
Wildfires: Smith River Complex / SRF Lightning Complex Updates

October 3, 2023

The following information concerning the Smith River Complex Fires is from the U.S. Forest Service as of Tuesday, Oct. 3.

Due to hard work from firefighters and more accurate reporting, containment has increased to 90% and the total acres burned rose by 87 for a total of 94,693.

Cooler temperatures and light rain yesterday and overnight helped firefighters increase the containment. The weather will be getting warmer and drier through Saturday and firefighters remain vigilant as winds will increase.

Yesterday, a firefighting UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) with infrared capabilities flew the fire and picked up some hot spots. Heat signature information was relayed to firefighting crews and they extinguished those hot spots and interior smokes. The eastern edge of the Hurdy Gurdy Fire is now completely contained. Crews will continue to assess the fire from the ground and air as the fire areas dry out and accessibility improves. There has been no reported firefighter injuries or illnesses for many days.

Extensive suppression repair and hazard abatement continues on the fire. Water bars are being constructed near primary containment lines to prepare for the rainy season. Machine work and hazard tree removal is occurring along the 17N49 road as well as south of US199 near Little Jones Rd (17N08).

Major chipping operations continue in this area. Yesterday, crews made great progress with suppression repair work in Gasquet (17N69), Steven's and Smith River areas. As the soil continues to dry out and containment increases, crews will identify additional target areas to complete suppression repair work. Positive attitudes, hard work and diligent focus by firefighters continues on day 52 of this fire.

WEATHER

Drier, breezing and warmer weather will be occurring through Saturday with rain expected at the beginning of next week. Temperatures will warm throughout the week. Northeasterly winds will increase with gusts of 30-35 mph. Firefighters will feel the continued warming and drying conditions as a result of offshore flow for the next four to five days. There is increasing chances of widespread precipitation early Monday morning and into next week.

CLOSURES

While county roads remain open, Six Rivers National Forest lands, roads, and trails around the Smith River Complex fires are closed (Forest Order No. 10-23-09). View the Order and closure map on the Forest's website:

tinyurl.com/4atens8c.

US Highway 199 in Del Norte County is fully closed twice daily, Monday through Friday, from 8 AM to 11 AM and from 1 PM to 4 PM. During all open hours, traffic will be one-way and piloted between Grassy Flat Campground east of Gasquet and Oregon Mountain Road. Motorists should anticipate delays during all open hours. Caltrans provides information on current highway conditions online (roads.dot.ca.gov), by phone (800-427-7623), and on Facebook

(facebook.com/CaltransD1).

The Following is from the U.S. Forest Service concerning the SRF Lightning Complex Fires as of Tuesday, Oct. 3.

This update covers 6 of the 15 fires being managed as part of the SRF Lightning Complex. The Copper Fire (2184 acres) was absorbed by the Blue Creek #2 Fire. On September 22, 2023, the Bluff #1 Fire (4270 acres) and Blue Creek #2 Fire (9751 acres) were absorbed by the Mosquito Fire.

The combination of Blue Creek #2 Fire, Bluff #1 Fire, and Mosquito Fire is now referred to as the Mosquito Fire. On September 30, 2023 we incorporated the management of the Hancock fire (1,728 acres, 100% contained). The remaining 6 fires (Big Foot, Blue Creek, Creek, Flat, Iron, and Merrill) totaling 34 acres, are contained and in patrol status. They are checked daily, and their size and containment remain unchanged.

Current Situation:

The 15 fires on this incident total 49,428 acres and overall containment is 20%. In total, 585 personnel are assigned to the incident. A warming and drying trend is occurring across the Complex. Firefighters continue to diligently respond to and address additional smokes as they present themselves. This written incident update will be distributed every other day. If fire conditions necessitate this update will return to being distributed as often as necessary.

Crews continue to actively assess the conditions of the Peach and Mosquito Fires. Prioritizing the safety of firefighters and the public is paramount, given that recent rainfall has heightened the risk of fire-weakened trees falling due to the saturation of soil. Continuous monitoring efforts have been extended to cover the remote Marlow Fire and the north side of the Mosquito Fire.

