



United States Department of Agriculture



Pacific Northwest Region
Umatilla National Forest
72510 Coyote Rd
Pendleton, OR 97801
www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Darcy Weseman (541) 278-3722

Sept. 15, 2020 –10:30 a.m.

Area and road closure implemented on the Birch Creek Fire

PENDLETON, Ore. – Forest officials have implemented an area and road closure surrounding the Birch Creek Fire for public and firefighter safety. The Birch Creek Fire is burning on the North Fork John Day Ranger District west of the junctions of Forest Service Road (FSR) 54 with FSR 5412 and FSR 5411, approximately 12 miles northeast of Ukiah, Oregon.

The closure is effective immediately and includes portions of Forest Service Road (FSR) 54, FSR 5411 and FSR 5412. A detailed map and description of the closure order is available on the Forest website and at any Forest office. Closure barriers and signs are posted on the ground and visitors can take alternative routes out of the area including Yellowjacket Road (FSR 5412 and FSR 5420), FSR 54 south to Highway 244 and FSR 5427 east to Indian Lake. Access to the popular area south of Granite Meadows toward Oregon Highway 244 is still available via FSR 5412 and the 030 spur.

The Birch Creek Fire, which is currently estimated at 50 acres, was reported on Monday, Sept. 14. The cause of the fire is under investigation. The fire is burning to the northeast in grass and timber. Yesterday's fire behavior consisted of active fire runs, spotting and torching. Gusty winds contributed to increased fire behavior and growth and prompted officials to evacuate campers within the Granite Meadows and Pearson Canyon areas. Visibility within the area is poor. Numerous resources aided in initial attack efforts, including support from Oregon Department of Forestry.

NEWS RELEASE, continued

With cooler temperatures overnight fire behavior has moderated, but the fire activity may increase as weather conditions warm up throughout the day. Today firefighters will focus on establishing access points to the fire and identifying anchor points where firefighters can build containment lines. A dozer line was constructed last night on the southwest edge of the fire and firefighters will extend that fireline along the eastern edge of the fire today. Current resources on scene include the Union Interagency Hotshot Crew, four engines, two hand crews, and two dozers. Additional resources are on order. A local Type 3 Incident Management Team was inbriefed this morning at 8 a.m. and will take command of the fire today at 12 p.m. An incident command post will be set up at the North Fork John Day Ranger District office. The health and safety of the public and wildland fire responders is top priority and mitigations are being taken regarding group sizes by dispersing firefighting resources through separate and smaller fire camps and conducting virtual meetings when possible.

Hot and dry conditions are expected to persist throughout the week. Fire officials want to remind everyone that the current fire danger rating remains at **EXTREME** and public use restrictions involving campfires, chainsaw use, smoking and off-road travel are in effect.

For more information regarding Restrictions, please contact:

Umatilla National Forest:

Information Hotline: Toll-Free (877) 958-9663

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The latest fire information will be posted on the Blue Mountains Fire Information Blog. To receive updates on fires in the Blue Mountains, follow our blog at <http://bluemountainfireinfo.blogspot.com/>.

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