

U.S. Forest Service reopens hiking trails

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The entire western side of the Linville Gorge Wilderness Area is now open to hikers. This includes the Table Rock picnic area.

While the northern end from Spence Ridge Trail south to Shortoff Mountain is still closed, the announcement represented the success firefighters have had this week on a wildfire near Shortoff Mountain that has burned 1,941 acres since June 8.

80 percent of the wildfire, which started from a lightning strike, has been contained, firefighters say. □ Two other fires started around the same time, one at Dobson Knob, the other near Cold Mountain. Both of those blazes have been fully contained. Crews at those fires are replanting grass and rehabilitating the areas.