

Giant sequoia wildfire updates: KNP Complex and Windy Fire grow, but containment increases

By Carmen Kohlruss

Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and other papers, Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021

Firefighters battling lightning-caused wildfires burning in California giant sequoia groves got a little more handle on containment Wednesday, although the size of those wildfires continues to grow.

Containment on the KNP Complex increased to 11% by Wednesday morning, compared to 8% the day before.

That wildfire in Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks is estimated to have burned through 48,872 acres, fire officials announced, an increase of more than 500 acres from the previous day.

To the south, the Windy Fire surpassed 87,900 acres on Wednesday morning, an increase of 192 acres from the night before, officials said. There was a bigger jump in containment there, now 25% contained compared to just a few percentage points the day before.

The Windy Fire is burning in Sequoia National Forest, including the Giant Sequoia National Monument, the Tule River Indian Reservation, and other Tulare County and state responsibility areas.

KNP COMPLEX UPDATE

There were no new evacuation warnings or orders for the KNP Complex over the past 24 hours, officials said Wednesday morning.

The team said firefighters along the eastern flank of the wildfire would continue to extinguish hot spots on Wednesday in the Giant Forest, home to many famous giant sequoias, and along established containment lines.

On the southern perimeter, crews continue work on Mineral King Road, where crews are monitoring the fire as it backs down slope toward the road. To the west, firefighters will continue to provide structure protection in the communities of Ash Mountain and Three Rivers, in addition to securing containment lines. Containment line construction also continues on the northern perimeter, moving to the east.

On Tuesday, firefighters worked on containment lines along the northern perimeter and in the Heartland area, officials said.

“As air quality permits, aviation resources will support firefighting efforts in coordination with personnel on the fire line,” officials said.

Smoky conditions on portions of the fire limited visibility Tuesday. Unmanned aircraft will be used Wednesday to assist firefighters on the ground. Fire officials reminded people not to fly recreational drones in the area. “If you fly, we can’t,” the KNP incident management team stressed.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are closed west of the Pacific Crest Trail and south of the ridgeline which lies north of Ionian Basin. In addition, the BLM Case Mountain Extensive Recreation Management Area and major portions of Sequoia National Forest are also closed.

There are 1,802 personnel working to extinguish the KNP Complex, including 42 crews, 78 engines, 45 water tenders, 34 bulldozers and 12 helicopters.

WINDY FIRE UPDATE

Fire officials described the Windy Fire as continuing to exhibit “high resistance to control,” with full containment not expected until Oct. 14, but added that winds were expected to be “much weaker” Wednesday.

Tuesday afternoon winds “provided new growth opportunities towards the Kern River and south towards Panorama Heights,” fire officials reported. “Limited expansion continued into the well-aligned topography adjacent Baker Peak.

“Recent growth south of the Tule River Indian Reservation represents continued risk to cultural and infrastructure assets within the reservation. North of Tule Indian Reservation boundary, Camp Nelson

remains threatened as fire continues to back along the 2017 Pier Fire scar towards the Middle Fork Tule River.”

Planned actions Wednesday include a number of structure defense operations and continued construction of containment lines. There are 2,393 personnel working to extinguish it.

EVACUATION INFORMATION AND AIR QUALITY INFORMATION

Officials stressed that all evacuation warnings and orders that have been issued are still active, and that “areas currently under an evacuation warning are urged to be ready to mobilize and leave should the warning escalate to an evacuation order.”

An evacuation map for both the KNP Complex and Windy Fire is available at tularecounty.ca.gov/emergencies.

A Red Cross evacuation shelter is located at Porterville College, 100 E. College Ave., Porterville.

A temporary evacuation point, where people can find information and assistance, is at the Woodlake Community Center, 145 Magnolia St., Woodlake. There’s also one of these points at Porterville College.

Poor air quality persists in the region. The latest is available at wildlandfiresmoke.net/outlooks/FresnoCA and [AirNow](#).

