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(Neb.)-U.S. Forest Service Says Fair Amount Of Work Remains On Fire Area

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 09/20/2012 02:05 PM

Photo: Fire management officer Weston Burch

(CHADRON)-Pine Ridge Ranger District fire management officer Weston Burch says most crews have now headed home or on to other fires after assisting with the Region 23 Fire Complex and Wellnitz Fires, but two engines and crews, one from Longmont, Colo., and one from Cape Hatteras, N.C., will remain in the area until at least the end of the month. Burch says there is still a fair amount of work to be done, including dozer line rehab, falling hazardous trees, campground rehab, and searching for trees and stumps that are still smoking. He anticipates that smoking trees will be the case for some time until the area receives significant rainfall or snow. Crews have worked the whole perimeter, though, so there is no real cause for concern, says Burch. It's mostly just patrol, continued mop-up, and rehabilitation duties now.

The crew from North Carolina is assigned to severity and is on hand to serve as an initial attack resource in case of any flare-ups or other fires, since conditions are very abnormal. Burch says the area is setting new records for the drought and all the fire weather conditions. He says the area has seen longer droughts in years past, but not any that hit with such severity so quickly as this year.

Public Affairs Specialist for the NebraskaNational Forests and Grasslands Cyd Janssen said that the Pine Ridge Ranger District is still closed due to safety concerns, but the Bessey Ranger District in Central Nebraska is open for use. It has yet to be determined if the Pine District will be open in time for hunting season.

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Burch says the U.S. Forest Service is hoping to host a workshop sometime in the near future for home and property owners in regard to fire education and fire proofing of homes and properties. We will have more information on that as it becomes available.

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