

## **Sequoia wildfire forces closures at Kings Canyon National Park, with more expected**

By Joshua Tehee

Modesto Bee, Fresno Bee and other papers, Monday, Sept. 20, 2021

Large portions of a second California national park have now been closed due to the KNP Complex Fire, with more closures expected to come.

The fire continues to burn uncontained inside Sequoia National Park and has grown to 23,743 acres in just over a week since it started. That national park remains closed with evacuations ordered for nearby communities.

On Sunday, Kings Canyon National Park announced the closures of much of its land due to the fire. On the same day, the Tulare County Sheriff also issued an evacuation warning for the Wilsonia area inside the park.

The full closures include: all lands within the boundaries of Sequoia National Park west of the Pacific Crest Trail; all lands of in the park west of the Generals Highway and south of Highway 180 and all lands within the park wilderness west of the Pacific Crest Trail and south of the ridgeline, north of Ionian Basin.

All campgrounds in Kings Canyon National Park are closed, through Sept. 25 at least. This includes campgrounds in Cedar Grove and Grant Grove. The groves themselves remain open, though they could close with little notice and guests should prepare for hazardous air quality, smoke and low visibility.

All concession services including lodging, retail, and food service are also closed and access into wilderness from Kings Canyon trailheads is no longer permitted.

A map of closures in both parks is available online at [go.nps.gov/SEKIClosures](https://www.nps.gov/SEKIClosures).

### **LITTLE GROWTH TOWARD THREE RIVERS**

While areas of Three Rivers are under evacuation (both mandatory and at the warning level), the fire had little progress toward the community over the weekend and crews continue to establish dozer lines and reinforce existing containment features, such as the Shepherd Saddle Road, which lies between Three Rivers and the current fire footprint

Structure protection is underway in cabin communities along Mineral King Road and direct suppression efforts will occur as weather conditions permit.

### **WINDY FIRE**

Meanwhile, an equally large wildfire continues to burn to the south, 25 miles east of Porterville on the Tule River Indian Reservation and in the Giant Sequoia National Monument inside Sequoia National Forest. The Windy Fire has burned 23,801 acres and is just 4 percent contained. It continues to threaten Johnsondale, the M-50/190 road, and Trail of 100 Giants and Cunningham sequoia groves. It is spreading east to the Kern River, Peppermint Camp and Upper and Lower Peppermint and to the north, impacting the Red Hill Grove, Threatening Ponderosa, Johnsondale and Fairview. In the southwest it is moving toward Redwood Corral.

## **4 famous giant trees unharmed by Sequoia National Park fire**

The Associated Press

In the Modesto Bee, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Monday, Sept. 20, 2021

THREE RIVERS, CALIF. - Four famous giant sequoias were not harmed by a wildfire that reached the edge of Giant Forest in California's Sequoia National Park, authorities said.

The Four Guardsmen, a group of trees that form a natural entryway on the road to the forest, were successfully protected from the KNP Complex fire by the removal of nearby vegetation and by wrapping fire-resistant material around the bases of the trees, the firefighting management team said in a statement Sunday.

The KNP Complex began as two lightning-sparked fires that eventually merged and has scorched more than 37 square miles (96 square kilometers) in the heart of sequoia country on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada.

There was no immediate word, however, on the extent of damage in several other sequoia groves reached by a separate blaze, the Windy Fire, in the Giant Sequoia National Monument area of Sequoia National Forest and the Tule River Indian Reservation.

The Windy Fire has burned through the Peyrone and Red Hill groves, as well as a portion of the Long Meadow Grove along the Trail of 100 Giants.

“Generally fires can be destructive however low-intensity fires can be beneficial to giant sequoia trees. A damage assessment will be done in these groves when it is safe to do so,” a Sequoia National Forest statement said Sunday.

The Windy Fire has scorched more than 37 square miles (95 square kilometers).

The KNP Complex forced the evacuation of Sequoia National Park last week, and on Sunday much of adjacent Kings Canyon National Park was closed. Visitors to areas that were still open were warned of hazardous air quality due to smoke.

A large area of Northern California was under a red flag warning for extreme fire danger Monday due to dry offshore winds that can raise fire danger.

