



Boteler Fire and Nantahala Branch Fires Update Monday, November 14, 2016



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

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

Email: BotelerFire@gmail.com

Incident Resources:

17 crews, 6 helicopters, 1 fixed wing, 64 engines, 16 dozers, 4 water tenders, and 809 total personnel

Boteler Fire (Clay County): The fire continues to be active due to dry conditions and continually falling leaves. Light winds yesterday enabled crews on the east side to strengthen control lines in areas near Cold Branch Road. On the northeast side, handcrews and a dozer improved containment lines near the end of Buck Creek Road. Elsewhere, firefighters held and patrolled existing containment lines. Aircraft could not fly because of dense smoke.

Today, crews will continue to protect residences adjacent to actively burning areas. They will also hold and patrol existing containment lines near the end of Buck Creek Road. On the south side near US Highway 64, firefighters will mop up containment lines, extinguishing hot spots and smoldering stumps.

A blasting crew will begin removing large hazard trees along Chunky Gal Trail, Bruce Ridge, and Nelson Ridge Road. This technique is necessary to reduce tree-falling hazards to firefighters and, once the fire is out, to recreationists in these areas.

The blasting crew will be felling only mature eastern hemlocks that have been killed by the hemlock wooly adelgid, an invasive insect. Blasting is necessary because the hemlocks become weakened near the top and cannot be safely brought down by chainsaws or heavy equipment. The highly trained and qualified blasting team will detonate diseased hemlocks within 50 feet from forest roads, trails, and containment lines. No trees will be blasted near homes. This technique has been used safely in the Joyce Kilmer Wilderness and other areas in the Nantahala National Forest. For safety reasons, access to the blasting area will be severely restricted during blasting operations. A more detailed article can be found on Inciweb: inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/article/5075/34386/.

Acreage: 8,695 **Containment:** 37 percent **Start Date:** October 25

Tellico Fire (Swain and Macon Counties): The necessary dozer and hand line construction is complete on this fire. Fire is working its way downslope to the fireline in only two remaining places: Queens Creek on the southwest side and Johnson Cove on the north side. Yesterday, firefighters responded to and extinguished a few instances of burning hemlock snags and small spot fires near or over the fireline. They also conducted a firing operation on the south side to bring the fire to a dozer line near the junction of Partridge Creek Road and Shields Creek Road. Fire managers feel confident in the work the structure-protection group has completed around residences and other structures, and **residents are allowed to return** to their houses today.

Last night's infrared flight detected isolated areas of heat near the fireline but no additional growth. Today, the crews and engines assigned to this fire will focus on mopping up the containment line to further strengthen and secure it. They will be on the lookout for burning snags that could start spot fires near or over the fireline.

Acreage: 13,676 **Containment:** 39 percent **Start Date:** November 3

Muskrat Valley Fire (Macon County): Yesterday, on the south side of Muskrat Creek, firefighters completed direct handline construction on the last remaining open portion of the fire’s northern perimeter. With several residences just north of the fire along Muskrat Lane, two twenty-person crews and six firefighters with two engines are assigned to the fire today. They will improve, mop up, maintain, and blow leaves off containment lines as needed.

Acreage: 103 **Containment:** 75 percent **Start Date:** November 11

Dick’s Creek Fire (Jackson County): As leaves continue to drop, some reburn is occurring, but it is interior and not threatening containment lines. The resulting smoke may be visible to nearby residents. An infrared flight last night detected only one spot of heat in the center of the fire, a significant change from the flight two nights ago. Today, five firefighters with two engines will patrol, mop up and clean containment lines.

Acreage: 728 **Containment:** 94 percent **Start Date:** October 23

Knob Fire (Macon County): Three firefighters with an engine remain assigned to this fire. They are monitoring and cleaning leaves off containment lines as needed to reduce the likelihood of a reburn. They are also monitoring the fire along US Highway 64.

Acreage: 1,130 **Containment:** 94 percent **Start Date:** November 2

Weather and Fire Behavior: Today will be slightly warmer and drier than yesterday. The warming and drying trend will continue as the week progresses. The maximum temperature should reach the low 60s. The minimum relative humidity will be in the 40s but could drop to the mid-30-percent range on slopes with southern exposure. Light northwest winds —around 8 mph—will again be favorable for fire-suppression efforts.

As the morning fog and smoke dissipates, the sun will heat and dry the vegetation and ground, resulting in a potential increase in fire behavior. As leaves continue to drop, reburn is possible because heat is retained in smoldering stumps and ground vegetation. Standing dead hemlock trees can also hold heat, break off, and ignite freshly fallen leaves, so crews will diligently monitor snags and keep the fire lines clean by using rakes and leaf blowers.

Road and Trail Closures:

US Highway 19/74:

- 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 in Swain and Macon Counties. 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 the community of Wesser on the north.

Swain County **Evacuations Lifted**

- Only residents are allowed on the following roads: Big Dog, Gassaway, Licklog, Long Branch, Luther Bingham, Mason, Morgan, Northern Partridge, Silver Mine, East Silver Ridge, Wesser Creek, Wilkes.

Macon County **Evacuations Lifted**

- Only residents are allowed on Deweese and Partridge Creek Roads.

Nantahala National Forest

- The following Forest Roads (FR) are closed: 6226 (Vineyard), 351 (Nelson Ridge), 350 (Perry Gap), and 348 (Old 64).
- The following trails are closed: Wesser Creek, Chunky Gal from Glade Gap to Tusquitee Gap, Whitewater Falls, Foothills from NC Hwy 281 to the Bad Creek access (detour maps are posted at trail junctions), and the Appalachian Trail from the Nantahala River at Wesser south to Rock Gap Trailhead on FR 67.

Burning Restrictions:

A total fire ban is in effect for all lands in the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. 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-notice/?cid=fseprd524246.

A North Carolina Forest Service ban on all open burning in Clay, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties is in effect. More information is at ncforestservice.gov/news_pubs/newsdesk_2016.htm#1107161.

Fires in Patrol 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.)

Notice:

The National Forests of North Carolina alerted us today that they expect these are human-caused fires, and they are investigating these fires for suspicion of arson. All fires are being investigated. Call the National Forests of North Carolina at 828-257-4200 if you have information about people setting fires or bragging about setting fires. If you see someone starting a fire, call 911.