

Santa Fe National Forest – 2021 “Llano Loco” Wildfire

Consecutive Success: Results of Fuel Treatments

Introduction

The Llano Loco fire was reported at 17:13 on April 22nd, 2021 on the Jemez Ranger District. The human caused fire was started during critical fire conditions with temperatures nearing the mid 60’s, relative humidity’s in the low teens and winds 15-25 mph gusting to 40 mph. Nearby 100-hr and 1000-hr fuel moisture readings were in the single digits. The Llano Loco fire was located off forest road 376 in the Guadalupe drainage, a drainage with a North South alignment ideal for large fire growth, which contributed to the 4,000 acre Venado wildfire in 2018(Figure 1). Values at risk in the area include Jemez Reservation lands upslope and to west, Rancho del Chaparral Girl Scout Camp to the north and updrainage, the Las Vacas and Guadalupe creeks and a powerline that serves the Girl Scout Camp and other private inholdings.

Fuel Treatment Effectiveness

The Llano Loco wildfire started in a 130 acre fuels reduction treatment. This 2017 project was a thin/pile with subsequent fuelwood removal, that was placed adjacent to various other cut/pile and thinning treatments totaling over 2,400 acres. These treatments had been implemented since 2015. One of the primary drivers for fuel reduction treatments in this area were to reduce large fires from human ignitions along the highly recreated forest road 376 corridor. Funding for the fuel reduction came from various sources, New Mexico State Forestry, Joint Chiefs, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Forest Service Hazardous Fuels funding. Pre-thin conditions were overstocking of small diameter predominately ponderosa pine. The photos below show fuels conditions before thinning, post-thin & pile burn and post wildfire.



Pre-thinning typical stand.



Post-thin and pile burn/adjacent fuels.



Llano Loco Wildfire effects.

As a result of fuels treatments along this busy forest roadway the Llano Loco fire was contained at 0.75 acres with ease by the Jemez Fire crew. In the 2020 season a similar human caused fire was started in this area also resulting in quick containment of the fire. With forest use at an all-time high it is important to consider strategic placement of fuels treatments to combat catastrophic wildfire from human ignitions. Fuels treatments such as these on forest road 376 will pay dividends in the long run not only in diminishing large human caused fires but also in aiding the return of natural fire to departed forest ecosystems. See Figure 1 for fire location and previous fuels treatments.

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Llano Loco Fire with Fuels Treatments

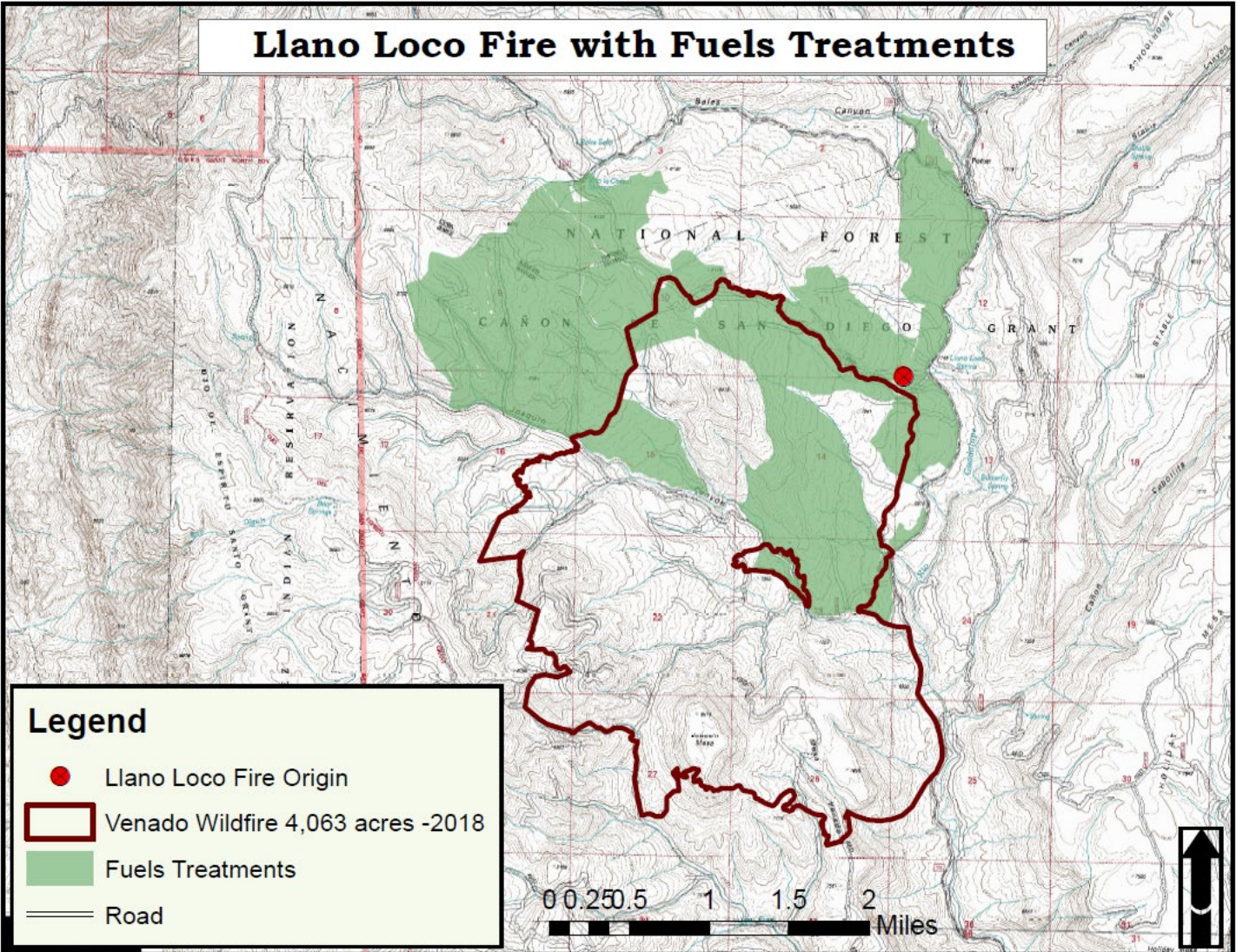


Figure 1: Fire location and fuels treatment locations.