

Thunderstorms in forecast; fire weather, air quality monitoring underway

August 24, 2020



Red Flag fire weather warnings have been issued for areas of Northern California and Southern Oregon due to the possibility of thunderstorms. And although inland areas are challenged by smoke from wildfires, as of this posting the air quality in coastal Del Norte and Curry counties remained good.

California already has 96% of Cal Fire's engines committed or responding to wildfires today according to information reported by the agency. More than 14,000 firefighters continue to battle more than two dozen major fires across the state including those caused by lightning strikes last week. Oregon firefighters are among those from other states who have traveled to assist with California's wildfires.

The combination of extremely dry fuels and forecast for thunderstorms means that the Rogue-River Siskiyou National Forest — which straddles the Oregon-California state line in places — is also under a Red Flag warning. And Sixes National Forest, in response to severe drought conditions, increased fire danger, and

increased visitation to the forest, has joined other national forests to mobilize a fire prevention and education team to increase fire awareness and reduce the threat of human-caused wildfires.

The closest large active California wildfire is the Red Salmon Complex on the Shasta -Trinity National Forest burning in rugged and remote country approximately 14 miles northeast of Willow Creek in Humboldt County. Started by lightning on July 26, the complex was at 19,365 acres and 41% contained as of 8 a.m. on Aug. 24. Some areas of Sixes National Forest are closed due to the Red Salmon Complex Fire.

Smoke from that and other wildfires in Northern California has resulted in unhealthy air conditions in Weaverville and other Trinity County communities and the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District is monitoring particulate matter in Crescent City, Klamath, Eureka, Weaverville, Hoopa, Weitchpec, Willow Creek and Trinity Center, according to statement released by the district just before noon Monday.

When air is determined to be unhealthy, people should avoid all prolonged or heavy outdoor exertion. The district's offices are located in Eureka. For more information call 707-443-3093 or visit the website.

Fortunately, air quality monitors early Monday afternoon still showed good air quality along the coast in both Curry and Del Norte counties.

The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest responded to one fire on Saturday, Aug. 22, in the Woodruff Bridge Recreation Site near Prospect in the High Cascades Ranger District (northeast of Medford). The fire was contained at .01 acres.

“While this may seem inconsequential because of its small size, every fire has the potential to become a large fire,” a spokesperson for the agency said. “Wind, dry fuels and low humidity can cause a small fire to become a threat to our forests and homes.”

Low humidity and stronger than normal winds could quickly cause a fire to spread if left unattended. When planning outdoor recreation, camping or hunting, forest users are advised to check the fire prevention requirements in advance. The rules may be different between land managers and may change.

Year-to-date, the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest has responded to 25 fires with a total of 2.71 acres burned. Three of these fires were caused by lightning, and 22 were human-caused.

The Coos Fire Protection Agency is also monitoring the weather and fire conditions. On Aug. 19 the agency noted that cooling weather had lowered the fire danger, but also noted live fuels are at the point where they are available for fire to burn, which makes fires more resistant to control efforts.

At the time this article was posted CFPA had not issued additional warnings due to the latest weather forecast that includes potential lightning, but a number of restrictions are in place.

For more information:

Cal Fire

Coos Forest Protective Association

Rogue River Siskiyou National Forest

Sixes National Forest

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