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Four-alarm brush fire breaks out in Gilmanton



By BOB MARTIN

GILMANTON — More than 50 firefighters from a large amount of fire departments in the Lakes Region and beyond fought an extensive brush fire on Sunday night, and while Chief Paul Hempel said it was too early to tell for sure, he believes that the blaze started from a lightning strike from the thunderstorms on Saturday.

Hempel explained that just before 7 p.m., Gilmanton Firefighters were called to Hattie Smith Road after a resident called to investigate a report of smoke in a marsh area. He said the fire was about two to four acres in an area that was very hard to access. It was a two-alarm fire to begin with, but it quickly was upgraded to four alarms.

"Guys finally made it out, surrounded the fire and contained it," Hempel said at about 8:40 p.m. "We will be overnight here and will finish out the extinguishing tomorrow."

Hempel said firefighters will be nearby and making sure it doesn't spread. He explained that fire lines had been cut and they had plenty of water. The fire was continuing to burn at that time, and he said it would continue to do so during the night, but they would work to contain it. There are not any nearby houses in the area, and Hempel said there was no threat to any structures.

Hempel commended the work of all the departments, saying it was difficult because there was also fire departments responding in Loudon. Departments assisting at the scene included Laconia, Belmont, New Durham, Alton, Wolfeboro, State Forestry Service, Tilton-Northfield, Pittsfield and more. Local police departments also assisted with traffic flow.

"We will pull guys out soon," Hempel said. "We don't really want anyone out there in the dark, but we'll be keeping an eye on it. We'll keep our companies here and release everyone else in an hour or so."
