

EAGLE CREEK FIRE

At-A-Glance Facts, November 28

Reported: September 2, 4:00 pm
Size: 48,831 acres
Contained: 50% contained since October 13
Origin: Eagle Creek Drainage, 2.5 miles west of Cascade Locks, OR
Cause: Human origin; Fireworks (Suspect Identified)

Suppression Response

Air resources was the primary suppression tactic during the first 4-5 hours of the fire due to steep terrain. Hikers were rescued through joint efforts with Hood River County Sheriff's Office. Dozer and hand lines, burnout operations, brushing, fire wrap, sprinklers, and strike teams of engines were all used to protect values at risk through the course of the fire.

Water drops on the fire: ~125,968 gallons of water
Dozer Line: Estimated 30 miles
Hand Line: Estimated 5 miles
Personnel: 1,060 personnel at peak effort
Cost to Date: Latest estimate, \$20 million

Human Impacts

Level 3 evacuations affected residents in Bridal Veil, Corbett, Dodson, Latourell, Warrendale, Cascade Locks, OR; Skamania County, WA

Hikers rescued: Over 150
Lives lost: 0
Hospital visits: 2 (x-rays)
Injuries: 4 (2 bee stings, shoulder injury, sprained ankle)

Lands and Infrastructure Impacts

Private Residences burned: 1 primary residence, 3 secondary
Union Pacific Railway: Trains halted 3 days (Sept 4-7)
Columbia River: Closed for 2 days (Sept 5-7)
Interstate 84: WB closed 11 days, EB 19 days (Sept 4-14&16/23)
Natl Forest System Trails: 121.4 miles in fire perimeter

- 83.5 miles in Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
- 37.9 miles in Mt. Hood National Forest
- 83 miles in Wilderness; 10.1 miles of Pacific Crest Trail

Natl Forest System roads: 12.43 miles in burned area
State Lands: State Parks - 1,283 acres; other state lands - 44 acres
State Parks: 15 State Park units closed at some point
Private lands: 232 acres in fire perimeter
Historic Multnomah Falls Lodge structure intact, with only smoke damage; closed for almost 3 months
Historic CCC-era structures at Eagle Creek remained intact but damaged suspension bridge to be removed
Historic Columbia River Highway (Oregon Hwy. 30)

- Bridal Veil to Vista House closed 80 days
- Ainsworth to Bridal Veil closed since Sept 4.

Hatcheries: 3 (Bonneville, Cascade, and Oxbow)
Bonneville Power Administration powerlines – lines de-energized during fire; hazard trees removed

Archer Mtn Fire

Reported: September 5
Contained: September 13
Size: 260 acres
Cause: Ember from Eagle Creek Fire
Dozer Line: 3.46 miles built
Hand Line: 0.50 miles built
Cost: Latest estimate, \$850,000

Located in Skamania County, WA, 10 miles northwest of North Bonneville on National Forest System and Washington Department of Natural Resources lands.

Managed by Western Washington IMT Type 3, came under Eagle Creek Fire on September 16.



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Suppression Repair

Suppression rehabilitation is the process of replacing dirt, vegetation, and other natural materials back into formations that resemble a natural landscape. Suppression rehabilitation speeds the natural process of recovery, reduces visible traces of suppression activities, and can help prevent erosion.

- Safety zones, staging areas and drop points were rehabilitated.
- Road drainage work was installed.
- 30 miles dozer line & 5 miles handline waterbarred
- 4.5 miles of fireline seeded

Ecological Facts

Fire is a natural phenomenon, even in the wet West Cascades forests, and therefore the forest ecosystem has natural processes for regenerating. The fire interval in the west Cascades can vary from 100-400 year intervals. Vegetation types within the fire perimeter consisted of “Western Hemlock Zone” (37,418 acres), “Pacific Fir Zone” (9,706 acres), “Grand Fir Zone” (880 acres), “Douglas Fir Zone” (500 acres), “Steppe” (174 acres), “Mountain Hemlock Zone” (58 acres), with 51 acres of other vegetation types.

Most of the fire perimeter was located within the Mark O. Hatfield Wilderness area, so USFS policy is to “Allow reforestation only if a loss of the wilderness resource, due to human influence, has occurred and there is no reasonable expectation of natural reforestation” (FSM 2323.54). Due to this, there will not be a widespread replanting of the burned area; however, there will be early detection and rapid response efforts in place to prevent invasive species from becoming established. USFS has also been putting in place erosion control measures to protect Chinook, coho, and steelhead.

Burned Area Hazards and Issues

The Gorge has a complex history involving volcanic lava flows, ice-age floods, tectonic plate collisions, and other dynamic geologic processes. The steep slopes and rock walls that make the Gorge so beautiful also make it prone to landslides, and even before the fire, landslides, rockfalls, and debris flows were not unusual.

Burn Severity. The higher the burn severity in a given drainage, the less likely that soil will absorb water from rainfall and snow melt. This increases the risks of flash floods, debris flows, landslides, and rockslides.

- 55% of the area within the fire perimeter is was unburned or low burn intensity
- 30% had a moderate burn intensity
- 15% had a high burn intensity

Rockfall and landslide hazards. In areas where fractured rocks have long been stabilized by moss and other vegetation, slopes are steeper than the natural “angle of repose.” Since Eagle Creek Fire burned through the vegetation, rockfall and landslide potential has increased, as these slopes are prone to collapsing without the “glue” of natural vegetation holding them in place.

Flash floods and Debris Flows. The fire perimeter contained 325.8 miles of streams (141.4 year-round streams). Predicted post-fire peak streamflows show increased potential for flash floods, which can also lead to debris flows. Estimated recovery time for ground vegetation, which affects these risks, is 5-10 years.

Most affected drainages: Eagle Creek, Tanner Creek, Moffett Creek, McCord Creek, Horsetail Creek, Oneonta Creek

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