

## 790 Fire – East Wind Episode (9/6/2014)

Fire perimeter had been pretty static for about a week. Some backing was occurring toward Big Ben Creek that was being checked by bucket drops. Control line along ridge on south (right) was secure to a point where the fire edge dropped down into Big Ben Cr. Suppression efforts included cold-trail/wet-line upstream from west, and securing a line from ridgeline to creek. An East-wind event was forecast (IMET) that could compromise continued work along the creek; a decision made to disengage suppression actions along Big Ben Creek until the threat passed. In anticipation of the wind episode an evaluation of potential fire spread (NTFB, WindNinja, Fuel Models) indicated likelihood of fire outside of Wilderness Boundary to the west. The wind event occurred during the early morning on 9/6, with resulting spread (black perimeter) and spotting *that corresponded very well with fire behavior projections*. Anticipation of the event allowed Operations adequate time to have aerial resources available, and a “Plan-B” to limit the impact of the winds to 500+ acres and prevent escape from the Wilderness.

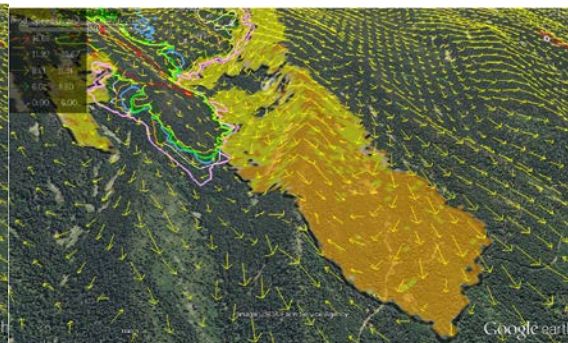
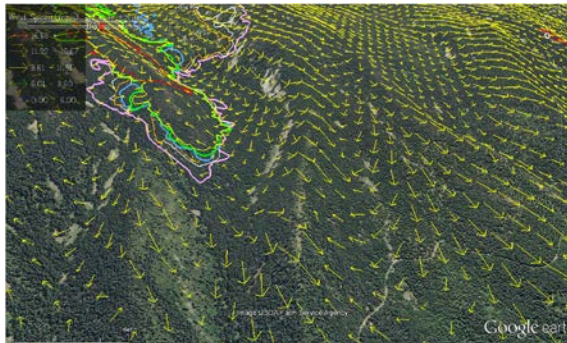
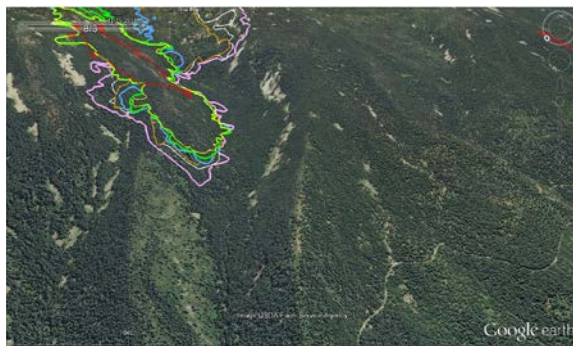
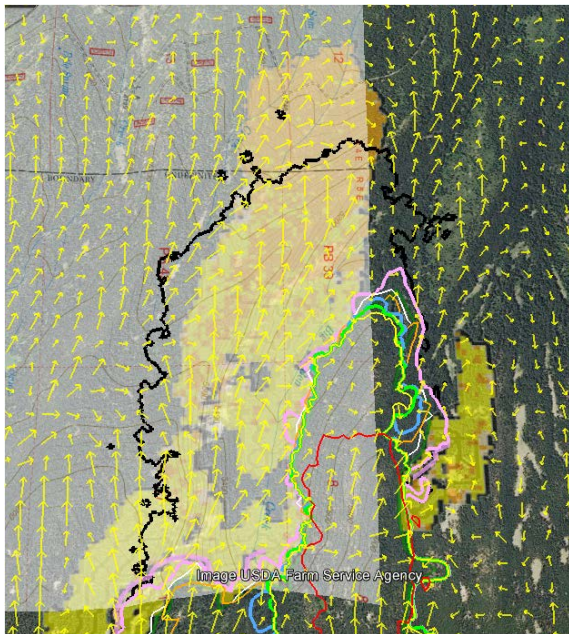
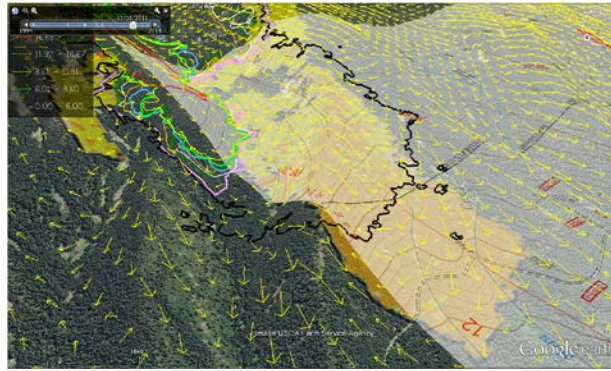


Photo from NE at 0605 – torching and spotting under eastwind 9/6.

WindNinja and NTFB were used well in advance of event to display area(s) of concern, anticipated extent of area involved, and to develop suppression plans that would keep the fire within the Wilderness. We used (with great trepidation) the modeled

imagery at a meeting with Forest Supervisor and others to help prioritize contingency lines. Discussions were prefaced with “in the event an east-wind event occurs – the likely outcome may resemble.....”.



*Potential fire spread was emulated several days prior to the wind event. Actual perimeter shown is the black line. A combination of aerial suppression efforts and abating winds limited fire further fire spread outside of the Wilderness.*

Forecast winds began around 0300 and lasted until mid-morning, before transition to light SW flow (photo). The low-level east winds failed to negotiate the curve in the Big Ben Cr. drainage just like WindNinja portrayed. Multiple air tankers (VLAT, CL-215's, and 7-SEATS), along with numerous helicopters were used in conjunction with scouted proposed control lines to keep the fire from escaping the Sky Lakes Wilderness.

Steve Ziel - FBAN