

Update on Salt and South Fork Fire Efforts

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Salt and South Fork Firefighting

South Fork Fire

- 6/17/2024 start date
- 17,569 acres
- Cause (lightning)
- 99% Contained

Salt Fire

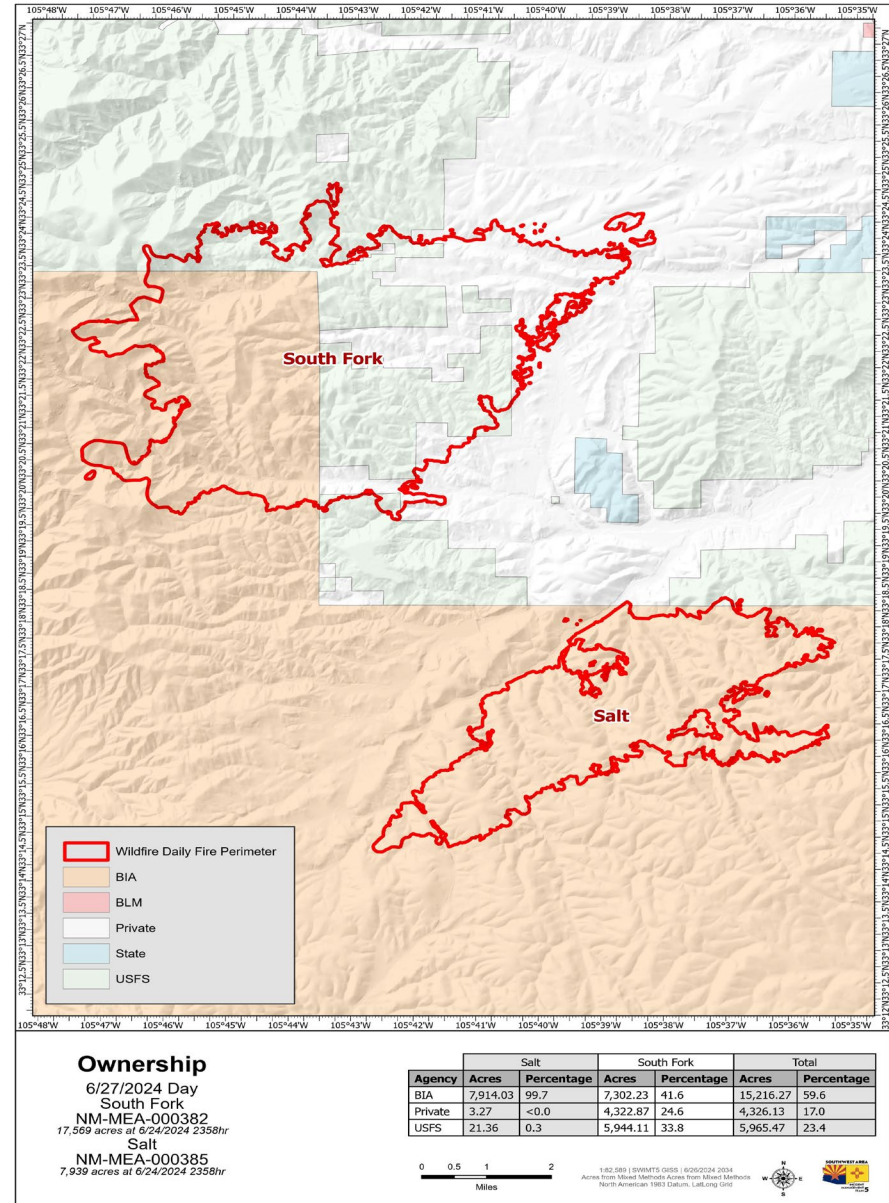
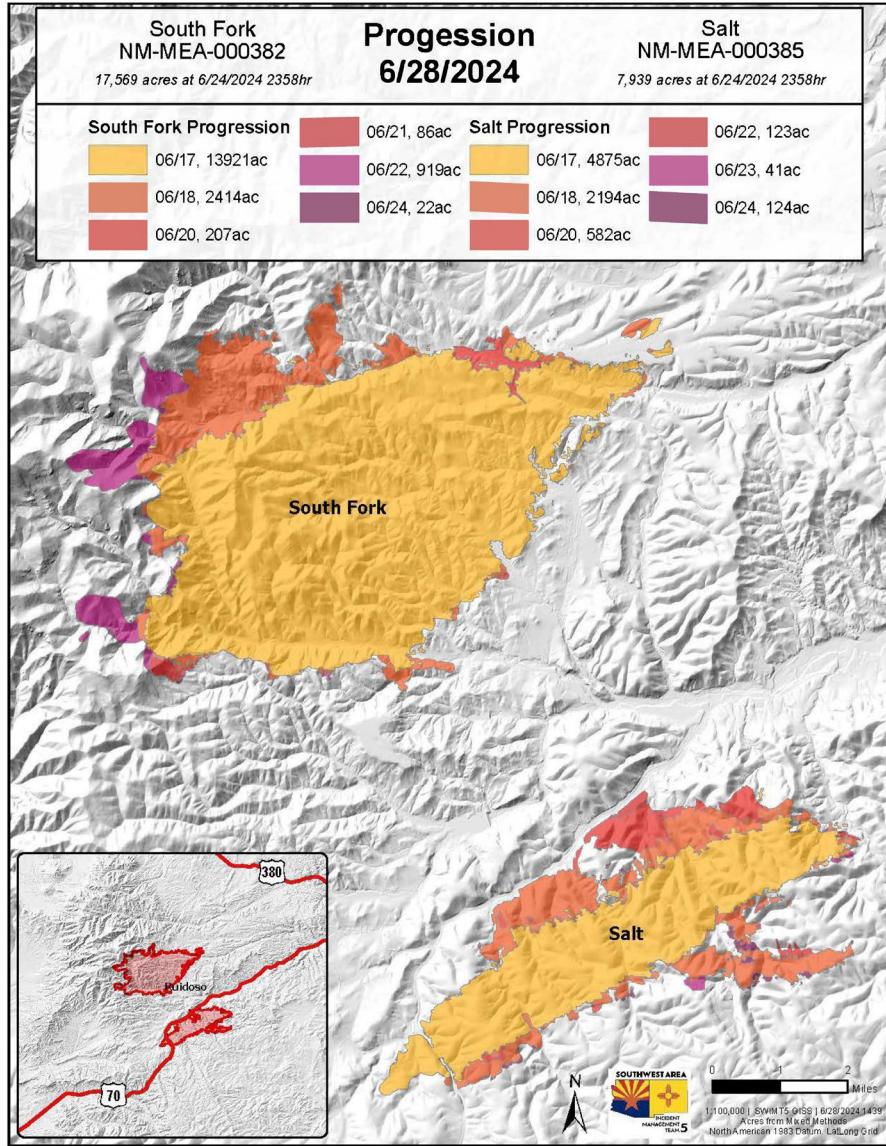
- 6/17/2024 start date
- 7,939 acres
- Cause (human)
- 100% Contained

