



## Boteler Fire and Nantahala Branch Fires Update Sunday, November 13, 2016



**Phone:** 828-389-6570 (new), 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**Websites:** [inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/34/#](http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/34/#)  
[facebook.com/BotelerFire](https://www.facebook.com/BotelerFire)

**Email:** BotelerFire@gmail.com

### **Highway 19 Closure:**

A ten-mile section of US 19/74 in the Nantahala Gorge is closed until further notice due to hazards associated with the Tellico Fire, mainly rocks and debris falling onto the roadway. Although the detour is very inconvenient, public safety is of paramount importance and the highway will not be closed any longer than necessary.

For nonresidents, the southern closure is at the junction of US Highway 19/74 and NC 129. The northern closure is at the junction of US Highway 19/74 and NC 28. Residents are allowed to proceed to the junction of FR 1310 on the south and Wesser on the north.

### **Incident Resources:**

20 crews, 6 helicopters, 50 engines, 10 dozers, 4 water tenders, and 757 total personnel

### **Incident Summary:**

No new fire starts were detected yesterday, giving firefighters an opportunity to staff the most-active fires more fully. They made significant progress and were very productive, constructing handline around structures and along the fires' edge, conducting firing operations, mopping up existing fireline to secure them, and increasing containment.

Crews working the night shift conducted a firing operation to merge the Ferebee and Tellico Fires. An eight-foot-wide dozer line separates the two fires where they come together along a half-mile stretch of Silver Mine Road southwest of Taylor Road, but fire managers now consider this one fire and will refer to it as the Tellico Fire. During the crews' morning operational briefing, fire managers commended the structure-protection group on their success. Of the more than 100 residences directly in the fire's path, only one minor outbuilding was burned. The Nantahala Outdoor Center on the north side remains secure. On the east side, where the fire crossed Needmore Road and the Little Tennessee River, crews contained the spot fire at approximately 100 acres.

On the Boteler Fire yesterday, firefighters made good progress containing the fire on the northeast edge between Joel Cove and Thunderstruck Road. They held, patrolled, and monitored firelines from Tate Gap to Cold Branch Road to Highway 64. Heavy smoke limited aerial operations throughout the day. All Clay County evacuations associated with the Boteler Fire were lifted .

See the individual fire narratives below for detailed information on today's planned firefighting activities.

### **Weather and Fire Behavior:**

The high-pressure system that moved into the fire area yesterday bringing more stable weather will remain well into the week. Smoke will linger this morning with clouds moving in this afternoon. An isolated shower might develop, but it is central and eastern North Carolina that will receive the significant rainfall. Winds will be light again today, around 5 mph, and from the north/northeast. The maximum temperature will be in the mid 50s and the minimum relative humidity around 50 percent.

High humidity today is the weather variable that will affect fire behavior the most. Fire activity should be minimal, with backing and flanking being the dominant behavior. If clouds do not develop this afternoon as expected, fire activity could increase slightly. As the vegetation dries and more leaves fall over the next several days, the fires could become more active, but for now the weather is giving firefighters an opportunity to make significant progress on suppression.

### **Closures, Evacuations, and Shelters:**

Please follow our Facebook and Inciweb websites (links above) for the most up-to-date and accurate information. Many unofficial Facebook posts are distributing inaccurate information on road closures.

#### Swain County

- Residents along the following closed roads are under a mandatory evacuation order: Big Dog Road, Gassaway Road, Licklog Road, Long Branch Road, Luther Bingham, Mason Road, Morgan Road, Northern Partridge Road, Silver Mine Road, East Silver Ridge Road, Wesser Creek Road, Wilkes Road.
- Evacuation shelter: Swain County Senior Center is available if needed. Call Swain County Dispatch 828-488-2196 if you need shelter services.

#### Macon County

- Residents along the following roads are under a mandatory evacuation order: Dewese Road and Partridge Creek Road. Tellico Road is also closed
- Evacuation shelter: Macon County EMS Base, 1096 Junaluska Road, Topton, NC.

#### Clay County

- The following Nantahala National Forest roads are closed: 6226 (Vinyard), 351 (Nelson Ridge), 350 (Perry Gap), and 348 (Old 64).

