

Two large fires rage in Sierra, Sequoia National Forests

By Rory Appleton

Fresno Bee, Saturday, Aug. 8, 2015

Firefighters from the U.S. Forest Service are battling two major wildfires growing in the Fresno and Tulare counties portions of the Sierra National Forest and the Golden Trout Wilderness in the Sequoia National Forest.

As of Saturday, the Rough fire poses the biggest threat to people, structures and the dozens of giant sequoia groves federally protected as the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

The blaze is burning southwest of the Spanish Mountain Wilderness in the Sierra National Forest. The forest service reported it did not pose a threat to any structures as of Saturday afternoon.

However, the blaze will be a major threat to the giant sequoias — the largest trees on Earth — as well as Hume Lake Christian Camp and the surrounding areas if it crosses the Kings River to the south. This spread would also close public access to Kings Canyon National Park.

Forest service spokeswoman Linda Hecker said about 300 firefighters are focusing their efforts on keeping the wildfire north of the river. The fire was not heading that way as of 1 p.m. Saturday. The wind was blowing then from west to east, meaning much of the smoke was blowing away from Fresno.

Hecker said the forest service is using helicopters to drop water from Hume Lake onto the fire's southern flank in order to keep it from advancing to the Kings River.

Both of these conditions may change during the afternoon, Hecker said, and evacuation plans are being formed in case the Rough fire turns back toward the river.

The Rough fire grew more than 200 acres from Friday evening to Saturday morning.

U.S. Forest Service reported that the Rough fire grew from 976 acres at 1:15 p.m. Friday to 1,365 acres by 6 p.m. Saturday. It began with a lightning strike on July 31.

Sierra National Forest spokeswoman Iveth Hernandez said Friday that the fire was difficult to fight because it was only accessible by aerial crews.

The Cabin fire is the larger of the two wildfires, scorching 5,364 acres throughout the Golden Trout Wilderness. It has burned U.S. Forest Service land in Tulare and Inyo counties.

The forest service reported that it is burning a heavily wooded area that's in a no-machinery and no-flame retardant zone, meaning ground crews must make a six-hour hike to the wildfire's location to try and contain it.

Nearly 500 firefighters were battling the Cabin fire as of 6:42 a.m. Saturday. It is 83% contained.

The Cabin fire started with a lightning strike on July 29, and crews have been monitoring its steady growth. It is unclear whether any structures are threatened, but the forest service closed a portion of the Golden Trout Wilderness and evacuated campgrounds in the area. Anyone interested in visiting the wilderness can call (559) 462-0088 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. for closure and fire information.

The three Sierra wildfires have burned more than 12,000 acres.

Meanwhile, more than 600 firefighters are still battling the Willow fire, which has burned 5,702 acres in the North Fork area. It is 95% contained.

The National Weather Service in Hanford said the forecast shouldn't impact firefighting efforts. Mild temperatures with light humidity and wind are expected through eastern Fresno and Tulare counties.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District forecast unhealthy air conditions for sensitive groups on Saturday for Fresno, Tulare and Kern counties and the Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks. Children, the elderly and people with asthma or heart disease in these areas are advised to be careful during outdoor activities.

Summit to explore clean energy in the Valley

By Kyla Cathey

Lodi Sentinel, Friday, Aug 7, 2015

FRESNO — State officials, San Joaquin Valley lawmakers and community members will gather for a summit with renewable energy companies and environmental activists at California State University, Fresno on Wednesday.

Unlocking Renewables: A Valley Summit will explore the Valley's future in the clean energy economy.

Ken Alex, a senior adviser to the governor, will deliver a keynote address. State Sen. Anthony Cannella, R-Ceres, Assemblyman Adam Gray, D-Merced, and Alexander Sherriffs of the California Air Resources Board and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will lead a lunchtime chat.

A report examining economic and development potential of clean energy technology in the Valley will be released at the summit, and breakout sessions will explore a number of clean energy topics.

For more information or to register, visit www.renewablesinthevalley.org.

Fresno State summit on the Valley's future in clean energy on Aug. 12

By Sarah Anderson

Fresno Bee, Thursday, Aug. 6, 2015

San Joaquin Valley legislators, state and local agencies and community stakeholders will meet with renewable energy companies and environmentalists at Fresno State on Aug. 12 for a summit to address the Valley's future in the clean energy economy.

Unlocking Renewables: A Valley Summit will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and will feature discussions on the clean energy potential in the Valley, its electric transmission infrastructure needs and the prospect of bioenergy and renewable gas as a major resource.

