

Friday afternoon, lightning started two new fires in the Linville Gorge area of the Pisgah National Forest.

As of yesterday morning, a fire near Dobson Knob had burned over 250 acres. A fire near Shortoff Mountain had burned about 125 acres. While no homes or private lands are threatened, state and federal helicopters and air tankers made water and retardant drops over the weekend to slow the blaze. Two dozers and approximately 140 firefighters are on scene. The recent drought has not helped measures, nor has the buildup of dead pines killed by the southern pine beetle outbreaks, according to U.S. Forest spokesman Terry Seyden. According to Seyden, heavy soaking rains over an extended period of time are needed to stifle the blaze. As a precaution, trails in the southern part of Linville Gorge Wilderness area will be closed until further notice.