



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

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# Fire Update

**For Immediate Release**

**Contact: (470) 208-2839**

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## **ROUGH RIDGE FIRE UPDATE November 8, 2016, 10 a.m.**

### **Rough Ridge Fire Status**

Acres Burned: 5,057  
Cause: Lightning  
Date Started: October 16, 2016  
Percent Contained: 10%  
Approximate resources: 272

**Location:** Cohutta Wilderness Area on the Chattahoochee National Forest

**Current Fire Situation:** Yesterday the fire continued its upslope run out of the Rough Creek drainage and crossed East Cowpen Trail. The fire continues backing downslope towards the west. The fire also continues to grow on the northern perimeter as it backs down into the Jacks River drainage. Areas with high shade are experiencing smoldering and creeping fire behavior. As leaf fall continues for the next couple of weeks, reburn potential remains high.

Due to the extreme drought conditions and concerns about firefighter safety, one of the management objectives is to allow the fire to accomplish its natural ecological role in the Cohutta Wilderness.

**Planned Actions:** The hotter and drier weather that started yesterday will continue; however increased cloud cover will keep most smoke contained at lower elevations and potentially moderate fire behavior. The most active fire behavior will continue to be on the western and northern perimeters. Crews will continue to mop-up fireline from Jones Settlement to Bee Knob. Crews will also continue to prepare the fireline in the Conasauga River drainage along Forest Service (FS) Road 64 to Conasauga Creek. Aerial resources will monitor the northern perimeter and provide support as determined by fire managers.

**Fire Weather:** Temperature and humidity levels will remain similar to Monday's weather. Winds will be weak and mostly terrain driven. As a cold front and upper level disturbance move across the area tonight, clouds will increase and a few sprinkles may fall on the fire. However, chances for measurable rainfall are very low.

**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.

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.

There is also a new closure outside the northwestern edge of the Cohutta Wilderness. This area extends from FS Road 16 south to the Conasauga River (FS Rd 16 is open, but the land east of it is not); then following the forest boundary down until it intersects with the Conasauga River again; then following the river down until it intersects with the wilderness boundary. Everything within that box is now closed, including FS Road 51. Cottonwood Patch Campground, which sits off FS Road 16 by the Conasauga River is still open.

**Due to extreme fire danger and the current drought situation, Forest managers have made an important decision on behalf of public safety. Effective today, there will be a total fire ban on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.** This means building, maintaining, attending, or using a fire or campfire (including charcoal based fire whether contained in a grill or not) are prohibited. Commercially available fuel stoves (camp stoves) are excluded from this restriction.

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:** Smoke will stay primarily in the lower elevations today. 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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