

Crews begin attack on NV fire as it burns beyond wilderness

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RENO, Nev.—Federal firefighters initiated efforts on Thursday to combat a wildfire they'd previously been allowing to burn unchecked for nearly two weeks in a remote wilderness area in northeast Nevada.

Forest Service officials switched gears because the blaze grew to an estimated 13 square miles and for the first time was starting to burn outside the designated Jarbidge Wilderness Area of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest near the Nevada-Idaho line.

The fire that began on Aug. 5 is about 15 miles southeast of the nearest town of Jarbidge.

A five-person crew and division supervisor were working to prevent the fire from spreading further east and try to coral it within the wilderness boundary, said Linda Slater, a federal fire information officer.

Aerial retardant drops also were planned later Thursday, she said. Four 20-person crews, along with engines and dozers, were scheduled to arrive Friday and Saturday to aid in the effort.

Prior to Thursday, the agency had been allowing the fire to burn as part of a management practice called "Wildland Fire Use," which is used to manage lightning-caused fires in remote areas where fire is a natural component of the ecosystem, Slater said.

Within the 8,400-acre fire's perimeter, islands of unburned vegetation are creating a natural quilt-like

mosaic on the landscape, she said.

Many of the acres burning are "cleaning up" large numbers of insect-killed trees within the wilderness, she said.

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