

# Jolly Mountain Wildfire costs surpass an estimated \$24 million

## Containment: 40%

### Type 3 Team in on Monday

UPPER KITTITAS COUNTY – Since Friday, Aug. 11, the Jolly Mountain Wildfire grew from 327 (0.5 square miles) to 36,808 acres (57.5 square miles) on Tuesday, Sept. 19, when the number of firefighters attached to the incident dropped dramatically to 136 from 828 on Sept. 9, when crews peaked. Personnel attached to the fire at outbreak: 70.

The good news is that Monday the smoke blanket suffocating the Upper County lifted and the region got its first sprinkling of rain in weeks.

Tuesday the sheriff reported the City of Cle Elum was the first to break out of evacuation status into the Green Zone, while Ronald and Roslyn dropped to Evacuation Level 1 and parts of the Teanaway and the Lake Cle Elum area remained at Level 2 or 3. Read the sheriff's complete evacuation report, which includes closures, further into this story.

Last weekend in a farewell briefing to fire crews before his Type 1 team transitioned to Type 3, Pacific Northwest Team 2 Incident Commander **Chris Schulte** complimented night crews and the burnouts

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JOLLY MOUNTAIN

# WILDFIRE...

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...they managed by saying, "Absolutely everything is falling together. You did a great job."

Incident Command Operations Chief **John Szulc** echoed the commander: "I gotta hand it to ya. You guys have done a really great job. We're going to turn over very nice tactics to the incoming team. This is a huge, huge thank you to the night shift. You all did some incredible work under nighttime conditions."

**Tom Roche** is the new Type 3 Team Incident Commander. A number of division supervisors and leaders stayed behind to ensure a smooth transition and continued effectiveness.

According to the Central Washington Interagency Communications Center in Wenatchee the Jolly Mountain Fire was one of 55 wildfires breaking out in Kittitas County since April 15, the start of the wildfire season.

At the state level, FOX News reported last week wildfires in Washington have consumed 300,000 acres. Although cost estimates were not available at press time, the Northwest Interagency Coordination

Center (NWCC) estimated Tuesday that the costs for Washington and Oregon combined had exceeded \$356 million.

This week U.S. Secretary of Agriculture **Sonny Perdue** said, "Wildfire suppression costs for the fiscal year have exceeded \$2 billion, making 2017 the most expensive year on record. The previous record was \$1.7 billion in 2015.

"More than 27,000 people supported firefighting activities during peak western fire season. The Forest Service has been at Preparedness Level 5, the highest level, for 35 days as of Sept. 14. Approximately 2.2 million acres of National Forest system lands burned in that time."

### Incident Command Update: Sept. 19

"Incident Command reported the wildfire is being managed for full suppression, meaning the objective is to have the fire fully contained.

"Fire managers anticipate that it will continue to burn until a season-ending precipitation event occurs in the region.

"Objectives: With safety considered, a suppression

strategy has been implemented to protect private and commercial property, infrastructure, and land within Roslyn, Cle Elum, Lake Cle Elum communities, the Middle Fork Teanaway River corridor and surrounding communities, in addition to infrastructure on lands managed by the Forest Service, the Washington Dept. of Natural Resources, the Teanaway Community Forest, and The Nature Conservancy.

"Firefighters are working to minimize impacts to White Bark Pine, Bull Trout, Northern Spotted Owl, and Steelhead trout habitat, and to safely reduce impacts to cultural and archaeological resources, recreation opportunities, and timber and grazing lands.

"Mop-up operations will make the likelihood of escape low and will be done based on experience, terrain fuel type, fuel conditions, and current and expected weather patterns.

"To ensure clear communication, understanding, and concurrency of strategies and tactics, fire personnel will keep local city, county, and state representatives informed on planned suppression actions taken on their lands.

"Firefighters are working to identify and repair damage resulting from fire suppression activities to prevent long-term environmental degradation of the land and its natural resources, and to encourage recovery.

"Planned actions: Continue to hold and improve the indirect line south of Salmon La Sac with the desired outcome to prevent the fire's spread toward values at risk. Holding and mop-up operations will continue along SR903.

