



**Pacific Northwest Region**

Umatilla National Forest  
72510 Coyote Rd  
Pendleton, OR 97801

# NEWS RELEASE

**Contact:** Darcy Weseman  
(541) 278-3722  
darcy.weseman@usda.gov  
[www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla](http://www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla)

## Umatilla National Forest lands temporarily closed

**PENDLETON, Ore. (July 16, 2021)** — With persistent extreme hot and dry conditions, active large wildfires, limited firefighting resources and concern for public safety, forest officials have temporarily closed the entirety of the Umatilla National Forest effective immediately.

The objective of the closure is to proactively protect public and firefighter safety as the Forest continues to actively suppress large wildfires on the Forest, while also responding to new smoke reports. Hot and dry conditions have challenged firefighters in suppression efforts battling the Lick Creek and Green Ridge Fires on the Pomeroy Ranger District. Additionally, on July 15 the Elbow Creek Fire emerged on the Walla Walla Ranger District, rapidly growing and threatening nearby communities. Overnight, humidity levels have remained extremely low, allowing fires to spread actively. These conditions have created an unprecedented potential for extreme fire spread and intensity. With three active large wildfires on the Umatilla National Forest, compounded by multiple active large wildfires burning across the region, firefighting resources are stretched. Forest officials have implemented the closure for public and firefighter safety.

A full Forest closure means that the public is prohibited from entering any part of Umatilla National Forest at any time, including National Forest lands, roads, trails and recreational facilities. Access on county, state or federal roadways will still be open.

Forest Service personnel will attempt to reach as many people as possible to begin vacating campsites and informing individuals who are camping in the Forest currently. The public should cancel any plans for visiting the Umatilla National Forest for the next several weeks. This is a temporary closure and the Forest will continually assess conditions and lift the closure once the unprecedented conditions moderate.

## NEWS RELEASE, continued

Violating closures and fire restrictions is a violation that carries a mandatory appearance in federal court, punishable as a Class B misdemeanor with a fine of up to \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization, or up to six months in prison, or both.

A detailed map and description of the closure area is available on the Forest website and at any Forest office. Closure barriers and signs will be posted on the ground.

Additional information on the Lick Creek, Green Ridge, and Elbow Fires is available at:

- **Lick Creek Fires:** <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7615/>
- **Green Ridge Fire:** <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7628/>
- **Elbow Creek Fire:** <http://bluemountainfireinfo.blogspot.com/>

Fire officials want to remind everyone that the current fire danger rating on the Umatilla National Forest is **EXTREME**.

The National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group has elevated the National Preparedness Level to 5 (PL 5) due to significant fire activity occurring in multiple geographical areas, an increase in incident management team mobilization, and heavy shared resource commitment to large fires nationally. PL 5 is the highest level of wildland fire activity. Several geographic areas are experiencing large, complex wildland fire incidents, which have the potential to exhaust national wildland firefighting resources.

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/>.

Additional information about the Umatilla National Forest is available at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla>.

###