



Boteler Fire and Nantahala Branch Fires Update Saturday, November 12, 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

Community Meeting:

Representatives from the Southern Area Incident Management Team and the US Forest Service Nantahala Ranger District will provide an update on the current fire situation and will be available to answer questions at a community meeting tomorrow at 2 p.m. at Southwestern Community College in Bryson City (60 Almond School Road).

Incident Resources:

23 crews, 6 helicopters, 72 engines, 14 dozers, 3 water tenders, and 1,049 total personnel

Incident Summary:

Yesterday, fire behavior was moderate until late in the afternoon when two significant fire-related events occurred. Firstly, at approximately 1 p.m., a twenty-person crew, two engines, and a dozer responded to a new fire start—the Muskrat Valley Fire—on the north side of Highway 64 approximately 4 miles west of Franklin. As of 6 p.m. the fire was approximately 20 acres. Night-shift crews conducted a firing operation along the highway and directly suppressed the fire elsewhere. It is approximately 100 acres. Secondly, at approximately 5 p.m. the Tellico Fire spotted over the eastern fireline and the Little Tennessee River. Firefighters responded quickly and worked through the night, constructing line around it and holding it at 90 acres.

Containment lines on the south and north sides of the Tellico Fire are established and holding, and the fire's spread has been stopped. Between the Tellico and Ferebee fires, structure-protection crews have successfully protected more than 100 residences directly in the fire's path over the past few days as they have facilitated the merging of the two fires. Starting tomorrow, they will be one fire and called the Tellico Fire. The western side of the Ferebee Fire is holding and secure along Highway 19. On the north side, the fire is now near the Nantahala Outdoor Center where firefighters have strengthened and improved the containment line by conducting a strategic firing operation.

On the north side of the Boteler Fire, crews completed fireline construction from Tate Gap east toward Joel Cove. They also constructed fireline directly at the fire's edge and from strategic areas away from the fire on the east side of Cold Branch Road subdivision. Firefighters spent a second day suppressing three fire starts that were detected Thursday night near Thunderstruck Brook, Tate Brook, and Fishprong Brook. Aircraft supported firefighting efforts with retardant and water drops. A transport truck hauling a dozer ran off the road and needed to be pulled out with a wrecker; no one was injured.

See the individual fire narratives below for detailed information on today's planned firefighting activities.

Weather and Fire Behavior: A high pressure system will result in stable weather for a couple days. Today will be mostly sunny, but light east winds (5–10 mph) will allow smoky conditions to persist. The maximum temperature will be near 60 degrees with a minimum relative humidity in the mid-20- to mid-30-percent range. Isolated showers are possible Sunday night.

Light winds, cooler temperatures, and higher relative humidity will moderate fire behavior today. If winds remain light, lingering smoke will shade the vegetation, reducing fire activity further and presenting firefighters with an opportunity to make significant fire-suppression progress. Fire activity will increase if the smoke dissipates and the sun heats and dries the vegetation. As more leaves drop, the possibility of reburn remains, making patrolling and monitoring a critical firefighting responsibility.

Road Closures, Evacuations, and Shelters:

Please follow our Facebook and Inciweb websites (links above) for the most up-to-date and accurate information. Many unofficial Facebook posts are distributing inaccurate information on road closures.

Swain County

- Residents along the following closed roads are under a mandatory evacuation order: Big Dog Road, Gassaway Road, Licklog Road, Long Branch Road, Luther Bingham, Mason Road, Morgan Road, 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: Dewese 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

Nantahala National Forest

- Wesser Creek Trail is closed.
- Chunky Gal Trail is closed.
- Whitewater Falls Trail and portions of Foothills Trail are closed.
- Appalachian Trail from the Nantahala River at Wesser south to Rock Gap Trailhead on Forest Road 67 is closed.
- Standing Indian Campground is open.

Safety:

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

Residents should take measures to protect their homes from wildfire, such as moving wood or debris piles away from structures or propane tanks and sweeping, raking, or blowing dead leaves off roofs, gutters, and decks and away from structures. North Carolina Firewise website: ncfirewise.org.

Burning Restrictions:

A total fire ban is in effect for all lands in the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. No one is allowed to build, maintain, use, or tend to a fire or campfire, including charcoal-based fires in or out of grills. Commercially available heating equipment, portable lanterns, or stoves that use gas or pressurized liquid fuel are allowed. www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/alerts-notice/?cid=fseprd524246

The NC Forest Service issued a ban on all open burning in twenty-five mountain counties, including Clay, Jackson, Macon, and Swain. ncforestservice.gov/news_pubs/newsdesk_2016.htm#1107161

Tellico Fire and Ferebee Fire (Swain and Macon Counties): To reduce the impact on Highway 19 traffic, crews on the west side of the Ferebee Fire will monitor the fire and the hazards of falling rocks and trees. On the north side, firefighters will construct line to the highway to keep the fire south of the highway, and they will conduct strategic firing operations around the Nantahala Outdoor Center as necessary if weather conditions allow.

The greatest potential for growth on the Tellico Fire remains on the western and eastern sides where the fire is most active. Crews are constructing fireline on the southwest side to advance containment westward, protecting the Queens Creek, Partridge Creek, Otter Creek, and East Silver Mine. Where the fire is merging with the Ferebee Fire on the northwest side, structure-protection crews continue firing operations around residences and outbuildings along Wesser Creek and Gassaway Roads

Firefighters will mop up newly constructed fireline and strengthen and improve existing line to increase containment on the south and east sides. They will also provide structure protection along Tellico, Cabe, Cove, Needmore, Loudermilk Creek, Kudzu Cor, and Big Dog Roads.

Tellico: Acreage: 9,982 (3,143-acre increase) **Containment:** 23 percent **Start Date:** October 23
Ferebee: Acreage: 2,950 (889-acre increase) **Containment:** 34 percent **Start Date:** November 5

Boteler Fire (Clay County): Structural protection will be a priority around High Meadow, south along Cold Branch Road to Highway 64, and east to Pounding Mill Road. Crews will assess structural protection needs at the end of Buck Creek Road. Along Mill Creek Road and Pounding Mill Road, firefighters will improve, secure, and mop up firelines near structures. They will also construct and strengthen fireline north of Forest Road 350 and west of Forest Road 350A. Existing firelines will be maintained and patrolled.

Acreage: 8,180 (3,413-acre increase) **Containment:** 12 percent **Start Date:** October 25

Dick’s Creek Fire (Jackson County): Last night’s infrared flight detected several areas of heat, but all are well inside the perimeter. The interior of this fire is minimally active, creeping and smoldering and reburning as more leaves fall within the perimeter. A twenty-person crew and two engines are protecting structures and holding the containment lines by patrolling, mopping up, and blowing leaves as needed.

Acreage: 728 (no change) **Containment:** 90 percent **Start Date:** October 23

Knob Fire (Macon County): Three firefighters with their engine are holding the containment lines by patrolling, mopping up, and blowing leaves as needed. They are also monitoring the fire along Highway 64.

Acreage: 1,130 (no change) **Containment:** 90 percent **Start Date:** November 2

Muskrat Valley Fire (Macon County): One twenty-person crew and two engines are assigned to this new fire today. They will construct direct fireline using hand tools and dozers to increase containment. They will also strengthen and secure the existing fireline by mopping up hotspots and blowing leaves off the line as necessary.

Acreage: 90 (initial estimate)

Containment: 50 percent

Start Date: November 11

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.): These fires are not actively growing; however, as more leaves drop from trees in the fires' interior, they have the potential to reburn, 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 for information.