"Mop-up and patrol will continue from the southwest portion of the fire, along the southern flank of the fire, east to the Tean-



RESIDENTIAL GREETINGS, like this one on South Oakes Avenue in Cle Elum, were erected along fire crew routes to show support to everyone involved. N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jana Stoner photo - 2017

### Fire Growth and Personnel



## CONTAIN FIRE

the fire, east to the Teanaway River.

"Firing operations are complete along the North Fork of the Teanaway River to Johnson Creek. All summer homes are secured and the fire's eastern progression has been halted.

"Patrol and mop-up actions are in place to secure the fire's edge.

"Aerial ignition operations are complete.

"Backhaul of surplus equipment is ongoing.

"Suppression repair work will begin, and crews will start to scout and gather information on repair needs.

"Fire growth will be minimal as the fire has reached containment lines on the east, south, and west flanks. Little to no spread can be expected to the north. Precipitation is forecasted for the fire area."

*SOURCE: Incident Command*

### Closures and Evacuation Levels Tuesday Sept. 19

U.S. Forest Service lands in the upper Cle Elum Valley are closed one mile north of Roslyn on SR903 and east to SR97. The Forest Service is tentatively planning to reopen French Cabin Creek Bridge and everything to the west of that location.

Nature Conservancy lands east of Lake Cle Elum

Jolly Mountain Fire.

On Sunday, Sept. 17, when Incident Command reported the wildfire at 36,808 acres and 40% contained, National Guard personnel were demobilized and sent home.

### Public Meetings

Incident Command held six public meetings between August 11 and September 12.

### INCIWEB's estimate for containment

Sunday, Oct. 15, on or about midnight.

### Norse Peak and Sawmill Creek fire updates

Tuesday, Sept. 19

Because the Norse Peak Wildfire has been one of the sources of smoke in our region, here's the latest on that incident, along with an update on the Sawmill Creek Wildfire.

### Norse Peak Wildfire

Location: About 34 miles west of Ellensburg, and about 24 miles southwest of Cle Elum. Outbreak: Friday, Aug. 11. Cause: Multiple lightning strikes. Size: 56,355 acres. (88 square miles). Personnel: 654. Containment: 80%.

### Sawmill Creek Wildfire

Location: In the Sawmill Ridge area northeast of the town of Greenwater, about 32 miles west of Cle Elum.



THE NKC Tribune and readers thank the crews staffing Incident Command's media outreach group. Shown here is Public Information Officer (PIO) Sunshine Meitzner, who left for her home in Alaska on Tuesday. Good name for a wildfire closer: Sunshine. Photo courtesy of Sunshine Meitzner

are still closed.

All Washington Dept. of Natural Resources lands in the Teanaway River corridor west of SR97 are still closed. That includes all campgrounds in the Teanaway Community Forest.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest have banned all campfires.

**Evacuation Level 3:** From Night Sky Drive to Boulder Creek, including Salmon La Sac HOA and the Paris Creek area.

**Evacuation Level 2:** From Ronald to Night Sky Drive, and in the West, Middle and North Fork Teanaway.

**Evacuation Level 1:** Ronald and Roslyn.

Green Zone: Cle Elum.

### National Guard

On Wednesday, Sept. 6, at the request of the Kittitas County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), the National Guard was activated to assist with roadblocks, traffic control and firefighting efforts on the Jolly Mountain Fire.

On Sunday, Sept. 17, when Incident Command

Outbreak: Monday, Sept. 4. Cause: Under investigation. Size: 1,061 acres (1.6 square miles). Personnel: 228. Containment: 0%.

*SOURCE: InciWeb*

### Cle Elum Transfer Station

On Tuesday, Sept. 19, a spokesperson at the Cle

Elum Transfer Station on the No. 5 Mine Road, across from the Cle Elum-Roslyn school district campus, said residents in the Upper County firewising their homes and/or creating defensible space would no longer be able to dispose of vegetation at no cost. Questions: 509-962-7542.



THE NATIONAL GUARD was mobilized and sent to the Jolly Mountain Wildfire on Wednesday, Sept. 6. They were demobilized and sent home on Sunday, Sept. 17. They assisted with security, support and fire suppression. Courtesy of Incident Command

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