The warning did not extend into Southern California, but forecasters said there would be weak Santa Ana winds and significant warming — elevating the risk of wildfires.

Historic drought tied to climate change is making wildfires harder to fight. It has killed millions of trees in California alone. Scientists say climate change has made the West much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

More than 7,000 wildfires in California this year have damaged or destroyed more than 3,000 homes and other buildings and torched well over 3,000 square miles (7,770 square kilometers) of land, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

## **KNP Complex, Windy Fire boom – force closure of Kings Canyon Nat'l Park**

By Alex Tavlian

The Sun, Monday, Sept. 20, 2021

Kings Canyon National Park joined its neighbor, Sequoia National Park, in being almost entirely closed by U.S. National Park Service officials due to concerns of wildfire spread in the KNP Complex, a Sunday bulletin said.

The complex, comprised of two different fires ignited by a lightning storm last week, has now boomed to 21,777 acres consumed.

A Saturday update by U.S. Forest Service officials stated that the fire had reached into Sequoia National Park's Giant Forest, touching an area known as “the Four Guardsmen.”

Per officials, “trees had been thoroughly prepped in recent days” and the General Sherman Tree did not see fire.

### **Kings Canyon National Park closure information**

The closure of Kings Canyon National Park affects all portions of the park west of Generals Highway and south of Highway 180 and all park lands within the wilderness west of the Pacific Crest Trail and south of the ridge line lying north of Ionian Basin.

Campgrounds in Kings Canyon were closed on Saturday through at least Sept. 25, including in Cedar Grove and Grant Grove.

While the campgrounds are closed, the two groves remain open to visitors, though smoke, limited visibility, and poor air quality are advised.

Concessionaires within the park closed up on Sunday and wilderness access from Kings Canyon trailheads were shuttered.

### **Windy Fire picks up steam, too**

The Windy Fire, another lightning-ignited blaze within the Sequoia National Forest, continues to burn out on the Tule River Indian Reservation.

The fire now sits at 21,598 acres, but is 3 percent contained, fire officials said in a Sunday morning update.

Currently, the Tulare County Sheriff's Department has issued evacuation warnings for Camp Nelson and surrounding communities.

Evacuation orders remain in effect for Johnsondale and Camp Whitsett, including M107 at Dome Rock, east to Lloyd Meadow Road (22S82), south to M99 at Sherman Pass Road, west to M107 and M50.

Additional evacuation orders are in effect for Ponderosa and Quaking Aspen. The area of warning includes M107 at Dome Rock, north to Highway 190/M90 at North Road (21S50), east to Route 21S05, at Needles Trail, south to Lloyd Meadow at Lower Peppermint Road (22S82).

Those evacuating should avoid all road closures and use Highway 190 to Porterville.

Porterville College continues to serve as the temporary evacuation point providing relocation assistance and information.

### **Portions of Kings Canyon National Park closed due to KNP Complex, now 0% contained**

By Sheyanne N Romero

Visalia Times-Delta, Monday, Sept. 20, 2021

As predicted, extreme fire activity was reported on Sunday in the Sequoia National park and forest.

The Windy and KNP Complex fires forced additional closures and evacuation warnings throughout the weekend. The fires also grew significantly and now have a combined acreage burned of 47,544.

#### **Windy Fire**

On Sunday, there was strong northwest wind, which caused rapid downhill runs. The fire is now at 23,801 acres with 4% containment.

The fire made a 2 to 3 mile run on Sunday and is burning toward the Kern River, Operations Section Chief Seth Mitchell said.

Due to the fire activity, the Sequoia National Forest expanded the Windy Fire Area, Roads, and Trails Closure Order. Forest Supervisor Teresa Benson announced the closure, stating the fire continues to show "aggressive behavior."

"The fire is continuing to spread across the forest posing an extreme threat to public and firefighter safety," Benson said. "Over the last week, many of our mountain communities are once again threatened, with evacuations and evacuation warnings in place."

The roads and trails within the Windy Fire Closure Area are closed, along with Cherry Hill and Big Meadow roads. These roads were closed to prevent hunters from getting trapped behind closed gates.

The forest closure will remain in effect until Dec. 31.