The South Fork Fire was reported at 9:07 a.m. on June 17th, 2024, on Mescalero Tribal lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Mescalero Agency. The South Fork fire had alignment with topography and fuels, and with SW winds the fire was heading towards Ruidoso. The fire reached the western parts of the community late in the afternoon of June 17th. The fire impacted the communities of Cedar Creek and later Alpine Village, Upper Canyon, West Gavilan, Alto Lakes and Ruidoso proper. The South Fork Fire destroyed over 900 structures.

Hours later, several other fires emerged on Tribal lands, with the Salt Fire exceeding aggressive initial attack. The Salt Fire was also aligned with winds and fuels for Ruidoso Downs. The team was able to utilize aerial resources, crews, engines, and dozers to keep the fire from impacting surrounding communities. One outbuilding was destroyed by the Salt Fire.

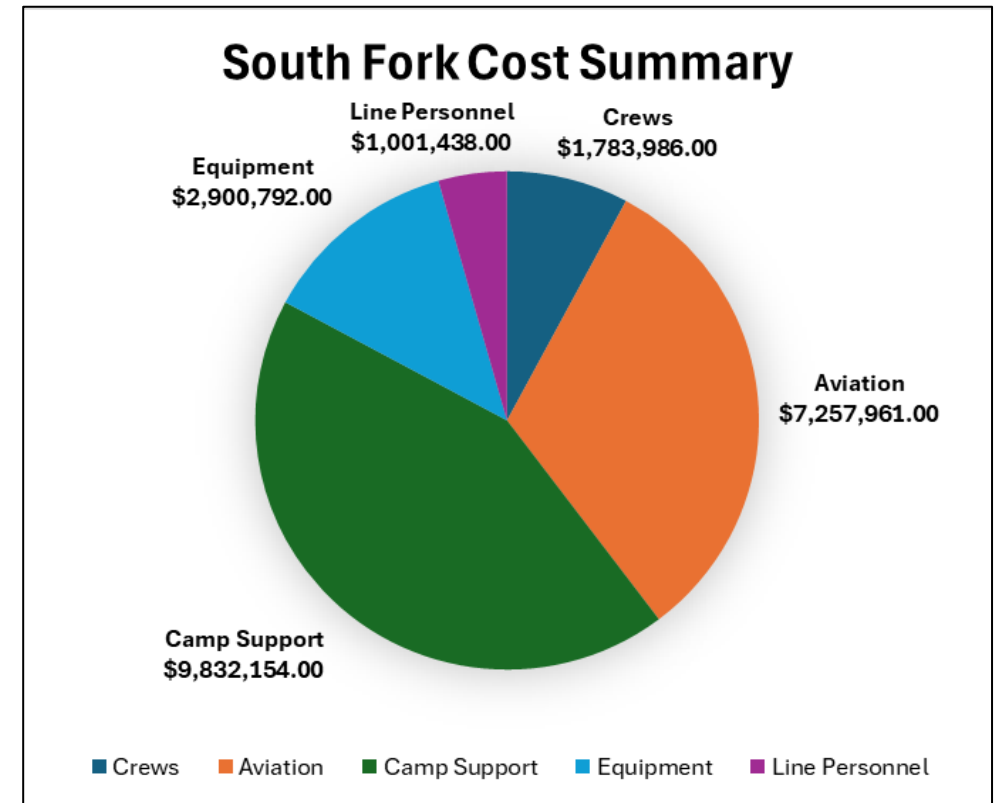
A total of 1,114 personnel supported both the South Fork and Salt Fire managed by the Southwest Area Incident Management Team 5. Resources included 21 hand crews, 88 engines, and 13 pieces of heavy equipment. Multiple aviation resources supported the incidents including Very Large Airtankers, Large Airtankers, Type 1 Helicopters, Type 2 Helicopters, Type 3 Helicopters, Lead Planes, and Air Attacks. More than 286 flight hours were logged for the combined incidents with 421,636 gallons of water for suppression drops. The 138 tanker flights dropped 484,046 gallons of suppression retardant at a cost of \$7.2 million.





South Fork Estimated Costs

Cost Category	Total Estimated Cost	BIA 41.6% Percent Ownership	USFS 33.8% Percent Ownership	NM State 24.6% Percent wnership
Crews	\$1,783,986	\$742,138	\$602,987	\$438,861
Aviation	\$7,257,961	\$3,019,312	\$2,453,191	\$1,785,458
Camp Support	\$9,832,154	\$4,090,176	\$3,323,268	\$2,418,710
Equipment	\$2,900,792	\$1,206,729	\$980,468	\$713,595
Line Personnel	\$1,001,438	\$416,598	\$338,486	\$246,354

