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KINLICHEE FIRE UNDER CONTROL

It's what every community dreads this time of year on the Navajo Nation, especially during times of drought – a wild fire. The Navajo Nation is currently under fire restrictions as nine wildfires burned throughout the Navajo Nation.

Kinlichee Chapter President Christine Wallace said that the fire in Kinlichee, Ariz., is now under control, but not contained. Officials still fear that the strong winds today could spread the fire but so far, there has been no structural damage or injuries.

Wallace said that this fire is especially devastating because the community also dealt with a fire last week that burned 1600 acres, and nearly all of the Chapter's resources have been expended.

Since the Department of Emergency Management has been dealing with nine wildfires throughout the Navajo Nation this week, the department has left it up to the Chapters to feed the firefighters and other emergency personnel needed to help contain the fires.

With their limited resources, Chapter officials turned to the Office of the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council to help provide meals for the firefighters. The Speaker's office worked with Wallace to feed 80 firefighters tonight's dinner at the Sawmill Chapter House.

If the fire continues, Wallace said she is hoping that other local Chapters will kick in to assist. So far, surrounding Chapters, the Apache County Sheriff's Office, the Navajo Nation Police Department and the Speaker's office have come to the aid of Kinlichee.

As of yesterday evening, 48.6 acres had burned. The consecutive fires have put the Chapter officials to work 24 hours a day, Wallace said.

To help ensure that other Navajo Chapters do not have experience the same devastation, Wallace said that the fire restriction ordered by the President needs to be enforced.

“The problem we are running into is enforcement. We need signs to be posted and we need rangers out there making sure that fires are being restricted,” Wallace said. She further recommended that wood permits be put on temporary hold.

“The majority of Kinlichee Chapter contains the Navajo Nation Forest area and people need to take precautions here,” Wallace said. “It’s up to Navajo Nation Forestry Department to enforce those restrictions.”

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