#### **Road closures:**

- Western Divide Highway is closed at North Road intersection near Quaking Aspen Campground to M50 above California Hot Springs.
- M99 is closed above Kernville at Sherman Pass intersection.

- M99 is closed north of McNally's Fairview Lodge at 7300 Kern River Highway going north towards Sherman Pass.

**Evacuations orders:**

- Johnsondale and Camp Whitsett, including M107 at Dome Rock, east to Lloyd Meadow Road, south to M99 at Sherman Pass Road, west to M107 and M50.
- Ponderosa and Quaking Aspen. The area of warning includes M107 at Dome Rock, north to Highway 190 at North Road, east to Route 21S05, at Needles Trail, south to Lloyd Meadow at Lower Peppermint Road.

Camp Nelson and surrounding communities are under an evacuation warning.

**KNP Complex**

Much like the Windy Fire, KNP Complex continues to threaten mountain communities in Tulare County.

The fire is now 23,743 acres, with 0% containment.

A new evacuation warning was issued for the Wilsonia area of Kings Canyon National Park. The warning includes all structures, side roads, associated roads and forest service roads.

Large portions of Kings Canyon National Park have now been closed, with further closures expected.

The closure includes:

- All lands within the boundaries of Sequoia National Park west of the Pacific Crest Trail.
- All lands of Kings Canyon National Park west of the Generals Highway and south of Highway 180.
- All lands within the wilderness of Kings Canyon National Park west of the Pacific Crest Trail and south of the ridgeline which lies north of Ionian Basin.

All campgrounds in Kings Canyon National Park are closed through at least Sept. 25. This includes all campgrounds in Cedar Grove and Grant Grove. All concession services are closed, and access into wilderness from Kings Canyon trailheads is no longer permitted.

Grant Grove and Cedar Grove are open, but visitors should prepare for poor air quality, smoke, and low visibility. Visitor services are very limited in these areas.

Sequoia National Park remains closed to the public.

**Windy, KNP Complex fires burn over 40,000 acres of Sequoia National park and forest lands**

By Sheyanne N Romero

Visalia Times-Delta, Sunday, Sept. 19, 2021

Roughly 1,500 firefighters are on high-alert as three wildfires continue to grow in the Sequoia National park and forest.

Today is expected to be another active fire day with winds reaching up to 40 mph. As of Sunday morning, the Windy and KNP Complex fires have burned a combined 39,852 acres — up 10,000 acres from the day before.

*UPDATE 11:30 a.m.:* The Windy Fire is 21,598 acres with 3% containment.

The fire grew Saturday afternoon across the Western Divide Highway and south to Johnsondale, Camp Whitsitt, and toward the Kern River. The fire also burned north and reached the Castle Fire burn scar impacting the communities of Peppermint, Camp Nelson, Ponderosa, and Quaking Aspen.

The Windy Fire burned through the Peyrone and Red Hill groves, and a portion of the Long Meadow Grove along the Trail of 100 Giants. The fire reached the edge of and skirted along the Long Meadow Grove, U.S. Forest Service officials stated.

A damage assessment will be done in these groves when it's safe to do so.

### **Windy Fire**

The Windy Fire is now at 18,075 acres. The fire burning in the Giant Sequoia National Monument is 0% contained.

Winds will increase throughout Sunday and shift from the west to northwest by the afternoon. These shifting, gusty winds could cause challenges for crews.

An evacuation order was issued on Saturday for the communities of Ponderosa and Quaking Aspen.

The area includes Western Divide Highway at Dome Rock, north to Highway 190 at North Road, east to Route 21S05, at Needles Trail, south to Lloyd Meadow at Lower Peppermint Road.

Firefighters are prioritizing defending Johnsondale — also under a mandatory evacuation order — and the Trail of 100 Giants, a famed sequoia grove at the heart of the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

The communities of Camp Nelson, Pierpoint, Coy Flat, Mountain Aire, Cedar Slope, Alpine Village, Rogers Camp, and Sequoia Crest are under evacuation warnings.

A temporary evacuation point where residents can access information and services has been established at Porterville College.

