



Clearwater-Municipal Complex Update

Update: 19

Friday, September 4, 2015

9:00 AM

Incident size: 68,127 acres

Current Situation: 80% contained

Number of personnel: 279

Managers of the Clearwater-Municipal Complex are exploring their options for controlling the westward movement of three fires in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest that are burning in steep, rugged terrain where traditional fireline construction can't be done.

Old roads and ridge-top trails might be able to serve as natural barriers on the western flanks of the Hemlock Ridge, Snowy Summit and Pete Forks fires, according to Glen Stratton, deputy chief of the Operations Section. These fires are part of the Motorway North Complex.

“The goal is to protect timber assets on the forest while keeping a light hand on the land,” Stratton said. Numerous other sites of cultural and historical significance — including the Nee-Me-Poo Trail, or Nez Perce National Historic Trail — are not being disturbed.

Until now, the Southern Area Blue Team has used aerial resources to cool the hottest parts of these fires, which are about five miles from the town of Pierce. But with fire-season-ending weather at least a month away, operations leaders are weighing the costs and risks to determine what actions are feasible for controlling the fire's spread.

On the Clearwater Complex, crews have attained the 200-foot standard for mopping up mechanical and hand-built fireline.

Needle cast is significant in many parts of the complex, according to incident fire behavior analyst Ben Rowland. This is a concern because needles that fall into control lines and catch fire — because of their proximity to a smoldering stump hole, for example — could cross those lines and ignite unburned fuels outside the fireline.

“That's why we mop up the outer edge and work toward the interior, because if it does catch fire, you've got time to catch it,” Rowland said.

For information about trail, road and campground closures on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest, visit <http://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/nezperceclearwater/alerts-notice>. Details about how this affects hunting and fishing access can be found at the Idaho Fish and Game site: <https://fishandgame.idaho.gov/content/fire>.

The Southern Area Blue Team continues to manage the complex, and fire updates are issued under the team's name. Visit www.facebook.com/centralidahofires, or search for the fire by name at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov>.

For more information contact the Public Information Office
Clearwater-Municipal Complex
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