

## **New wildfire prompts evacuations in Northern California**

By the Associated Press

In the Bakersfield Californian, Sacramento Bee and other paper, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021

REDDING, Calif. (AP) — Evacuations were ordered Thursday in a Northern California community as a new wildfire spread, authorities said.

The Shasta County Sheriff's Office issued a mandatory evacuation order because of the Fawn Fire burning in the unincorporated Mountain Gate area north of the city of Redding at the far north end of the Central Valley.

Residents were told to temporarily gather in a parking lot at Shasta College in Redding. The number of residents affected was not immediately known. People living in other areas were warned to be prepared to leave if more evacuations are ordered.

The fire has grown to more than 1 square mile (3.2 square kilometers) since it started Wednesday afternoon and was just 5% contained.

Statewide, more than 9,000 firefighters remained assigned to 10 large, active wildfires, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

California fires have burned 3,671 square miles (9,507 square kilometers) this year, destroying more than 3,200 homes, commercial properties and other structures.

Those fires include two big forest blazes growing in the heart of California's giant sequoia country on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada.

On Wednesday, officials showed reporters how Sequoia National Park's famous Giant Forest has been protected from the KNP Complex fire by years of using carefully set and controlled fires to burn away vegetation that can serve as wildfire fuel.

The bases of some of the most famous giant sequoias were also wrapped in fire-resistant materials. Giant Forest has 2,000 sequoias and includes the General Sherman Tree, the largest tree in the world by volume.

The fear of catastrophic fire coming through that section of the national park has been greatly reduced due to the combination of the prescribed burns and the low intensity of the fire that moved into part of the forest, said Ed Christopher, deputy fire director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"And because of that we feel that the majority of the trees in this Giant Forest area should come out of this event like they have for the past thousands of years," he said.

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.

The KNP Complex began as two fires ignited by lightning on Sept. 9. The fires later merged into one and have scorched more than 51 square miles (132 square kilometers). Sequoia and adjacent Kings Canyon National Park have been closed. Several communities are under evacuation orders or warnings for people to be prepared to leave.

Nearby, the Windy Fire has burned through nearly 57 square miles (148 square kilometers) on the Tule River Indian Reservation and in Sequoia National Forest, including Giant Sequoia National Monument.

Also ignited by lightning on Sept. 9, the Windy Fire has forced evacuation of small forest communities but no privately owned structures had burned as of Thursday morning. A fire lookout structure and a radio repeater site on a peak were destroyed by the blaze.

The fire has moved through several groves of giant sequoias and damaged one of the big trees on the famed Trail of 100 Giants. An expert from Yosemite National Park was expected to examine the groves on Thursday.

## **Gavin Newsom visits KNP fire near Fresno; signs \$15 billion climate change bills**

By Joahua Tehee

Merced Sun-Star, Modesto Bee and other papers, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021

SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK - California Gov. Gavin Newsom remembers standing with former President Donald Trump amid the devastation of the Paradise Fire and thinking he wouldn't see anything like it again in his life time.

Two years later, California saw the worst fire season in its history.

Currently, there are 10 large, active wildfires burning across the state and some 2.35 million acres have been destroyed in what the governor sees as direct impact of climate crisis.

"You can't deny your own eyes," Newsom said Thursday during a press conference at the entrance to Sequoia National Park, just a mile from the KNP Complex Fire line.

"This is not debatable any longer," Newsom said, amid thick smoke and falling ash at a podium in front of an iconic national park sign that recently was covered in aluminum and fiberglass as protection from the wildfire.

Newsom was at the park to sign AB 170, a more than \$15 billion package of legislation aimed at combating the impacts of climate crisis, including wildfires. The package, which includes \$1.5 billion for wildfire prevention and suppression, is an "unprecedented commitment," by California, and also invests in drought response efforts and water resilience, clean transportation and sustainable agriculture.

The bill allocates close to \$5 billion for immediate drought response, which Newsom said will include water storage in a broad sense. It puts \$3.9 billion toward making California a dominant force in the electric vehicle market.

The \$1.9 billion in wildfire funds will go to both suppression and prevention efforts, something that has been long overlooked.

"It can't just be more Cal Fire engines," Newsom said, as just such an engine passed along the highway toward the fire.

Newsom was pointed in contrasting this legislation with what is happening on the national level, at one point calling out senate minority leader Mitch McConnell to "put down the swords, rhetorically and otherwise," and take action on what he called the "smash mouth realities," of climate crisis.