Progress resumed on the mowing and mastication work along the Bluff Creek Road and Slate Creek Road. This work is intended to establish a fuel break for potential future needs. On the Peach Fire, the process of backhauling pumps and hoses from locations where they are no longer needed is ongoing. Suppression repair has begun where appropriate.

Firefighters are closely monitoring the Highway 96 corridor and Salmon River Road for any signs of falling rocks, debris, or fire activity. Both CalTrans and Siskiyou County crews remain on standby to clear roadways if necessary. Special attention is being given to assessing and mitigating the risk posed by fire-weakened trees with root systems affected by wet soils before reengaging on fire control lines.

Fire activity is expected to increase throughout the week, several areas still contain heat sources and large diameter trees that continue to burn and generate smoke. Therefore, smoke may remain visible across all areas affected by the fires as warmer and dryer conditions return in the coming days.

Pearch Fire (12,126 acres, 31% contained) – Firefighters are holding and improving fire lines along the Highway 96 corridor and Butler Flat. Mop up work continues in and around structures. Continued efforts will focus on packing up and backhauling pumps, hose, and other equipment.

Mosquito Fire (33,445 acres, 10% contained) – Crews and equipment have returned to the Bluff Creek Road and Slate Creek Road to resume mastication work, aimed at creating a fuel break along these routes. Several days of mastication work are anticipated to prepare these roads effectively. Fire managers will maintain vigilance regarding fire activity on the north side, which remains in a remote location. On the east and west sides of the fire, crews continue to secure control lines, mop up and address hot spots near the line.

Marlow Fire (1,988 acres, 0% contained) – Minimal activity is reported on the Marlow Fire, which is in a remote area. The fire is contained by indirect control lines to the east and south, as well as prior fire footprints where fuels are less dense. No values or structures are currently threatened by the Marlow Fire.

Monument (2 acres, 100% contained), **Let er-Buck** (96 acres, 100% contained) and **Hancock** (1,729 acres, 100% contained) Fires – A confinement strategy has been employed for these three fires due to the limited values at risk and the challenging, remote, and steep terrain, which presents safety concerns for firefighters. Natural fire barriers such as rock outcroppings and old fire footprints with sparse fuels are being used to contain fire growth until the arrival of season-ending precipitation. Regular monitoring ensures that both fires remain within an acceptable perimeter, all are now considered 100% contained.

Weather

A weak system will pass to the north of the fire Monday through Tuesday morning bringing increasing clouds, but no precipitation is expected. Temperatures will continue to warm with highs reaching the upper 70s to mid-80s in the valleys and upper 50s to upper 60s on the mid-slopes and ridges. Gusty northerly winds are expected on Tuesday with speeds up to 25 mph on the ridges.

Afternoon humidity values will trend downward through this period with valleys seeing readings generally in the 20s with lower 30s to lower 40s on the mid-slopes and ridges. Mid-slopes and ridges will see only moderate overnight recoveries with values holding in the upper 30s to mid-40s.

Please stay informed and exercise caution in the affected areas and be aware that warmer and drier conditions may lead to ongoing fire-related challenges.

Evacuation Information

Siskiyou County Office of Emergency Services: <https://www.co.siskiyou.ca.us/emergencyservices>

Closures

Six Rivers National Forest: Area and campground closures are in effect on portions of Six Rivers National Forest. They can be found at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/srnf/notices/?cid=FSEPRD1096395>.

Additional Fire Information

InciWeb: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident-information/casrf-2023-srf-lightning-complex-and-redwood-lightning-complex> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/2023SRFRedwoodLightning>

More Fire Information Links: www.linktr.ee/srffirepio For Air Quality Information: www.airnow.gov

NOTE: For information about the Elliot Fire which is part of the

Happy Camp Complex, please visit <https://linktr.ee/happycampcomplex2023> .

"Positive attitudes, hard work and diligent focus by firefighters continues on day 52 of this fire."

Smith Rivers Complex Fires

Location: Six Rivers National Forest

Size: 94,693 acres

Percent Contained: 90%

Cause: Lightning

Vegetation: Timber (Litterand Understory) and Brush

Number of Personnel Assigned: 603

Start Date: Tuesday, August 15, 2023, 0700