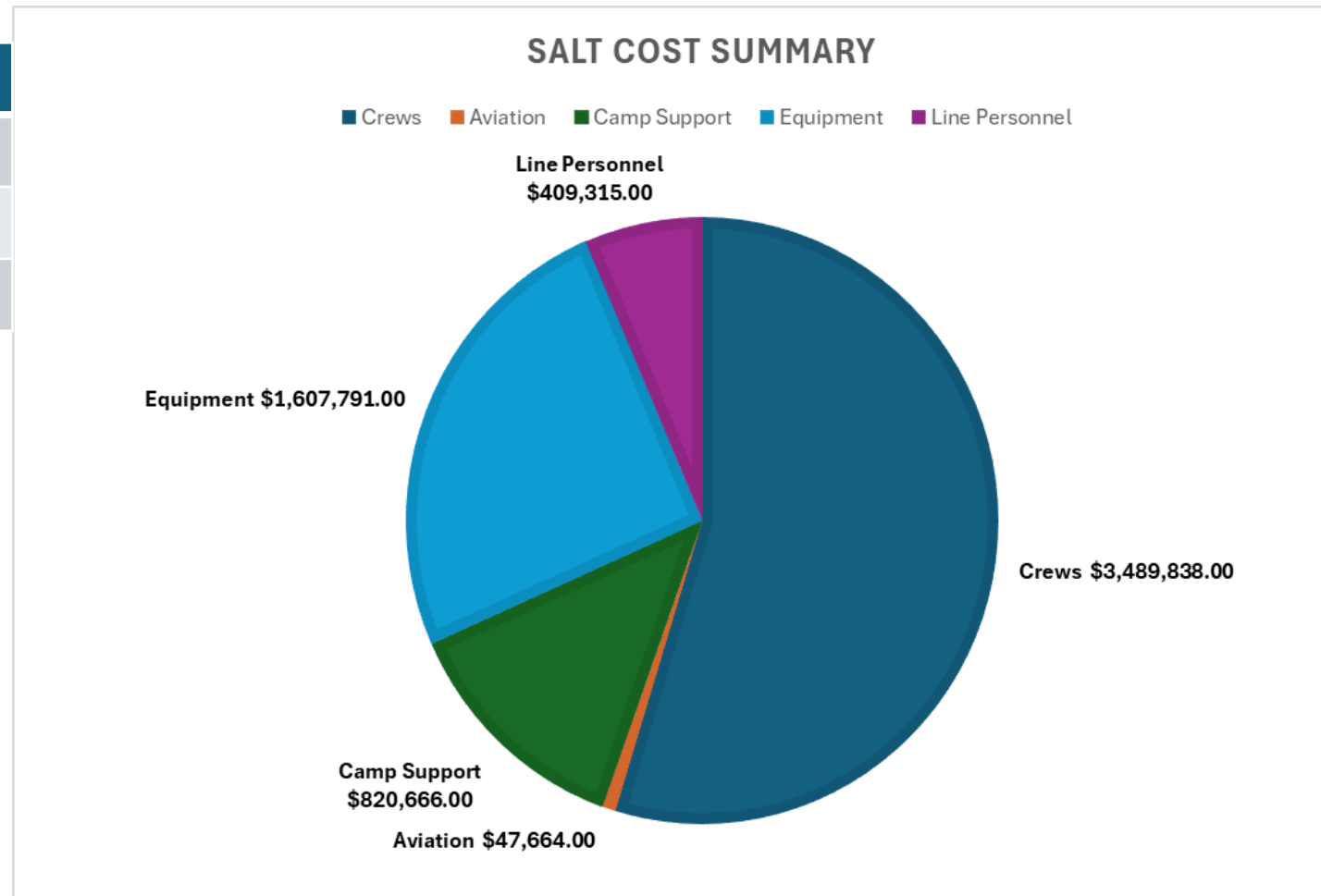


Negotiation of the cost-share agreement is not complete and the final cost allocation may change.

Salt Fire Estimated Costs

Cost Category	Total Estimated Cost
Crews	\$3,489,838
Aviation	\$47,664
Camp Support	\$820,666
Equipment	\$1,607,791
Line Personnel	\$409,315

% of Acres Burned	
BIA	99.7%
USFS	0.3%
State	0%



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Salt and South Fork Post-Fire Impacts



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Homes that survived South Fork Fire
June 2024

Salt and South Fork Post-Fire Impacts



Green trees and surviving house at left that meets the Village of Ruidoso Ordinance spacing standards.