"Here we are in California getting things done," Newsom said.

The choice of location was an intentional nod to the true and lasting impacts of the climate crisis, beyond the rising temperatures.

"Climate is not just about degrees and decarbonization," Newsom said.

"You can't rebuild giant Sequoias. You can replant them and come back in 3,000 years."

Newsom remembers coming to Sequoia National Park with his dad. He wasn't able to find the picture of them in front of the General Sherman Tree, but the governor said he was sure one exists. He contrasted that with his own sons.

## **Two Sequoia wildfires have each passed 30,000 acres. Forest officials clamp down**

By Thaddeus Miller

The Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021

The KNP Complex Fire grew by almost 5,000 acres overnight as it spreads in a difficult area for fire crews to reach, according to officials.

The fire has scorched 33,046 acres since lightning sparked the blaze on Sept. 9, and has drawn more than 1,500 firefighters and other personnel to the Sequoia National Forest, the National Park Service said Thursday.

Sequoia National Park is closed to the public and large portions of Kings Canyon National Park have also been closed. Communities further from the parks are feeling air quality impacts, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The fire teams have prioritized life and property in the communities near the park, but also are working to protect the giant sequoias, infrastructure and other facilities in the park.

Some flames have been allowed to burn in areas with vegetation that is away from protected areas, fire officials said. Crews and bulldozers are working to create a barrier to protect Three Rivers, Silver City, Hartland and surrounding communities.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom was in Sequoia National Park on Thursday to visit the site of the KNP Complex Fire. He signed a \$15 billion-plus climate package.

### **WINDY FIRE**

The Windy Fire, which is also in the Sequoia National Forest, has burned 36,249 acres on the Tule River Indian Reservation, officials said. It's 6% contained.

Nearly 1,500 personnel are working towards containment.

The fire has affected several giant sequoia groves, and a Yosemite National Park adviser is on hand to assess the trees in question, including Bench Tree from the Trail of 100 Giants.

Evacuation orders remain in place.

No privately owned structures have been damaged or lost to the blaze, officials said. The Sequoia National Forest did lose the Mule Peak Lookout and its radio repeater early on during the wildfire. Despite being wrapped in fire-resistant material, they faced "extreme burning conditions and strong winds."

Crews are working along the Trail of 100 Giants, spraying hot spots around the giant sequoias and bringing down smaller hazard trees in that area that have already burned, crews said.

### **CAMPING RESTRICTIONS**

The Sierra National Forest tightened temporary fire restrictions on Thursday because of the extreme fire dangers, officials said. Some restriction have already been in place since June 24.

Campfires are prohibited temporarily in developed recreation sites and wilderness areas Thursday through Nov. 15, forest officials said. Visitors with a valid California Campfire permit may still use a portable stove or lantern as long as the device has a shut-off valve.

Campfires that got out of control have been a problem in the past, according to Forest Supervisor Dean Gould.

"We share a responsibility to do what we reasonably can on the SNF to reduce the risk of wildfire, while being mindful that first responder resources are stretched very thin state-wide as well as nationally," he said in a news release.

A number of other fire, fireworks and smoking restrictions are also in place. For the full list, email [SM.FS.Sierraninfo@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.Sierraninfo@usda.gov). Or call a ranger station local to the campsite: High Sierra Ranger District, 559-855-5355; Bass Lake Ranger District, 559-877-2218; Supervisor's Office, 559-297-0706.

### **Wildfire updates: Caldor Fire still active; latest on Sequoia fires, Dixie Fire**

By Michael McGough

Sacramento Bee & Modesto Bee, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021

Fire officials are asking El Dorado County residents to remain vigilant as the Caldor Fire remains active, even as most mandatory evacuation orders have been lifted for well-populated areas near Lake Tahoe.

"While fire personnel have made considerable progress in containing the Caldor Fire, the fight is NOT over!" the U.S. Forest Service's Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit wrote in a news release and social media posts Wednesday evening.

“The fire is not out or fully contained. Please remain vigilant and be mindful of what is happening in your community.”

The blaze, which ignited Aug. 14 south of Pollock Pines, was reported Wednesday evening at 220,877 acres (345 square miles) with 76% containment. It has become the 14th largest wildfire in California’s recorded history, overtaking the 220,000-acre Matilija Fire from 1932.

Highway 50, closed for just over a month by the Caldor Fire, reopened for general travel this week. The last remaining closure, between Kyburz and Meyers, was lifted by Caltrans and law enforcement Tuesday morning.

