



Gila Las Cruces Type 3 Incident Management Team

MARCUS CORNWELL – INCIDENT COMMANDER



For Immediate Release:

Notification for Public Health and Safety

Press Release – June 12, 2026

Critical Fire Weather Increases Growth of Lightning-Caused Bear Fire

Acres: ~3,717

Location: 18 miles southeast of Quemado, NM

Containment: 0%

Start Date: June 9, 2026

Personnel: 227

Cause: Lightning

Summary: Firefighters are working to suppress the Bear Fire on the Gila National Forest, which is estimated at 2,000 acres. The Bear Fire is a full suppression incident utilizing a mix of direct and indirect tactics to contain the fire.

Yesterday, dry weather and wind drove the fire through steep terrain with heavy fuel loads. Growth was predominantly on the east-southeast side of the fire. Crews continued with direct line construction where possible, but fire behavior necessitated the assessment and prep of indirect lines.

Three Type 1 helicopters, two Type 3 helicopters, and fixed wing aircraft are supporting the efforts of eight crews, two dozers, 13 engines, and five water tenders.

Today firefighters will continue with direct line on the northern flank of the fire, protecting critical energy infrastructure. Due to anticipated fire behavior, resources will prepare indirect fire lines on the eastern and southern perimeter to minimize growth and protect private and state land.

Weather: Friday's forecast predicts moisture seeping back into the region from the east, improving minimum relative humidities. Winds will continue to blow from the west-northwest at 5-10 mph. Storms will move into southwestern New Mexico over the weekend, elevating relative humidity levels up to 35% before dry weather returns Tuesday.

Safety: A 24-hour Temporary Flight Restriction is also in place. *If you fly, we can't!* Along with private dip sites, aircraft are sourcing water out of Quemado Lake. Members of the public should avoid all areas where firefighting operations are occurring. An Area Closure Order is forthcoming for the Bear Fire.

Evacuations: The Catron County Emergency Management Office and Catron County Sheriffs are implementing the Ready, Set Go! method. Three of the identified zones of private land east of the fire, moved into SET status Thursday evening. Residents are encouraged to monitor official updates and be prepared for potential changing conditions.

Smoke: Smoke may be visible in and around surrounding communities today. Air quality will vary based on fire activity, weather, and wind patterns. Residents should monitor local conditions, reduce prolonged outdoor activity when smoke is present, and check the Air Quality Index before recreating or working outdoors. Sensitive groups should take extra precautions to limit smoke exposure. Continue following official incident updates for changing conditions. For real-time smoke conditions, visit <https://fire.airnow.gov>.

Fire Restrictions: The Gila National Forest is in Stage 1 Fire Restrictions due to long term severe drought in the Gila region, increased tree mortality across the forest, and forecasted hotter, drier weather conditions. Stage 1 Fire Restrictions limit campfires on forest land to designated recreation sites and campgrounds with constructed metal fire rings. Open burning is also prohibited in the unincorporated area of Catron County and in Catron County Fire District 30.

For more information:

Public Information: 2026.bear@firenet.gov

Incident Information:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/GilaNForest

InciWeb: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/nmgf-bear-fire>

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