



## Boteler Fire and Nantahala Branch Fires Update Friday, November 11, 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

Yesterday, most of the fires grew very little during the day. However, the Boteler, Tellico, and Ferebee Fires did have significant growth, producing significant smoke. Smoke from other fires to the northwest also blanketed the area. Although the widespread smoke was very unpleasant for local residents and visitors, it did provide firefighters an opportunity to make significant progress on the fires that pose the greatest threat to homes and other structures. The smoke reduced fire behavior and intensity, allowing crews to construct more fireline, complete defensive burning operations around many structures, and mop up along existing containment lines.

Last night, the relative humidity dropped to historic lows, allowing the fires to remain active through the night. On the west side of the Tellico Fire, the fire made a run up Paint Mountain and down into the East Silver Mine and Grant neighborhoods. However, crews working the night shift successfully protected structures, and no residences were burned.

Resources assigned to these fires include 7 crews, 6 helicopters, 46 engines, 9 dozers, and 3 water tenders. If the smoke clears adequately, aircraft are available and ready to assist firefighters on the ground with water and retardant drops as needed to suppress the fires and protect structures. See the individual fire narratives below for detailed information on today's planned firefighting activities.

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

A local red flag warning is in effect today for gusty winds and very dry air. Northwest winds will be 7–15 mph, with gusts up to 25 mph possible this afternoon. The minimum relative humidity could be as low as 20 percent on the ridgetops. The temperature will be in the low 60s today.

As the relative humidity decreases and wind speeds increase today, the fires could become more active. Most of the vegetation that is burning consists of leaves, grass, and dead trees. Hardwood leaves that have recently fallen are loosely compacted and burn readily. Mountain laurel and rhododendron are abundant in some areas, are very dry, and are also burning easily. Where this brush is present, it acts as a ladder, allowing the fire to get from leaves on the ground into the shrub crowns and spread quickly, especially up slopes.

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

Many Facebook posts have included incorrect information on road closures. Please follow the fire's Facebook page for the most up-to-date and accurate information [facebook.com/BotelerFire](https://www.facebook.com/BotelerFire)

#### Swain County

- Residents along the following closed roads are under a mandatory evacuation order: Big Dog Road, Gassaway Road, Licklog Road, Long Brance Road, Luther Bingham, Mason Road, MorganRoad, 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: De Wesse Road and Partridge Creek Road. Tellico Road is also closed
- Evacuation shelter: Macon County EMS Base, 1096 Junaluska Road, Topton, NC.

## Clay County

- Residents along the following roads are under a mandatory evacuation order: Ash Loop Road, Nelson Ridge Road
- Roads are closed and residents are under a mandatory evacuation order in the following area: Cold Branch Road at its junction Nelson Ridge Road south to Highway 64 and then east to Pounding Mill Road. Highway 64 itself remains open.
- Evacuation shelter: Clay County Senior Center, 196 Ritter Road, Hayesville, NC

## Safety:

Motorists should use caution when driving roads and highways in the fire area. Trees and rocks falling onto Highway 19 in the Nantahala Gorge, low visibility due to smoke, and the presence of firefighters and equipment are driving hazards travelers may encounter.

All residents should take measures to protect their homes from wildfire, such as moving wood or debris piles away from your home or propane tanks. Sweep, rake, or blow dead leaves off roofs, gutters, and decks and away from structures. North Carolina Firewise website: [www.ncfirewise.org](http://www.ncfirewise.org).

## Burning Restrictions:

On November 10, the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests implemented a **total fire ban**. Building, maintaining, and attending or using a fire or campfire (including charcoal-based fires in or out of grills) is **not allowed anywhere** on the National Forests. The updated restrictions expands those issued on October 28 to include restrictions in fee-area campgrounds.

