

	United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service	<h1>NEWS RELEASE</h1>	KLAMATH NATIONAL FOREST 1312 Fairlane Road, Yreka, CA 96097 (530) 841-6131 www.fs.usda.gov/klamath	
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Onion Fire Update

YREKA, CA—The Onion Fire, burning ten miles east of Cecilville, California, on the Klamath National Forest within the Trinity Alps Wilderness, reached 560 acres in size today and is holding within established containment lines. The fire, which was started by a lightning strike on August 19, grew at a slow pace until late last week when a warmer and drier weather pattern settled over the area and accelerated fire activity.

“When fires are ignited by lightning in Wilderness, we look for opportunities to allow burning to play its natural role in the ecosystem,” commented Kerry Greene, information officer for the Onion Fire. “Natural fire reduces hazardous fuels buildup and improves forest health when weather and burning conditions are right.”

The initial plan for the Onion Fire was to allow it to treat up to approximately 2500 acres of wilderness lands, containing it within constructed fire lines and existing natural barriers, such as ridgelines, rocky areas, wet creeks and areas burned previously in 2006 and 2008. That plan was based on fire projections showing the burn continuing to move slowly across cooler, moister slopes early in the month, crossing to hotter, drier areas at the end of September when weather was expected to cool and burning conditions to become more moderate.

“It would have been great to have treated more acres to reduce hazardous fuels, but burning conditions changed,” said Greene. “A warmer and drier weather pattern settled in over the area and caused the fire to grow more quickly than would work with that goal. If we had let the fire grow to the 2500 acre size under those conditions, it would have burned too hot on south facing slopes and left the area with severe fire damage. At the beginning of the fire, we developed a number of potential strategies just in case conditions changed, and when they did, we were ready.”

Fire suppression strategies are based on many factors, including risks to public and firefighter safety, type and condition of fuels, weather, land management objectives, values to protect, and available firefighting assets.

The Onion Fire has been staffed with fire fighters since detection on August 22. When the fire increased activity on Saturday, September 3, additional fire crews and aviation support were assigned. At its peak, the fire had 85 fire fighters working on it as well as two medium-duty helicopters and twenty support personnel in Fort Jones and Yreka. Twenty fire fighters are expected to be released from the fire on Tuesday. Remaining fire crews will continue to mop-up and patrol within containment lines.

“The Onion Fire has been very successful,” remarked David Betz, Deputy District Ranger on the Salmon-Scott Ranger District. “Fire was safely reintroduced to an area that hadn’t seen burning in a long time. Accumulated hazardous fuels have been reduced under moderate burning conditions and at a time when fire fighting resources were available to take any needed action. Fuels reduction has improved forest health and the safety of private property in the area, and will provide safer conditions for fire fighters to take action on future fire starts.”

Location: 10 air miles southeast of Cecilville, CA **Estimated Fire Size:** 560 acres

Jurisdiction: USDA Forest Service, Salmon-Scott Ranger District, Klamath National Forest.

Cause: Lightning **Injuries:** 0 **Resources:** **Total Personnel:** 105 **Evacuations:** None.

Closures: None at this time; hunters and Forest users may see smoke or firefighters in the area of Lady Gulch Trail.

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