### **KNP Complex**

The Paradise and Colony fires merged and the complex is now 21,777 acres with 0% containment.

On Saturday, the fire reached the Red Fir maintenance area. The fire also reached a small area of the Giant Forest known as the Four Guardsmen. It's expected to grow.

Despite the fire reaching the area, fuel removal efforts by firefighters and structure wrap applied by crews to the base of the sequoia trees, these "national treasures" have been protected, park official stated.

Fire hasn't reached The General Sherman Tree, yet.

Crews at the KNP Complex are also preparing for changes and possible significant increases in fire activity. A Red Flag Warning is in effect for the region until 8 p.m. Sunday.

There have been no changes to evacuation warnings or orders at this time. Sequoia National Park remains closed to the public.

### **Windy Fire grows to 18,000 acres. Region now under Red Flag Warning**

Sheyanne N Romero

Visalia Times-Delta, Friday, September 18, 2021

The Windy Fire was ignited on the Tule River Indian Reservation during an intense Sept. 9 thunderstorm that lit up California, also sparking the KNP Complex threatening Sequoia National Park to the north.

The fire is roughly 12,370 acres with 0% containment.

With resources across the state and nation strained, firefighters are prioritizing existing barriers — roadways, rivers, and ridges — to contain the fire's spread.

*Update 7:45 p.m.:* The Windy Fire grew roughly 6,000 acres in less than a day and is now at 18,075 acres. The fire burning in the Giant Sequoia National Monument is 0% contained.

"Firefighters faced very active to extreme fire behavior driven by the winds associated with the passage of a cold front today," U.S. Forest Service officials stated.

A Red Flag Warning is in effect until 8 p.m. Sunday. Shifting winds along with the very dry air and very dry fuels have created a challenge for firefighters.

Peak winds on Sunday could be more than 40 mph, forest service officials said.

M99 has been closed just north of McNally's Fairview Lodge at 7300 Kern River Highway going north towards Shirman Pass. Tulare County residents can sign up to receive county emergency notifications by registering at [AlertTC.com](http://AlertTC.com).

### **More evacuation orders issued for Windy Fire**

An evacuation order was issued for the communities of Ponderosa and Quaking Aspen.

The area includes Western Divide Highway at Dome Rock, north to Highway 190 at North Road, east to Route 21S05, at Needles Trail, south to Lloyd Meadow at Lower Peppermint Road.

An evacuation order means an immediate threat to life, safety, and property and all residents and visitors must leave now before the fire reaches the community.

If residents are unable to evacuate and need help, they can call 9-1-1. Avoid all road closures and use Highway 190 to Porterville.

A road closure is in place for Western Divide Highway from Highway 190 to M50 at Parker Pass. There will be a roadblock at Highway 190 and Redwood – only residents of Cedar Slope will be allowed through with proof of residency.

Firefighters are prioritizing defending Johnsondale — also under a mandatory evacuation order — and the Trail of 100 Giants, a famed sequoia grove at the heart of the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

The communities of Camp Nelson, Pierpoint, Coy Flat, Mountain Aire, Cedar Slope, Alpine Village, Rogers Camp, and Sequoia Crest are under evacuation warnings.

A temporary evacuation point where residents can access information and services has been established at Porterville College.

### **Burning on all sides**

On Friday night, the fire burned north to Slate Mountain and has burned a portion of the Slate Mountain Botanical area on the Giant Sequoia National Monument. It also crossed the Western Divide Highway on the south end and reached the Trail of 100 Giants.

"Firefighters are doing everything they can to protect the Trail of 100 Giants Sequoias and the large trees elsewhere in the fire area," fire officials stated. "The goal is to manage a low intensity fire around the big trees that is beneficial for them."

The fire is burning on all sides and is backing downslope on the western perimeter on the Tule River Reservation to the Road 212. As of Saturday, the fire hadn't crossed the road.

Protective measures are being made to preserve seasonal cabins on the Tule River Reservation.

The fire is expected to grow Saturday and Sunday.

Gusty winds are headed for the region and may push the fire north, toward the KNP Complex burning in Sequoia National Park. A Red Flag Warning, indicating high wildfire threat, will be in effect across the region beginning 5 p.m. Saturday.