



**U.S. Forest Service
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests
Conasauga District**

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Fire Update

For Immediate Release

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ROUGH RIDGE FIRE UPDATE November 7, 2016, 10:00 A.M.

Rough Ridge Fire Status

Acres Burned: 4,319
Cause: Lightning
Date Started: October 16, 2016
Percent Contained: 10%
Approximate resources: 265

Location: Cohutta Wilderness Area on the Chattahoochee National Forest

Current fire situation: Yesterday, the fire crossed the Rough Creek drainage and continued burning upslope towards the East Cowpen Trail. The fire has begun backing downslope and making short runs. The fire continues to grow on the northern perimeter as it backs down into the Jacks River drainage. Fire managers have been conducting daily Infrared flights to monitor the fire perimeter and track acreage.

Because of the extreme drought conditions and the location of this fire within the Cohutta Wilderness, one of the management objectives is to allow the fire to accomplish its natural ecological role.

Planned Actions: Hot and dry weather will increase fire behavior today, especially on western exposed slopes and the north and west perimeters. Fire crews will continue to patrol Jacks River north from Jones Settlement. Crews near Jones Settlement will give special attention to the continual leaf drop and watch for reburn potential and lingering creeping fire. Crews will continue to mop up the fireline from Jones Settlement to Bees Knob and construct fireline along East Cowpen Trail to the North Buckeye Mountain. Prep work to establish a future line in the Conasauga River drainage from Forest Service (FS) Road 64 to Conasauga Creek will continue. Lines throughout the fire perimeter will need to be continually reestablished as the leaf fall continues.

Fire Weather: The high pressure system that has been over the fire area in recent days will lift today, causing slightly higher temperatures and lower humidity. Winds will be out of the southeast and slightly stronger than in previous days.

Closures: Pursuant to Title 36 CFR, Section 261.50(a) and (b), the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest has issued a Forest Closure for the entire Cohutta Wilderness. All visitors and Forest users are asked to abide

by all closure signs posted at entry points, roads and trails. This closure has been put in place due to the increase in fire spread through the Cohutta Wilderness Area and to allow for public and firefighter safety.

In addition, an area on the southeastern edge of the wilderness is closed. This area is bordered on the south and east by FS Road 64, north from Jacks River Fields and east to Watson Gap. This area encompasses the Jacks River Fields Campground, the South Fork Trail, the two to three mile section of the Benton MacKay Trail that overlaps, and the last two miles of the Pinhotti Trail located north of FS Road 64. The length of FS Road 64 between Watson Gap to Potatopatch Mountain along the southern edge of the Cohutta Wilderness is closed. This includes the section of FS Road 64 that was previously closed due to a landslide last winter. Additionally, all roads west of Watson Gap are closed to all traffic except residents; this includes FS Road 126.

Effective Tuesday a complete burn ban will be implemented for the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests This restriction prohibits all open flames such as campfires and charcoal grills.

Due to high fire danger caused by extreme drought conditions across much of Georgia, Fannin and Gilmer Counties have issued a ban on all outdoor burning until further notice due to the extremely dry conditions and high fire danger. No open burning of any type is being permitted including campfires and fire pits. For more information on the burn ban for Fannin County, contact the Fannin County Emergency Management Agency at 706-632-1958. For more information on the burn ban for Gilmer County, contact the Gilmer County Department of Public Safety at 706-635-1333.

Air quality: With winds expected out of the southeast today, communities west and northwest of the fire area are likely to experience smoky conditions. However, with other fires in northern Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and North Carolina, all areas have the possibility of impaired air quality.

Air quality conditions may change quickly, based on weather, wind direction, and fire activity. Sensitive groups including individuals with asthma, lung or heart disease, children, older adults and pregnant women should take precautions to avoid exposure to smoke. If you feel as though you are having health effects from smoke, see your doctor or health professional as needed. Use caution when driving in or around smoky areas.

Fire Information: For more information about the Rough Ridge Fire, contact: 470-208-2839. Information is also available online on the Forest website, social media pages and on inciweb at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/5078/#>.

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