



# Manastash Ridge and Conrad Lake Fires

News UPDATE

August 26, 2013  
0900 Hours



The Manastash Ridge Fire has been burning through high-elevation forests of subalpine fir and whitebark pine with characteristic lichens on low branches. Credit: Ryan McCliment, LTAN

**Manastash Ridge Fire Information:**

<http://inciweb.nwcc.gov/incident/3697>

**Conrad Lake Fire Information:**

<http://inciweb.nwcc.gov/incident/3629>

Larry Nickey, Incident Commander  
Brian Gales, Deputy Incident Commander  
WIIMT #4

[http://199.134.225.50/nwcc/t2\\_wa4/index.htm](http://199.134.225.50/nwcc/t2_wa4/index.htm)

**Fire Information Center**

**New Phone Number**

**(509) 964-2138 Hours: 7 AM-9 PM**

*Storm delivers some rain, reduces fire behavior but not enough to extinguish burning forest fuels*

## Hotshot crews join initial attack firefighters, looking for the best chances to “go direct” building fire lines closer to Manastash Ridge Fire perimeter

**Cle Elum, Wash.** – The 2,352-acre Manastash Ridge Fire has been burning for a week in high-elevation subalpine fir forest above one of the Okanagan-Wenatchee National Forests’ geological marvels of the same name – seemingly unaffected by water and retardant drops from helicopters, airtankers, and even heavy rains from several storms. The fire is currently five percent contained.

After doubling in size last Thursday, the slow-moving fire has continued to slowly back down heavily forested slopes behind the 2,000 foot-high Ridge, hopping tree-to-tree igniting lichens that hang from low branches. These lichens typically absorb a lot of moisture from the air ...but also dry out quickly. When dry, the lichens catch fire and cause trees to torch. Higher relative humidity over the past several days has helped to slow tree torching and fire growth. However, the active fire, spot fires, and rugged terrain have prevented firefighters from safely approaching the fire perimeter.

The strategy adopted by the incident management team charged with suppressing the fire has been to first construct containment lines along existing roads away from the fire. They plan to use those cleared lines as an “outer box” that would prevent the fire’s spread, should winds and weather activate the fire and send it racing to the north, away from the Ridge face. This strategy is referred to as taking indirect fire suppression action. This big box is about 10,000 acres in size.

Today, most of that outer box is complete. With recent precipitation, firefighters are getting a chance to move in closer to the fire, and prepare direct line along edges where it is safe to approach. Fifteen firefighting crews, including three Pacific Northwest hotshot crews and the original, initial attack firefighters, are preparing for this job. They spent most of Sunday scouting for the best locations for a constructing a smaller, 3,800-acre “box” around the fire.

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According to Larry Nickey, incident commander for the Washington Interagency Incident Management Team #4, firefighter and public safety will not be compromised at this or any wildfire. “We will use the safest tactics necessary to accomplish this suppression mission.”

“This fire is not threatening homes, communities or structures in the immediate area. We are looking for opportunities to create fire lines where the fire might escape.” Most of the work over the past 5 days has been brushing, grading and chipping to widen, clear and strengthen Forest Service Road 3100 (Manastash Canyon Road), approximately 1.5 miles from the fire while waiting for higher relative humidity to allow work closer to the fire.

The Manastash Ridge Fire is burning on difficult, shallow soils over basalt rock through dense forests. The fire has been observed from the air daily to monitor its slow growth. Even though the area is known for its treeless, fields of talus, it would seem to the common observer that fires could not spread beyond them. Fire crews are mopping up timber islands along the steep, rocky face of the Ridge that forms the southern perimeter of the fire.

“Not true,” says Dean Warner, fire and fuel behavior analyst for the Team. “This talus is filled with dry, fine, plant material that burns hot. Embers from burning trees that fall into the talus will catch logs and debris on fire and carry the fire into small islands of trees and allow the fire to spread to forest on the other side,” he said.

Warner said the fire, which is five percent contained, continued to burn Sunday even after the rain that fell earlier in the day. “The rain has little effect, as the large-diameter, downed logs were dry again shortly after the storm passed,” he said.