#### Nantahala National Forest

- Wesser Creek Trail is closed.
- Chunky Gal Trail from Glade Gap to Tusquitee Gap is closed.
- Whitewater Falls Trail and portions of Foothills Trail are closed.
- Appalachian Trail from the Nantahala River at Wesser south to Rock Gap Trailhead on Forest Road 67 is closed.
- Standing Indian Campground is open.

### **Burning Restrictions:**

A total fire ban is in effect for all lands in the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests; however, commercially available heating equipment, portable lanterns, or stoves that use gas or pressurized liquid fuel are allowed. More information is at [www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/alerts-notices/?cid=fseprd524246](http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/alerts-notices/?cid=fseprd524246).

A North Carolina Forest Service ban on all open burning in Clay, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties in effect. More information is at [ncforestservice.gov/news\\_pubs/newsdesk\\_2016.htm#1107161](http://ncforestservice.gov/news_pubs/newsdesk_2016.htm#1107161).

**Tellico Fire (Swain and Macon Counties):** The fire is holding on the south side, and as crews patrol it, they are identifying hazards along firelines and roads, making them known to other fire resources and cooperators, such as Duke Energy, so they can be mitigated. The southwest side—where the fire is backing downslope to Queens Creek near the community of Fairview—is the last remaining area of active fire on the Tellico Fire. Crews are mopping up the fireline elsewhere along Queen’s Creek and Winding Stairs Roads. On the west side, crews will monitor and mop up the fire along Highway 19/74

but limit their exposure as falling rocks and trees present a significant hazard. Firefighters on the north side will continue strengthening and mopping up fireline along Highway 19/74, Gassaway Road, Lickdog Road, and Long Branch Road. They will also patrol and mop up existing firelines. On the east side, crews will mop up and strengthen containment lines around the spot fire east of the Little Tennessee River.

**Acreage:** 13,676 (744-acre increase)      **Containment:** 33 percent      **Start Date:** November 3

**Boteler Fire (Clay County):** Today, crews continue to construct a contingency line on the northern end of Buck Creek Road. They will also conduct burnout operations to strengthen firelines in the area north of Jackie Cove Road. They will use firing operations as necessary to prevent the fire from escaping existing containment lines. They are holding, patrolling, monitoring, and maintaining existing containment lines. Firefighters continue assessing structure-protection needs throughout the fire area.

**Acreage:** 8,695 (515-acre increase)      **Containment:** 23 percent      **Start Date:** October 25

**Muskrat Valley Fire (Macon County):** With many residences close to this fire on its north side, a twenty-person crew and two engines remain assigned to it. Today they will construct fireline on the south side of Muskrat Creek along the last remaining open portion of the fire's northern perimeter. They will also maintain and blow leaves off existing containment lines as needed.

**Acreage:** 103 (13-acre increase)      **Containment:** 50 percent      **Start Date:** November 11

**Dick's Creek Fire (Jackson County):** With containment at 92 percent, this fire is nearing patrol-and-monitor status. Containment lines are holding, and firefighters are identifying and extinguishing the last remaining hot spots to an interior depth of 100 feet around the fire's perimeter. They are also cleaning leaves off the firelines daily to reduce the likelihood of reburn. As leaves continue to drop, reburn is happening, but it is well within the fire's interior. The resulting smoke is visible to nearby residents but not represent a threat to containment lines.

**Acreage:** 728 (no change)      **Containment:** 92 percent      **Start Date:** October 23

**Knob Fire (Macon County):** Three firefighters and their engine remain assigned to this fire. At 92-percent contained, it is also nearing patrol-and-monitor status. The crew is checking and cleaning leaves off containment lines as needed to reduce reburn potential. They are also monitoring Highway 64.

**Acreage:** 1,130 (no change)      **Containment:** 92 percent      **Start Date:** November 2

**Patrol-and-Monitor Status:**

Buck Creek Fire (8 ac.), Falls Fire (NA), Grape Cove Fire (35 ac.), Moses Creek Fire (30 ac.), Jones Gap Fire (115 ac.), Jarrett Knob Fire (NA), Wine Spring Fire (95 ac.), Mulberry Fire (NA), Moss Knob Fire (7 ac.), May Branch Fire (175 ac.), Boardtree Fire (0.5 ac.), Charley Creek Fire (3 ac.), Ridge Gap (2 ac.), Cliffside Fire (101 ac.), and Whitewater Fire (23 ac.)