



Boteler, Maple Springs, and Nantahala Branch Fires Update **Sunday, November 27, 2016**

Phone: 828-349-5827, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Websites: inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/34/#
[facebook.com/BotelerFire](https://www.facebook.com/BotelerFire)
[facebook.com/MapleSpringsFire](https://www.facebook.com/MapleSpringsFire)

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Incident Resources

8 crews, 32 engines, 5 helicopters, 2 tankers, 11 dozers, 3 water tender, 1 skidgine, 435 total personnel, 34,739 total acres

Camp Branch Fire (Macon County)

Yesterday, crews initiated a large firing operation, more than 800 acres, to prevent the fire from growing beyond containment lines east and southwest of Wayah Bald. On the southwest side, they secured the three cabins along Forest Road 69 between Wine Springs Bald and Wayah Bald and fired out along FR 69 to its intersection with Wayah Raod (SR 1310). The spot fire north of the Right Prong of Ray Branch Creek advanced upslope slightly toward the Appalachian Trail south of Licklog Gap. On the east side, crews fired on the top of Trimont Ridge from Wayah Bald east to Locust Tree Gap and the fire burned downslope into the Camp Branch drainage. They also fired along a ridge running north from Trimont Ridge to FR 713 at Bearpen Gap.

Today, crews will monitor yesterday's firing operation on the west side along FR 68 and in Crawford Cove, securing the structures in Bear Cove as the fire backs downslope. They will initiate a new firing operation north of Wayah Bald along the Appalachian Trail east of Little Laurel Creek to stop the westward, upslope advance of the spot fire. Crews will strengthen and secure firelines on the east side along Locust Tree Branch Road and monitor yesterday's firing operation in the Trimont Ridge area on the northeast side of the fire.

Size: 1,483 acres

Containment: 35 percent

Start Date: November 22

Boteler Fire (Clay County)

Yesterday, firefighters completed approximately 25 percent of fire-suppression repairs. Completed areas include all of Nelson Ridge, the interior dozer line near High Meadows, and a stretch of fireline running south from High Meadows to Cold Branch Drive. All handline repair has been completed on the west, northwest, and northeast sides of the fire. Today, heavy-equipment suppression repair efforts are underway in those same areas. Also today, firefighters will continue mopping up and patrolling containment lines, focusing on firelines running from Tate Gap east to Thunderstruck Brook, southeast to Buck Creek, and then west to Perry Gap. They will also complete as much fire-suppression repairs as possible prior to tomorrow's forecasted rains.

Size: 9,036 acres

Containment: 85 percent

Start Date: October 25

Maple Springs and Old Roughy Fires (Graham County)

Yesterday's infrared flight identified six areas of heat within the Maple Springs Fire perimeter and three within the Old Roughy Fire. They are far from containment lines, and although fire managers are confident that these isolated heat sources will not compromise those lines, firefighters will be patrolling, monitoring, and securing the fire's perimeter. Elsewhere, having completed approximately 75 percent of suppression repairs, crews are striving to finish the remaining 25 percent prior to expected rains late tomorrow and Tuesday. For example, they are constructing water bars and berms to minimize the effects of water runoff and erosion on open firelines. They will not cover the firelines with vegetation as long as the possibility of reburning remains. All suppression repair has been completed on the Old Roughy Fire.

Where the fire burned within the steep, rugged, inaccessible Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness Area, scooper planes dropped water on the fire's edge, creating a wet line. Along with natural barriers, the wet line has been a substitute for hand- or dozer-constructed fireline. Because firefighters are unable to patrol the wet line on foot, fire managers are being conservative when considering this area contained even though the fire is not advancing

and growing. Therefore, the fire's overall containment remains less than 80 percent. As aerial observers monitor the wet line daily and confirm that the line is holding, containment will gradually increase.

Size: 7,788 acres

Containment: 78 percent

Start Date: November 4

Initial-Attack Group

No new fire starts were detected yesterday on the three Nantahala National Forest districts that the Blue Team has initial-attack responsibility for—Cheoah, Tusquitee, and Nantahala. Crews are positioned to respond to any new fires and are regularly monitoring numerous fires in patrol status (see list below).

Suppression-Repair Group

Recent infrared flights have not detected any lingering heat within the perimeters of the following fires: Whitewater (23 ac.), Cliffside (110 ac.), Grape Cove (11 ac.), Wine Spring (93 ac.), Knob (1,130 ac.), Moss Knob (7 ac.), Ridge Gap (1 ac.), Mulberry (1 ac.), Boardtree (0.5 ac.), and Muskrat (104 ac.). As a result, suppression-repair crews can now start restoring roads, firelines, and other areas affected by fire-suppression activities to prefire conditions. In some cases, this involves returning vegetation and organic matter to the firelines, which they would not want to do as long as the potential for interior reburns remains.

