



Pacific Northwest Region
Malheur National Forest
541-575-3000
www.fs.usda.gov/malheur

FIRE UPDATE

September 17, 2014

Bald Sisters Fire Grows Slightly, South Fork Complex Contained

JOHN DAY, OR – Fire activity picked up yesterday on the **Bald Sisters Fire** with continuing warm temperatures and low relative humidity levels, along with some light and gusty winds. The fire has now increased to 1,984 acres by early this morning, as determined by infrared imaging.

Burning in downed timber mixed with standing beetle-killed pine, the fire presented growth just over a third of a mile from the east contingency point, with the potential of spotting across that east line. As expected to happen with the current and foreseen weather conditions, activity increased prompting a moderate increase in resources to hold the line and defend against any spotting near Deardorff Mountain. Crews were mobilized to monitor and hold throughout the area. The fire is still holding at Wildcat and Reynolds Creek.

Despite the increase in activity, the fire remained within the established containment lines. Crews will continue to improve those lines in preparation for operations should the fire threaten those areas.

To protect key values that could become threatened by the Bald Sisters Fire, the local Incident Management Team has contingency plans in place. These plans include potential firing operations to eliminate fuel in the path of the fire, should flames approach any of four pre-determined points:

- Boundary with the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.
- Elkhorn Communication Site and power lines.
- Reynolds Creek
- North Reynolds Creek

A defensible containment line around the fire area was built by fire crews last month to provide a safe point of engagement, should the fire behavior escalate. Firefighters also cleared several “safety zones,” which remain in place to ensure their survival should they be overrun by flames.

Due to increased fire activity, Forest Officials have expanded the Bald Sisters Area Closure for public safety. This updated closure will affect the area around Baldy Mountain in the Inventoried Roadless Area, specifically:

- Starting at the Malheur National Forest (MNF) boundary and Forest Road (FR) 2635 in Sec. 30, T 13S, R 35E to the intersection with Forest Service Road (FSR) 101 in Sec. 16, T 13S, R 35 ½ E.
- East to intersection with FSR 2652 in Sec. 9, T 13S, R 35 ½E.



for the greatest good

NEWS RELEASE

(continued)

- South to FSR 600 in Sec. 9, T14S R35 ½ E;
- Southwesterly to FSR 268 in Sec. 16, T14S, R 35 ½ E
- Southwesterly to FSR 13 in Sec. 17, T 14S, R 35 ½ E.
- North and northwesterly on FSR 13 to the MNF boundary in Sec. 31, T 13S, and R 35E.
- North along MNF boundary to starting point at FSR 2635.
- Perimeter roads open for through traffic.

The **South Fork Complex** was deemed 100% contained as of Sunday, September 14. Crews will continue with mop up and rehabilitation. A Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) team has been actively working on the South Fork Complex to assess fire impacts to natural and cultural resources; they are also evaluating options for reducing threats to public safety posed by hazard trees, especially along Forest Road 24, which remains closed.

Area Closures remain in effect for not only the Bald Sisters Fire, but also the South Fork Complex at this time. The current Area Closure Orders, along with maps, are available at:
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/malheur/alerts-notice>.

Forest Officials encourage everyone to be safe and careful when recreating, hunting, or using the National Forest. **Please make sure your campfires are DEAD OUT before leaving their site;** the fire should be cold to the touch with no potential to ignite. Although temperatures are getting cooler at night, we are still in fire season; vegetation is still very dry, and the weather is still hot during the day.

FIRE RESTRICTIONS: The north half, including Blue Mountain and Prairie City Ranger Districts, of the Malheur National Forest are in Phase A of the Public Use Restrictions (PURs), which addresses use of campfires, chainsaws (firewood cutting), internal combustion engines, smoking, generators, and off-road/off-trail vehicle travel. The south half, including Emigrant Creek Ranger District, remains in Phase B of the PURs, which prohibits or restricts use of campfires, chainsaws (firewood cutting), internal combustion engines, smoking, generators, and off-road/off-trail vehicle travel. The specific PURs information can be found at this location: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/malheur/>.

The public is responsible for knowing if restrictions are in place and can obtain information through many avenues:

Call the Forest's offices or District offices at:

- Malheur National Forest/Blue Mountain Ranger District: 541-575-3000
- Prairie City Ranger District: 541-820-3800
- Emigrant Creek Ranger District: 541-573-4300

OR Visit the Forests website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/malheur/>.

Official information on these fires is now being updated weekly. For more information, go to Inciweb at:

South Fork Complex: <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4042/>

Bald Sisters Fire: <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4055/>

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