



Arizona fires in '11 have burned 1 million+ acres

Tom Beal Arizona Daily Star | Posted: Monday, September 5, 2011 12:00 am

Fires have burned more than 1 million acres of Arizona forest and grassland this year.

They have burned in every month of the year, including this one.

There are fires burning now in the Kaibab, Tonto and Apache-Sitgreaves forests, and in Grand Canyon National Park.

There is even a small fire in the Rincon Mountains east of Tucson.

"The thing about Arizona is we have fires year-round," said Cam Hunter, spokeswoman for the State Forestry division.

Arizona fires reported to the Southwest Coordination Center as of Aug. 31 totaled 1,008,753 acres.

That total does not include the current fires, which range from 3 acres to 2,200. All were lightning-caused and are being managed for "resource benefit," burning mostly along the ground and clearing out accumulations of dead wood, brush, leaves and pine needles.

Monsoon moisture makes it possible to simply monitor the fires this time of year, rather than actively fight them.

The real destruction came during Arizona's dry summer, and most of it hit the eastern and southeastern areas of the state.

Wind pushed the 538,049-acre Wallow Fire across the Apache Forest on the eastern edge of the White Mountains and into New Mexico.

The Horseshoe 2 Fire burned most of the Chiricahua Mountains in the state's southeast corner and the Monument Fire burned through the canyons of the Huachuca Mountains near Sierra Vista.

All burned in areas listed throughout the summer as being in severe, extreme or exceptional drought - classifications that cover nearly all of neighboring New Mexico, where 1,098,186 acres burned this year.

Drought also created conditions for record fire seasons across the southern United States. In Texas, more than 3.5 million acres have burned and 14 large fires are currently being fought, according to the Texas Forest Service.

The National Interagency Fire Center says the chance of significant fire is "above normal" through the end of September in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, Alabama and Georgia.

Arizona's largest fires in 2011

Wallow - 538,049 acres

Horseshoe 2 Fire - 222,954 acres

Murphy Complex - 68,079 acres

Monument Fire - 30,526 acres

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