Commercially available portable lanterns, stoves, or heating equipment that use gas or pressurized liquid fuel are allowed. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/alerts-notice/?cid=fseprd524246>

On November 7, the North Carolina Forest Service enacted a burning ban for twenty-five mountain counties, including Clay, Jackson, Macon, and Swain. The ban prohibits all open burning, regardless of whether a permit was issued. [http://ncforestservice.gov/news\\_pubs/newsdesk\\_2016.htm#1107161](http://ncforestservice.gov/news_pubs/newsdesk_2016.htm#1107161)

**Tellico Fire and Ferebee Fire (Swain and Macon Counties):** Tellico was very active last night, advancing north up and over Paint Mountain. It is naturally wanting to merge with Ferebee, so fire managers are doing everything they can to make that happen on their terms. Structure-protection crews are working in the Queens Lake, Partridge Creek, Otter Creek, East Silver Mine, and other communities between Tellico and Ferebee as other firefighters conduct strategic burning operations to intentionally bring the two fires together on the north side along Wesser Creek and Gassaway Roads and on the south side along Winding Stairs Road. Firefighters and equipment from other fires that have been put into patrol status will now be working on these fires.

The Tellico Fire is now visible on the east side from Needmore Road and the Little Tennessee River. Crews and resources are providing structure protection along Tellico Road as the fire progresses south and east.

<b>Tellico:</b>	<b>Acreage:</b> 6,839	<b>Containment:</b> 18 percent	<b>Start Date:</b> October 23
<b>Ferebee:</b>	<b>Acreage:</b> 2,061	<b>Containment:</b> 28 percent	<b>Start Date:</b> November 5

**Boteler Fire (Clay County):** Yesterday, a hotshot crew constructed fireline in rugged terrain near Piney Creek. Air tankers and helicopters dropped water and fire retardant to create a defensive barrier on Piney Top above High Meadow. Crews completed fireline construction along Chunky Gall Trail to Tate Gap. Last night, three new fire starts were detected near Thunderstruck Brook, Tate Brook, and the north end of Fishprong Brook. Today, firefighters will improve, secure, and mop up firelines near structures along Mill Creek Road and Pounding Mills Road. They will construct dozer line and hand line from High Meadow to Pounding Mills Road. Firefighters will focus on structure protection in High Meadow south along Cold Branch road to Highway 64. They will also maintain and patrol existing lines.

**Acreage:** 4,767      **Containment:** 12 percent      **Start Date:** October 25

**Dick's Creek Fire (Jackson County):** This fire is minimally active, creeping and smoldering and reburning as more leaves fall within the perimeter. Crews are protecting structures, and patrolling, mopping up, and blowing containment lines. Fire managers plan to conduct an infrared flight over this fire tonight to detect remaining areas of heat, which firefighters on the ground will locate and extinguish within 100 feet of the containment line.

**Acreage:** 728      **Containment:** 85 percent      **Start Date:** October 23

**Knob Fire (Macon County):** Crews will not conduct burning operations today. They are mopping up and blowing leaves off firelines and monitoring Highway 64 for smoke and traffic. This fire continues to produce smoke as leaves continue to fall and ignite in the fire's interior. The containment lines are holding and being monitored.

**Acreage:** 1,130      **Containment:** 80 percent      **Start Date:** November 2

**Whitewater Fire (Jackson County):** An engine crew is improving fireline and mopping up and patrolling existing containment lines.

**Acreage:** 23      **Containment:** 0 percent      **Start Date:** unknown

**Buck Creek Fire, Falls Fire, Grape Cove Fire, Moses Creek Fire, Jones Gap Fire, Jarrett Knob Fire, Wine Spring Fire, Mulberry Fire, Moss Knob Fire, May Fire, and Cliffside Fire:** These fires are not actively growing; however, as more leaves drop from trees in the fires' interior, they have the potential to burn, producing smoke that could be visible to nearby residents. Firefighters are monitoring and patrolling these fires daily to ensure the containment lines are holding.

**Maple Springs Fire, Avey Branch Fire, and Old Roughy Fire (Graham County):** These fires, to the northwest, are being managed by the Rocky Mountain Blue Incident Management Team. Call 828-407-0653 or email [maplespringsfire@gmail.com](mailto:maplespringsfire@gmail.com) for information.