The morning will have a keynote address from Ken Alex, senior adviser to Gov. Jerry Brown and director of the Office of Planning and Research. There will also be a lunchtime chat with state Sen. Anthony Cannella, R-Ceres, and Assembly Member Adam Gray, D-Merced, and Alexander Sherriffs, who is representing both the California Air Resources Board and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Breakout sessions will include a clean energy and incentives workshop and a workforce development workshop about careers in clean energy.

A report examining the economic and development potential of clean energy technologies in the Valley will also be released at the summit.

More information is at www.renewablesinthevalley.org.

[Guest Commentary, Fresno Bee, Saturday, Aug. 8, 2015](#)

Alexander Sherriffs and William B. Marcus: Clean-energy economy for the Valley

By Alexander Sherriffs and William B. Marcus

The San Joaquin Valley is a remarkable place. It has played a vital role in the development of the economy and the character of the state. The Midway-Sunset and Kern Oil Fields produced over 5 billion barrels of oil since being discovered in the 1890s. Natural water run-off and later some of the world's largest public works brought water to the Valley floor creating an agricultural treasure, producing 250 different crops, half the nation's fruits, vegetables and table foods, and one third of its milk.

The Valley has been sharing the fruits of its natural endowments with others for over a century, but many of the negative impacts have stayed local while the benefits were exported. Our transportation corridors are critical to the regional, state and national economy, but not without local impacts: While goods movement has gotten cleaner, diesel emissions are still the No. 1 cause of cancer from air pollution. Alas, our childhood asthma rates in the Valley top 99% of America and our air pollution causes over 1,000 premature deaths every year here. The monetary effect on our local economy is consistently ignored. The

direct health care costs and indirect costs such as lost work and lost school days are calculated to be between \$1 and \$3 billion every year. Ironically, the land of plenty also has the state's worst food insecurity. Rampant unemployment and drought are threatening to undo our very way of life.

But change is possible and happening. California is on a fast-track to revolutionize its energy system and reduce fossil fuel use. In the next 15 years, we will transform the way we make and use energy with cleaner power, efficiency measures and bioenergy solutions. The San Joaquin Valley can, should, and must play a central role in that transformation and reap the benefits a clean-energy economy brings to a region and its people.

By 2020, the clean-energy sector will exceed the economic engine of the state's agricultural industry. California's clean-energy industry will more than triple from 2012 to 2020, when it will account for more than 5% of the state economy, according to the California Air Resources Board Research Division. But right now, nearly two-thirds of California's advanced energy employment is in Southern California and the Bay Area. How can the Valley be integrated into that burgeoning clean-energy economy?

Other regions profited when California focused policies and programs on their clean-energy potential: We captured the wind in Tehachapi, installed more solar than any other state, and we rank second in the nation in installed energy-efficiency measures. California virtually transformed the auto industry pushing better mileage and lower emissions. Today, more electric vehicles are sold here than anywhere else, and clean cars are a normal part of the transportation vernacular the world over.

Billions of investments flowed into California through these efforts, bringing jobs, high-tech industry and tax revenues to local and state coffers. But not enough programs and investments focused on the Valley. The region is rich in human and natural resources that must be put into play. Building and operating bioenergy plants, fuel cells, energy storage, conservation measures and other clean energies put thousands of blue-collar and white-collar professionals to work, and save consumers money. More can happen in the Valley if we focus attention and investments in the region.

On Wednesday, Aug. 12, at Fresno State, "Unlocking Renewables: A Valley Summit" will bring together state and local agencies, utilities, local businesses, residents, environmental groups, educational institutions, and clean-energy developers to try and answer the question of how the Valley can join California's clean-energy economy. The summit will engage stakeholders on ways to increase renewable energy in the Valley, while protecting prime farmland and the environment. Participants will explore what programs and targeted investments could bring local air benefits and improve the social and environmental justice situation in the region.

Embracing the clean-energy revolution will benefit the economy and health of the Valley. The Legislature directed that as well as lowering greenhouse gas emissions, a portion of cap and trade revenues must be spent in and to the benefit of disadvantaged communities that, for example, suffer cumulative pollution impacts, have low education rates and high unemployment.

That description unfortunately does not fit much of our great San Joaquin Valley. Valley residents, businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations have an opportunity we must take advantage of. On Wednesday and in the coming months you have an opportunity to improve life in our Valley. We ask you to join the dialogue.

Alexander Sherriffs, M.D., of Fowler is a member of the California Air Resources Board. William B. Marcus is chief economist for JBS Energy in West Sacramento.