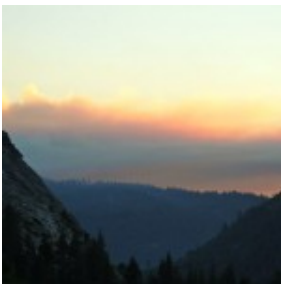


Fire started by lightning near Strawberry allowed to burn

A plume of smoke west of Strawberry that looks like a wildfire burning in the Sierra is under control – but is not going to be put out by firefighters any time soon.

Known as the Long Fire, it started Sept. 12 by lightning, but is just now starting to show itself to travelers along Highway 50.

“Fire specialists on the Placerville Ranger District are managing the lightning-caused Long Fire to meet multiple benefits such as allowing the fire to burn naturally in a fire-adapted ecosystem when it can be done safely, effectively and efficiently (while) posing no immediate risk to life, safety, property or resources,” Kristi Schroeder with the Eldorado National Forest said in a press release.



Smoke from a lightning ignited fire fills the American River canyon Sept. 26. Photo/LTN

The cloud of smoke can be seen in the west as far as El Dorado

Hills, and from the east at about Lovers' Leap. Travelers on Highway 88 can also see the smoke.

It is burning at about 7,000 feet in the Packsaddle Pass area, southwest of Strawberry.

Firefighters are on scene to make sure it does not get out of control. The fire is expected to burn another five to seven weeks.

According to fire officials, the benefits to natural resources derived from a managed wildfire include:

- Reduction of heavy fuel loading that diminishes the threat of catastrophic wildfire.
- Reintroduction of fire into the landscape to perform its historical role of cleaning the forest floor of dead and down vegetation, eliminating sickly trees, and generally keeping the ecosystem healthy.
- Raising the crown base height. The crown base simply means the lowest limbs on an individual tree that would allow a ground fire to climb into those limbs and transition the fire vertically up into the tree to create a crown fire.
- Recycling valuable nutrients back into the soil.
- Maintaining and improving wildlife habitat.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*