Cal Fire and the Forest Service in incident reports said the fire has remained active this week due to gusty southwesterly winds and low humidity.

The agencies say they are planning a firing operation to prevent spread toward Christmas Valley, a hamlet of cabins several miles south of Lake Tahoe, tucked between Highway 50 and Highway 89.

### SEQUOIA FIRES

Two incidents, the KNP Complex and Windy Fire, burning in Sequoia National Park and Sequoia National Forest grew active this week amid wind, threatening historic groves of sequoia trees.

The KNP Complex, ignited by lightning Sept. 10, as of Thursday morning had burned 33,046 acres with no reported containment, according to an update from Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks.

Crews are working to protect the Giant Forest Sequoia Grove.

The Windy Fire, burning on the Tule River Indian Reservation and in Sequoia National Forest, was 36,249 acres with 6% containment as of Wednesday evening, and is also threatening giant sequoia groves.

Numerous evacuation orders have been issued, including for Camp Nelson, Pierpoint, Coy Flat, Mountain Aire, Cedar Slope, Alpine Village, Rogers Camp and Sequoia Crest.

### DIXIE FIRE

Crews are nearing full containment on the mammoth Dixie Fire, California’s second-largest wildfire incident ever recorded.

Burning since July 13 in parts of Butte, Lassen, Plumas, Shasta and Tehama counties, the blaze as of Thursday morning had reached 963,276 acres (1,505 square miles) but is 94% contained.

Crews are still observing hot spots, Cal Fire and Forest Service officials said in a Wednesday incident update, but containment lines are holding.

### FAWN FIRE

The Fawn Fire, a new incident that sparked Wednesday near Shasta Lake in Shasta County, as of Thursday morning was 150 acres and 5% contained, according to Cal Fire.

The Shasta County Sheriff’s Office has issued evacuation warnings for parts of the Mountain Gate area.

## **Air quality rises to unhealthy levels in Fresno, Clovis region from Sequoia wildfires**

By Tim Sheehan

Sacramento Bee and other papers, Wednesday, Sept. 22, 2021

The KNP Complex and Windy fires that continue to rage out of control in Sequoia National Park and the Sequoia National Forest in Tulare County are pumping increasing volumes of smoke into the air in the central San Joaquin Valley, creating unhealthy conditions in some parts of the Valley.

An air quality alert issued by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is in effect because of smoke from the fires. That alert runs through at least Thursday morning, when a change in the weather is expected to push through the San Joaquin Valley and help disperse the pollution.

The air district had forecast hazardous air quality for Wednesday in the mountains of eastern Tulare County, and unhealthy levels on the Valley floor of the county. Moderate air quality was forecast for Kings, Fresno, Madera and Merced counties on Wednesday, but different locations were experiencing varying levels of pollution throughout Wednesday morning and into the early afternoon.

“If you can smell smoke and see ash, that is an indication that you are being affected by poor air quality,” a statement posted by the air district to its website said.

In Fresno and Clovis, many residents awoke Wednesday to find the sky shrouded in gray by smoke from the wildfires, turning the typically bright sun to a muddy orange ball. The air quality in the metro area deteriorated throughout the morning, from “moderate” in the pre-dawn hours to “very unhealthy” by noon, according to the air district’s [Real-Time Air Advisory Network \(RAAN\) monitoring system](#).

In the “very unhealthy” range, people are advised to avoid any outdoor activity. The air quality levels are based on the volume of PM2.5, fine particles of soot measuring 2.5 microns or less in diameter – or about 1/25th of the diameter of a human hair. Those particles can be inhaled deep into a person’s lungs.

Air quality in downtown Visalia was reported as very unhealthy throughout most of the morning. By midday, the levels had dropped into the range of unhealthy for sensitive groups – people with asthma or other conditions that make them vulnerable to breathing problems.

“Particulate matter can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke,” the district warned in its air alert. “Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly are especially susceptible to the health effects of this form of pollution.”

District officials urged anyone affected by poor air quality to stay in an air-conditioned home or space with windows closed.

Residents can check the air district’s RAAN system for their local air quality status at [myRAAN.com](#). People without internet access can call the air district’s Fresno office at 559-230-6000.

## **New evacuation warnings for communities near Sequoia wildfire, now at nearly 30,000 acres**

By Joshua Tehee

Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and other papers, Wednesday, Sept. 22, 2021

The Tulare County Sheriff has issued a new evacuation warning for areas under threat from the KNP Complex Fire.