As the Fire has continued to cause small spot fires along an irregular fire perimeter and firefighting activities are increasing, the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests established an area closure last Saturday to eliminate access to the area surrounding the fire. The area closure includes Township 18N, Range 14E Sections 3, 10-14, 24, 25; Township 18N, Range 15E Sections 8, 10, 16, 18,19-36; Township 17N, Range 15E Section 1-4. Included in the area closure are Forest Service Roads 3100 (Manastash Canyon Road), 3120, 3111, 3111-115, 3111-117, and Trails 1366, 1345, 4W311, 1350, 1385, 4W306, 694. Details of the closure boundary and other road and trail closures are available on the [Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests web site](#).

To ensure public and firefighter safety, visitors need to drive carefully and stay out of closure areas. Only firefighters, Forest Service or other agency personnel, and law enforcement are allowed access to closure areas.

**A community meeting about the Manastash Ridge Fire, including the closure orders, will take place tonight (Monday, August 26, 2013) at the Thorp Fire Station at 7 p.m. The fire station is located at 10700 N Thorp Highway in the town of Thorp, Wash.**

The Washington Interagency Incident Management Team #4 is also managing the 1,066-acre Conrad Lake Fire. The Conrad Lake Fire, located 35 miles southwest of Naches, is currently 25% contained. The low containment level is due to the fire having so much open line in the wilderness. Yesterday, the Conrad Lake Fire continued backing downhill toward Phantom Lake. Approximately 150 firefighters are mopping up and monitoring the Conrad Lake Fire.

Radio communications between the Conrad Lake Fire and Manastash Ridge Fire and Incident Command Post were established late yesterday.

Visitors should be aware of closures and monitor web sites or call Manastash Fire Information at (509) 964-2138 for the latest Conrad Lake Fire closure information.

Fire danger remains very high. Please check the [Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest website](#) for the current campfire restrictions. To stay informed of changing air quality conditions, view <http://wasmoke.blogspot.com/>

**Manastash Ridge Fire Facts – Monday, August 26, 2013 – 0900 HOURS**

**Fire Size:** approximately 2,352 acres

**Percent Contained:** 5%

**Evacuations:** No homes or structures threatened.

**Manastash Ridge Closures Summary:** A detailed list of closures is available on the [Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest website](#). On the Naches Ranger District this includes Forest Service Road 1701 before the Funny Rocks Area and the 1900 road system leading north from Little Naches to Quartz Mountain. On the Cle Elum Ranger District, the expanded area closure prohibits being within the boundaries of the posted closure including Forest Service Road 3100 (Manastash Canyon Road) west of the Forest Boundary.

**Fuels:** Heavy ground and ladder fuels, high elevation subalpine fir and whitebark pine forest.

**Air Resources:** Two air attack platforms, two Type II helicopters and one Type III helicopter.

**Crews:** 12 Type II hand crews, 3 Type I crews

**Engines:** 4

**Dozers:** 2

**Water Tenders:** 5

**Road graders:** 2

**Total Personnel:** Approx. 418 (122 overhead)

**Conrad Lake Fire Facts – Monday, August 26, 2013 – 0900 HOURS**

**Fire Size:** approximately 1,066 acres

**Percent Contained:** 25%

**Evacuations:** No homes or structures threatened.

**Conrad Lake Closures Summary:** Road closures near the Conrad Lake Fire include National Forest Roads 1000, 1204, 1205, 1200-725, and the 1070 between its junctions between the 1000 Road and 1070-595 Road. Trail closures include Bear Creek Mountain Trail #1130 and Conrad Meadows. Area closures include Rimrock Peninsula Recreation Area and the boat launch. There is no access from the 1200 Road onto the 1200-711, 1200-712, 1200-713, 1200-714, 1200-715, 1200-716, 1200-725, and 1200-653 roads.

**Fuels:** Timber litter and understory, meadows.

**Air Resources:** Two air attack platforms, two Type II helicopters and one Type III helicopter (shared with Manastash Ridge Fire)

**Crews:** 3 Type II crews

**Engines:** 4

**Dozers:** 0

**Water Tenders:** 6

**Road graders:** 0

**Total Personnel:** Approx. 146 (47 overhead)