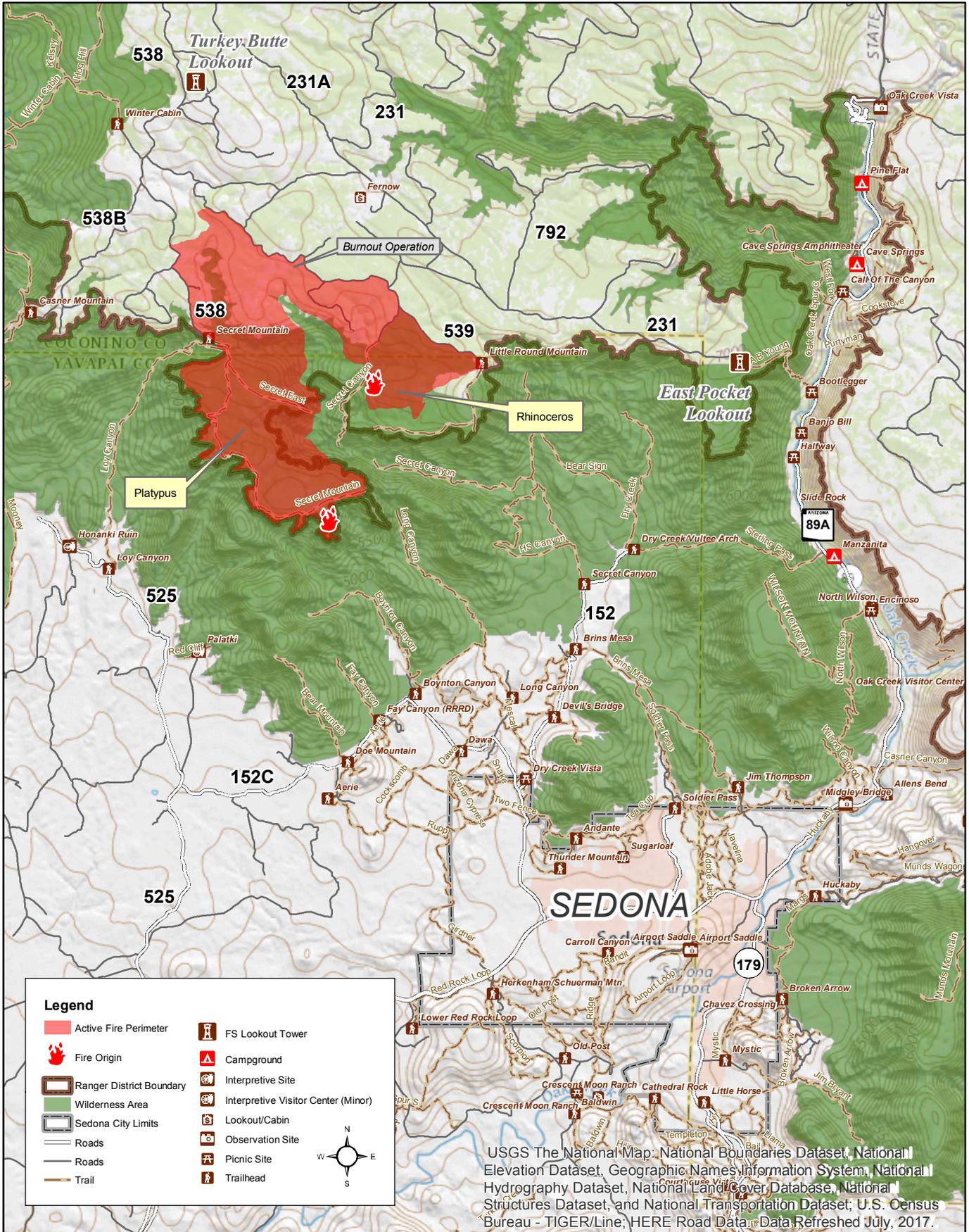


Coconino National Forest

Flagstaff & Red Rock Ranger Districts

Platypus and Rhinoceros Fires - September 18, 2018





Forest Service
Coconino National Forest
1824 S. Thompson Street
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

News Release



Public Information: (928) 527-3600
www.CoconinoNationalForest.us

MEDIA CONTACTS
Brady Smith – Public Affairs Officer
George Jozens – Dep. Public Affairs Officer
Media Only: (928) 224-8306

Smoke from Platypus and Rhino Fires Expected to Begin Decreasing

The Coconino National Forest and firefighters on the Platypus Fire were saddened to learn of the ATV accident on the Mogollon Rim this weekend that resulted in the loss of four lives. Public information regarding the accident and the September Fire, burning on the Tonto and Coconino National Forests, is being handled through the Coconino County Sheriff's Office and the Tonto National Forest. We extend our deepest condolences to the victims' families and loved ones, and are holding them in our hearts and prayers.

SEDONA, Ariz., Sept. 18, 2018, For Immediate Release – Firefighters finished the majority of the burnout operations on the Platypus and Rhino Fires several days earlier than expected. The burnout operations were a significant part of the suppression strategy, strengthening hand lines, dozer lines, and road systems, to create containment lines to the north and east of the fire.

With the large burnout operations complete, the public can anticipate seeing smoke decrease as the week goes on. However, the fires – which have merged together – will continue to be active in several areas and some smoke will still be noticeable in Sedona and Flagstaff.

An increase in total acreage is to be expected as the main fire advances to the containment lines that crews strengthened with burnouts. The fire also still has potential for movement along the southern edge of the original Rhino Fire, working through unburned fingers of vegetation in the steep rugged canyons. Significant growth to the south is not anticipated, but firefighters are closely monitoring that area and may utilize helicopters to assist with suppression efforts should the need arise.

“We still have a lot of work to do,” says Incident Commander Trainee Brian Blanchard. “But we’re really pleased with the progress our crews have made, and are feeling optimistic that we’ve started to turn the corner.”

The Forest Service has been working closely with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to monitor smoke impacts. Individuals sensitive to smoke can learn how to protect their health by visiting the Coconino County Public Health Service District website at <http://bit.ly/SmokeHealthAwareness>.

PLATYPUS/RHINO FIRE OVERVIEW (<https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/6061/>)

Discovery date: July 28, 2018

Cause: Lightning.

Tactics: Full suppression



Flagstaff Ranger Station: (928) 526-0866
Mogollon Rim Ranger Station: (928) 477-2255
Red Rock Ranger Station: (928) 282-4119



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Location: Approximately 6 miles northwest of Sedona in Red Rock Secret Mountain Wilderness.
(Lat/Long: [34.94291, -111.8701](#))

Current size: Combined total 5,525 acres

Resources: Approximately 145 personnel including engines, water tender, dozer, hand crews, and two helicopters

Predicted smoke impacts: Smoke will continue to be visible in Sedona, Parks/Bellemont, Munds Park and Flagstaff during the day. It will disperse to the north and northeast during the day and settle into Sedona and the Verde Valley during the nighttime and early morning hours.

Current closures: Secret Mountain Trail No. 109 (<http://bit.ly/SecretMtnTrail>), Secret Canyon Trail No. 121 ([Secret Canyon Trail No 121](#)) and Loy Canyon Trail No. 5 ([Loy Canyon Trail No 5](#)).

For public and firefighter safety, the public is encouraged to avoid the area south of the junction of Forest Road 231 (Woody Mountain Road) and 231A.

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