Which masks protect best against wildfire smoke? Study shows one is superior

By Katie Camero

Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and other papers, Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021

Some experts are questioning whether face masks should continue to be worn after the COVID-19 pandemic to protect people from the flu, common cold and other respiratory viruses. Now, similar queries are being made about mask use during wildfires that send plumes of harmful smoke into the air.

“People were asking, should we keep them on in the summer when the fire season starts?” Jack Kodros, an atmospheric scientist at Colorado State University and lead author of a new study on the topic, said in a news release. “There weren’t a lot of guidelines on what sort of masks would be helpful for wildfire smoke.”

In laboratory experiments, Kodros and colleagues tested how well N95, synthetic, cotton or surgical masks filter out particles of many sizes found in wildfire smoke and other types of air pollution that are known to enter our lungs and cause health issues, such as asthma, respiratory infections and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Researchers put each mask over a pipe that “breathes” in air and particles inside a plastic box.

N95s offered the best protection against wildfire smoke, reducing exposure to harmful particles by a factor of 16, according to the study published in August in the journal *GeoHealth*. Next were synthetic masks, such as those made of polyester, spandex or nylon, which did “a poor job” of filtering harmful particles from wildfire smoke. They reduced exposure by a factor of 2.2.

Cotton masks performed even worse, reducing exposure by a factor of 1.4.

Surgical masks have been shown to filter more than 90% of particles that pass through them, but about 50% of air can leak out the mask through gaps on the sides if not properly worn, so researchers determined they are only about as effective as their synthetic and cotton counterparts.

N95 masks also protected the best against larger dust particles and air pollution typical in cities, including particles from car exhaust, which are smaller than those from wildfire smoke. Smoky particles are usually about the size of a single bacterium, or about the thickness of a single strand of hair.

Researchers estimate that N95 masks could reduce 22-39% of wildfire smoke-related hospitalizations — an important implication given global warming will continue to make wildfires more frequent and intense.

The team also developed a model that can estimate the benefits of mask wearing within a population based on the percentage of people likely to wear masks and how consistently they would wear them

during wildfire season. Researchers inserted data from Washington's 2012 fire season to see how many wildfire smoke-related hospitalizations masks could have been prevented, if any.

Turned out N95 masks would have prevented about 30% of hospitalizations caused by wildfire smoke inhalation. Surgical masks would have prevented about 17% of them, while synthetic masks would have done away with 13% of hospital admissions. Cotton masks would have led to a 6% reduction in hospitalizations.

Valley PBS to Air 'Afterburn: The Creek Fire Documentary' Thursday

By The Business Journal Staff

The Business Journal, Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021

Central Valley residents can tune into a new, original documentary this Thursday evening about the Creek Fire.

Valley PBS is airing "Afterburn: The Creek Fire Documentary," which features never-before-seen accounts from the fire and how Shaver Lake was saved from it. The documentary specifically focuses on the first 96 hours of the blaze.

The exclusive airs about one year after the fire in Sierra National Forest erupted on Sept. 4, 2020. The fire wasn't fully contained until late December 2020.

The exact cause of the Creek Fire is still not yet known, which has brought speculation and debate. The documentary seeks to explore several angles of speculation through interviews with fire investigators and statements directly from Sierra National Forest officials. Emotional accounts from fire personnel are captured throughout the film.

The documentary also features a look into how victims are rebuilding their homes and lives after the tragic fire in 2020.

The documentary was created by 18Thirty Entertainment, a full service marketing and production company. The production company is owned by Jill Aiello and current Valley PBS CEO Jeff Aiello.

The documentary airs at 7 p.m. Sept. 30. and is sponsored by Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino, Hendricks Chevrolet, Reedley College, Lazzerini Family Foundation, Valley Air Conditioning & Repair, Inc. and InSight Vision Center.

A teaser of the film can be viewed [here](#)