



**File Code:** 1010/1520/1560

**Date:** September 29, 2015

Dear Community Member,

As the District Ranger and Agency Administrator, I wanted to update you on the status of the Rough Fire on the Hume Lake Ranger District, Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument.

Over the weekend we transitioned from the Type 1 IMT (Team 4) led by Incident Commander, Rocky Opliger, to a Type 3 IMT led by IC, Shelby Charley. As you've probably already noticed the Incident Command Post that was at Squaw Valley was closed on Sunday 9/27/15, and the camp has been relocated to Sequoia Lake.

The Rough Fire is now much closer to full containment. Many cherished sites were within the fire perimeter, including the giant sequoia groves, which, while threatened, remain in excellent condition. As you know, sequoias are fire-adapted; the issue was ensuring that the fire behavior wasn't too intense for the sequoias. As fire suppression activities wind down, the fire repair activities are already underway. Over the next several weeks staff and contractors will be repairing and stabilizing areas affected by the creation of fire camps, firelines and retardant drops.

A Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team is in place, and consists of various resource specialists from the local forest and other areas. This team is evaluating the burned area to determine where there is high risk of erosion or other damage to resources that may occur within the next few months to the next year. They will also begin conducting emergency stabilization activities where necessary throughout the burned area. Some of the activities will be stabilizing roads and trails; placing vegetation, seeds, or other material on the severely burned slopes to prevent erosion; and proposing treatments to prevent spread of known invasive species in the burned area. These activities can take days, weeks or months to complete. Some areas may be monitored for up to three years where there is risk of fire-related damage.

The current Forest Order that is keeping most of the district closed to the public remains in place. We are continuing to maintain a list of approved individuals so that they can access their private land, cabins, and permitted operations on National Forest System land. Carol Hallacy (338-2251 x 360) and Marianne Emmendorfer (338-2251 x 313) will continue to be the district Points of Contact for approving additional names to the master list, so please contact either of them to have your name added.

Please remain patient with the Forest closure as it continues to be important for both firefighter and public safety. While I do not have a projected date for when the closure will be modified, it is not likely to happen within the next 2 weeks. I appreciate your help in communicating to other members of the community about these continued hazards and the concern for firefighter safety and public safety.

What are the safety concerns? Last week there were several spot fires across Highway 180 near Cherry Gap. While these fires were contained quickly, it shows that this fire is not over yet. While the fire has



been primarily terrain and fuel driven, there is potential for windy conditions, high temperatures and low relative humidity in the coming days that can result in fire flare-ups. Other potential safety hazards we are dealing with include heavy equipment traffic on narrow roads; hazard trees resulting from fire damage, insects or drought-kill; and chippers and other heavy equipment sending debris onto roadways. In addition to these hazards, there are numerous areas where the fire is still smouldering, which can result in ash pits and stump holes that are likely to continue burning into the winter months. While there is little chance for rain in the near forecast, we are monitoring the potential for storm activity which could increase our chances of mudslides, flash floods, and additional hazards along the roadways.

It was inspiring to see local people and organizations worked together to provide the infrastructure and support that allowed thousands of firefighters from all over the country to suppress this massive wildfire. I understand how much this fire impacted you during this summer—from the smoke and closures to the understandable concern during evacuations and fire approaching the places we call home. I want to thank residents for their patience.

I am grateful for the consistent cooperation that occurred between the Fresno County Sheriff's Office, Tulare County, Caltrans, Fresno County Roads, PG&E, Red Cross, local emergency responders, Sequoia National Forest and Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Park employees, CalFire, CHP, concessionaires, private landowners and many others. Working together allowed us to develop, coordinate, and execute successful plans. I look forward to our continued cooperation as we rehabilitate roads, trails and facilities so the Hume Lake District can once again be the destination for hundreds of forest visitors.

I am grateful to all of you for your hard work, dedication, perseverance, great attitudes, and passion for protecting and managing our public lands.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Teresa Benson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

TERESA BENSON  
District Ranger