The communities of Eshom and Heartland Camp are now under warning, including Eshom Valley Drive, from Fresno County Line, south to Tarbell Pocket on Eshom Valley Drive and North Mountain Road, 468 north to the county line. This includes all structures, side roads, associated roads and forest service roads, according to a statement from the sheriff.

This is not a mandatory evacuation order, though residents are strongly encouraged to prepare to evacuate if it becomes a necessity. Those who may need more time to evacuate should consider leaving the area now.

The Woodlake Community Center is serving as a temporary evacuation point, where residents can find information and assistance. Those needing help with evacuating can call 2-1-1; those over 60 years old can call the senior hotline at 1-800-321-2462.

### **SMOKE POURS INTO VALLEY**

Smoke from the KNP Complex and Windy wildfires in Sequoia National Park has been slowly moving from the southeast into areas of the central San Joaquin Valley.

With it has come worsening air quality.

On Tuesday, an air quality alert was issued for the region, including Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, Tulare, San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties.

The Weather Service is predicting a trough will move through the region on Wednesday, changing winds and helping move the smoke to the southeast by Thursday.

But on Wednesday morning, areas closest to the fires, including Three Rivers, saw air quality readings in the hazardous levels. Conditions in Woodlake were very unhealthy. Levels were reading well above 150 in large swaths of Fresno and Clovis, according to the tracking site PurpleAir. AQI values above 100 are generally unhealthy.

#### KNP CONTINUES TO GROW

The KNP Complex Fire has now been burning uncontained in Sequoia National Park for close to two weeks. As of Wednesday, it had burned 28,421 acres.

Fire crews continue to monitor high-value infrastructure within the national park, including the park headquarters, museum and employee housing. Protection and fire mitigation measures are being taken for all sequoia groves within the fire area, including the Giant Forest Sequoia Grove.

Mineral King Road continues to be a high priority.

The fire was expected to move towards Lodgepole on Wednesday, and firefighters were on standby in the area.

In the western park boundary, work is being done to provide protect Three Rivers, Silver City, Hartland and surrounding communities.

A community meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. Wednesday in the Three Rivers Memorial Building, 43490 Sierra Dr. The event will also be livestreamed on Facebook. A recording of the meeting will be made available on Facebook and on the fire's Inciweb site.

#### SMALL CONTAINMENT GAINS ON WINDY FIRE

The nearby Windy Fire also continues to burn after nearly two week. As of Wednesday, the fire had burned 31,388 acres. It is 7% contained. That fire is burning on the Tule River Indian Reservation and in Giant Sequoia National Monument area of the Sequoia National Forest.

#### EVACUATION ORDERS FOR WINDY FIRE

Tulare County Sheriff's Office announced Wednesday night evacuation orders for the communities of Camp Nelson, Pierpoint, Coy Flat, Mountain Aire, Cedar Slope, Alpine Village, Rogers Camp, and Sequoia Crest due to the Windy Fire.

Sheriffs warned that 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 you are unable to evacuate your domestic animals please call Tulare County Animal Shelter Manager Cassandra Heffington at 559-679-6222. A roadblock will be in effect at Highway 190 at Wishon Campground.

Anyone in need with assistance in the evacuation may call 911.

The temporary evacuation point is at Porterville College, 100 E. College Ave. Individuals with RVs or Trailers may find information about where they can park at the College, or you may go to the International Agri-Center 4500 W. Laspina in Tulare, Gate D, where you may dry camp.

#### DONATIONS OVERWHELMING AREA BUSINESSES

Community members are being asked to route any donations for the fires through the United Way and Salvation Army.

Businesses and other locations receiving donations in the area are being overwhelmed, according to a news release from Tulare County.

"Please be advised that the firefighters on both incidents are being well cared for and have their needs met, including ample amounts of water, Gatorade, and other supplies. They are fully supported by the incident base camps," the release read.

Items for those evacuated by the fire, such as bottled water, non-perishable food, and hygiene products, should be donated through United Way of Tulare County at:

Salvation Army, 314 E. San Joaquin in Tulare, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday and Tuesday (closed 12:30-1:30 p.m.); and 2-5 p.m. Wednesday.

1501 W. Main St. in Visalia, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday and Tuesday; 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday and Friday (closed 12:30-1:30 p.m.).

Monetary donations can be done by texting FireTC to 41444. Gift cards can be donated by emailing [donatefiretc@unitedwaytc.org](mailto:donatefiretc@unitedwaytc.org).