

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Okanogan National Forest

Tonasket Ranger District

www.fs.fed.us/r6/colville/WIMT



Thursday, August 23, 2001

Tonasket Ranger District: 509-486-2186; Okanogan National Forest: 509-826-3275

Windy Swamp Incident Information: 509-223-4592/509-223-3021/509-223-3110

2200 Hours

During this fire suppression effort, no resource is more important than human lives. Firefighter, aviation and public safety is our highest priority. All firefighting strategies are being coordinated with the utmost consideration of the well being of the people involved. Firefighters are extensively trained in safety procedures and will take no risks that may jeopardize their own safety or the safety of others. The locations and behaviors of each fire are being monitored and scrutinized for effective and expedient suppression while ensuring public safety and protecting private property.

Washington Incident Management Team to fight Windy Swamp Fires near edge of Pasayten Wilderness

Highland Fire Camp, Loomis, Wash. – Two fires that have been creeping slowly for several days through approximately 1,200 acres of spruce and lodgepole forests near the Pasayten Wilderness west of Loomis, Wash., have been removed from the Tonasket Complex and are now being managed by the Washington Incident Management Team.

The Long Swamp Fire is burning outside of the wilderness along the Long Swamp Road. The Windy Peak Fire – the northernmost of the two -- is burning in the wilderness.

The team ordered 18 Federal and Canadian crews, and a strike team of engines on Thursday to begin direct containment efforts along the eastern and northern flanks of both fires burning 1.5 miles apart, separated by Queer Creek.

Firefighters will begin putting out hot spots and cold-trailing on the Long Swamp Fire starting from points at the northeast and southwest perimeter and working to a midpoint on the fire's eastern flank. Fallers will accompany the crews to eliminate dangerous snags. A Type I helicopter will aid firefighters with aerial water drops throughout the day.

According to Dave Johnson, incident commander, the fires are burning primarily on the ground through 1,000-hour fuels that remain extremely dry, even after receiving light precipitation during the past week. "The fires are snaking through the stands, leaving unburned areas and a great deal of snags," Johnson said. "Burning roots and falling snags have created significant hazards for firefighters in both areas," he said.

MORE

Add One
Windy Swamp Fire
August 23, 2001
2200 Hours

Johnson said the fire is not burning completely, but spotting and burning along stringers of timber. He said the firefighting efforts will be very tedious and labor-intensive. Crews will be mopping up by hand inside the firelines.

The fires haven't increased much in size during the past several days, even though strong winds have fanned many of the fires burning throughout the Tonasket Complex. Fire officials, predicting increasingly hot, dry weather next week, decided yesterday to take advantage of this week's cool weather and mop up 150 to 300 feet inside the perimeters of both fires. The fires are not threatening any homes but could potentially threaten state-owned land to the east.

The Long Swamp Road, east of the campground is closed to the public. The Windy Peak, Thirtymile, Windy Creek and Chewuch Trailheads are also closed.

Firefighters will be using Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST) to fight fire burning in the Pasayten Wilderness. All suppression tactics will consider firefighter, aviation and public safety as the highest priority. They will also be designed to protect other resources, including trails, anadromous fish, grizzly bear, lynx and wolf recovery areas.

Windy Swamp Fire Facts

Size: 1,200 acres

Number of Fires: 2 fires

Started: Lightning caused –8-13-2001.

Containment Status: No containment date estimated

Location: Started 16 miles west of Loomis, Wash.

Threats: Dry fuels, falling snags, burned-out roots, dense forest and lack of safety zones (Windy Peak Fire)

Resources: The Washington Incident Management Team is managing the incident.

Fires:

Windy Peak Fire – estimated 600 acres

Long Swamp Fire – estimated 600 acres