



NEWS RELEASE

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July 17, 2021 – 10 a.m.

Elbow Creek Fire Morning Update

WALLOWA, Ore. - The Elbow Creek Fire continues to be pushed by erratic winds and hot temperatures, challenging firefighters as the fire burns primarily to the east and west, with some growth to the north. The fire is located in the Grande Ronde River drainage near Mud Springs, approximately 31 miles southeast of Walla Walla, Washington.

Helicopters and air tankers worked to slow the spread of the fire to the north and south yesterday, while crews aided in structure protection. Firefighters also worked the northwest side of the fire to keep the fire from spreading into Elbow Creek and progressing further through the Grande Ronde River drainage. Support from heavy airtankers aided in limiting the fire spread on the south on private ownership and firefighters were able to hold the fire last night north of Sickfoot Road. Based on infrared mapping, the fire is estimated to be 10,941 acres in size.

Today, suppression activities are focused on holding the fire in the Wildcat creek area on the east side and protecting structures at risk. Additionally, firefighters are establishing anchor points and scouting opportunities to build containment lines to the west side of the fire near Elbow Creek. Where terrain and fuels allow for crews to safely engage, firefighters continue working to build line construction and limit the fire spread on private ownership to the south, utilizing aircraft to slow fire spread.

The Elbow Creek Fire was reported on Thursday, July 15 and is burning on both sides of the Grande Ronde River and is on or threatening Umatilla National Forest lands, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest lands, Vale District Bureau of Land Management lands and Oregon Department of Forestry protected lands. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

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Numerous resources are aiding in firefighting efforts, including landowners, private operators, and various federal and state resources (hand crews, dozers, multiple engines, and water tenders). The fire is currently being staffed by a Type 3 Northeast Oregon Interagency Management Team. The agencies will inbrief the Oregon Department of Forestry Team 3 Type 1 Incident Management Team led by Link Smith today at 5 p.m. at the Wallowa High School and the team is anticipated to take command of the fire tomorrow.

The conflagration request sent by Wallowa County Fire Defense Board Chief, Paul Karvoski, to the Governor's Office has been approved and additional resources are en route to support structure protection work with suppression efforts. The Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office is surging resources to assist the local fire agencies.

Wallowa County has updated evacuation information. Additional information regarding evacuations is available through the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office at (541) 426-3131 or by monitoring the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office Facebook.

Closures are also in place surrounding the fire. Due to fire activity on both sides of the Grande Ronde River corridor, the river is closed at Minam State Park. Any rafters that arrive into the fire area will be safely evacuated in coordination with Wallowa County Search and Rescue. Due to extreme wildfire activity and the concern for the safety of the public the entirety of the Umatilla National Forest has been temporarily closed.

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**.

The latest fire information can be found by visiting the Blue Mountains Fire Information Blog (<http://bluemountainfireinfo.blogspot.com/>).

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