Photo Courtesy Village of Ruidoso, Dick Cooke

Salt and South Fork Post-Fire Impacts

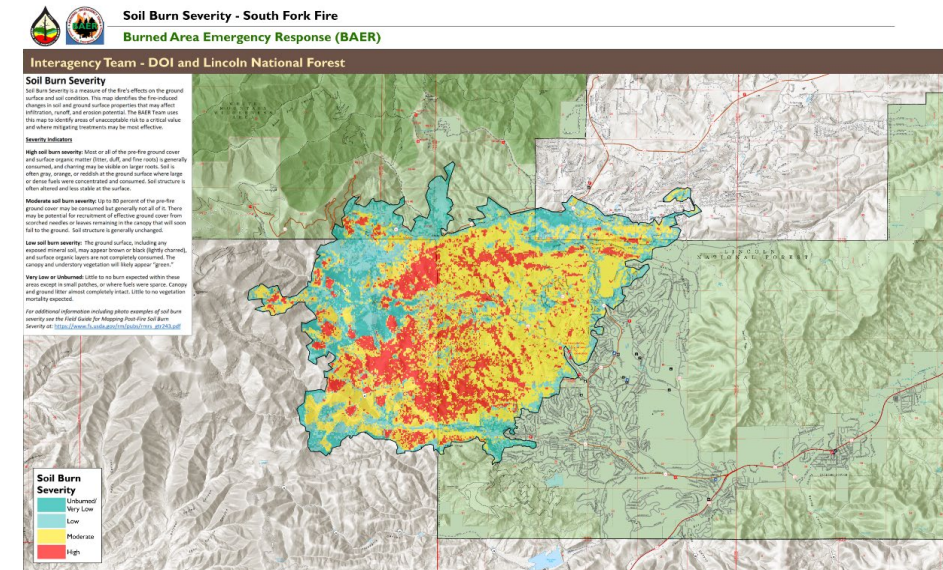


Proper tree spacing, no ladder fuels, and home hardening =
House survived

Photo Courtesy Village of Ruidoso, Dick Cooke

Salt and South Fork Watershed Recovery Activities

- USFS and BIA Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) teams coordinated to produce soil burn severity and debris flow hazard maps for the Salt and South Fork Fires.
- BAER teams assess all lands, but only implement recovery actions on federal lands.
- The three phases of BAER implementation are:
 1. Fire suppression damage repair to minimize soil erosion from fire suppression activities
 2. Emergency stabilization of soils by mulching, seeding, installing water control structures, temporary barriers, and signs
 3. Long-term recovery and restoration including habitat restoration, reforestation, fencing, monitoring, invasive species management



Salt and South Fork Watershed Recovery Activities

- Hazard tree mitigation makes it safer for landowners and managers to access burned lands and work toward recovery.
- The FEMA Private Property Debris Removal (PPDR) Program removes burned structures and trees that pose an immediate danger within 25 feet of burned structures.
- Removal of hazard trees not addressed by PPDR is a top priority.



Photo credit: Dick Cooke

Salt and South Fork Fire and HB1

Activities EMNRD is planning for completion in FY25:

- Hazard tree mitigation on private lands near powerlines, roads, and surviving structures not covered by PPDR.
- Synthesis of BAER soil burn severity and debris flow mapping with infrastructure location and damage information to identify priority projects.
- Soil stabilization and erosion control activities on forested slopes above at-risk infrastructure on Tribal and private lands.

Salt and South Fork Watershed Recovery Funding

Funding Source	Activities	Amount
FEMA PPDR	Removal of burned structures and hazard trees within 25 ft of burned structures	TBD
NRCS Emergency Watershed Program	Technical and financial assistance for private landowners to relieve imminent threats to life and property, including erosion control measures	\$50M
State HB1	Hazard tree mitigation, chipping, and hauling; erosion control; planning	\$10M
US Forest Service Disaster Relief	Bark beetle, invasive species, and hazard tree monitoring and mitigation; erosion control	\$10M Requested
Farm Service Agency, EFRP	The Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) is being requested to fund a long-term recovery program for private forest landowners	TBD



For More Information

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