Patrol Group

As long as the potential for interior reburns remains, firefighters will patrol the following fires regularly and keep the containment lines open and cleared of newly fallen leaves: Buck Creek (6 ac.), Falls (NA), Moses Creek (30 ac.), Jones Gap (8 ac.), Jarrett Knob (NA), May Branch (175 ac.), Charley Creek (6 ac.), Nick (0.2 ac.), Howard Gap (0.2 ac.), Bullpen (6 ac.), Jones Creek (1.3 ac.), Cathey Gap (123 ac.), Dick's Creek (729 ac.), and Tellico (13,874 ac.).

Weather and Fire Behavior

Today's weather will be very similar to yesterday's. Skies will be clear after this morning's fog dissipates. Temperatures will be in the 50s and low 60s. West winds will be light, ranging from 5 to 10 mph, switching to the southwest tonight. The minimum relative humidity will be in the mid-30-percent range. Conditions will change significantly tomorrow: The incident meteorologist is predicting winds up to 25 mph and a 60 percent chance of the fire area receiving wetting rain (1/10 inch or more). More than an inch of rain is likely on Tuesday.

Because critical fire-weather conditions are very unlikely and rain is not expected for another day, firefighters have a window of opportunity today to make significant progress with their firing operations. When they use firing as a suppression tactic, the desired outcome is a large, clean swath where the vegetative debris on the ground is sufficiently consumed and is a buffer between the fire and unburned vegetation. It might seem contradictory, but a more-complete burn is safer, and ultimately more efficient than a sparse "dirty" burn where the leaves and woody debris are blackened but not adequately consumed. In such cases, the main fire could more easily cross that buffer and continue into the unburned vegetation that the firing operation was intended to protect. To have a successful firing operation that produces a clean burn, firefighters need just-right weather conditions, and today presents them with their best opportunity this week.

Closures

Macon County

- A segment of Wayah Road (SR 1310) near the Camp Branch Fire is closed to through traffic; residents who live in the closed section are allowed access to their property. Westbound traffic is stopped at Enloe Farms. Eastbound traffic is being stopped at the Wayah Bald Road junction. Northbound traffic on Crawford Road is being turned around at the junction with Wayah Rd (SR 1310).

Nantahala National Forest

- Forest Road 711 is closed from Wayah Road (SR 1310) to Cold Springs Road (SR 1397). The Dirty John Shooting Range is not accessible.
- The Bartram Trail is closed from Harrison Gap at FR 713 (Shingletree Road) west to Nantahala Lake and from the trailhead at SR 106 to SR 1643 (Hickory Knoll Road). The Foothills Trail from SR 281 to the Bad Creek access, the Wesser Creek Trail, and the Whitewater Falls Trail are also closed.

- An area closure order (No. 08-11-02-17-01) for the **Cheoah Ranger District** is in effect for lands, trails, and roads in the area surrounding the Maple Springs Fire including the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness Area. To view a map and complete list of closed roads and trails, go to bit.ly/2fDZuqt.
- An area closure order (No. 08-11-09-17-02) for the **Tusquitee Ranger District** is in effect for lands, trails, and roads in the area surrounding the Boteler Fire. To view a map and complete list of closed roads and trails, go to bit.ly/2fArtYf.
- An area closure order (No. 08-11-00-17-03) for the **Tusquitee and Nantahala Ranger Districts** is in effect for lands, trails, and roads southeast of the Boteler Fire. The closed area extends south from Highway 64 to the Georgia border and includes the Southern Nantahala Wilderness. The Appalachian Trail is closed from the Nantahala Outdoor Center south to the Georgia border. To view a map and complete list of closed roads and trails, go to bit.ly/2g1iPm1.

Burning Restrictions

A total fire ban is in effect for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests (bit.ly/2fikSmG) and for forty-seven western North Carolina counties (bit.ly/2gIBVyt).

Joint Information Center (JIC)

A JIC in Asheville is distributing information about all western North Carolina wildfires. Email ncjicinformation@gmail.com, call 828-575-2840 (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.), or go to <http://ncjic.blogspot.com>.

Nearby Fires

The Rock Mountain Fire—which originated in Georgia and is now south of Franklin, North Carolina, and west of US Highway 23—is being managed by Pacific Northwest 3, a type 1 incident management team. Fire information can be obtained at 470-208-2866 and inciweb.nwccg.gov/incident/5100/.

Arson Reporting

North Carolina is offering a reward up to \$10,000 to be issued to anyone who provides information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for setting wildfires in western North Carolina. Anyone having information concerning these wildfires should contact Macon County Crimestoppers at 828-349-2600 or Jackson County Crimestoppers at 828-631-1125.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is also seeking information regarding arson fires on Indian Lands of North Carolina through the WeTip Program. Up to \$10,000 is being offered through this anonymous program. WeTip can be contacted through its website wetip.com or by calling its hotline 800-47-ARSON (800-472-7766).