

Sourdough Fire Update – August 18, 2023 – 9:00 a.m.

North Cascades National Park

Fire Information Line: 360-370-4169

Email: 2023.sourdough@firenet.gov

Inciweb: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/warlp-sourdough-fire>

Resources: 379 Total Personnel | 6 Hand Crews | 20 Engines | 5 Water Tenders | 7 Helicopters

(Newhalem, Wash.) -- The Sourdough Fire started with a lightning strike on July 29 near Diablo in the rugged terrain of Ross Lake National Recreation Area, 7 miles northeast of Newhalem. Firefighting teams have made significant progress in ensuring the protection of communities, highways, and infrastructure.

Infrared flights for updated acreage have been unavailable the previous four nights. Based on observations from fire personnel flying above and manually mapping the fire, the current estimate is 4,532 acres. It is noteworthy that the increase in acreage has taken place over several days and does not represent a substantial surge in fire activity overnight. The main fire growth has been in steep terrain to the north, away from populated areas. These areas, often difficult to access, naturally bring forth the imperative considerations of firefighter safety and a broader strategic approach in managing this fire. Inaccessible fires in remote areas may be monitored and extinguished by fall and winter storms, as directly intervening can pose a significant threat to firefighters. The Sourdough Fire is approximately 11% contained, but it is important to understand that containment alone is not a measure of fire management achievements.

Yesterday: Hazardous debris and rocks fell onto State Route 20 as the fire approached the control feature at the 2015 Goodell burn scar. Firefighting crews ensured no burning debris crossed the road through swift mop-up operations. Aerial teams monitored the fire's progression in the Sourdough Creek drainage and to the north. The fire's activity intensified on the northern perimeter due to hot and unstable conditions. Collaborative efforts with the National Park Service led to the repair of wind-induced rips in the protective wrap at the Sourdough lookout. Helicopters remained engaged, focusing on hotspots along the fire's perimeter.

Today: In partnership with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), firefighters plan to use drones to survey potential geohazards above State Route 20. Helicopters will continue water drops over the fire, with a key focus on the Sourdough Creek drainage and the 2015 Goodell burn scar. Crews will enhance structure protection measures around Ross Lake and Diablo, performing fuel removal, chipping, and deploying sprinkler systems.

Weather: Last night a cold front moved into the area, bringing gusty winds and cooler temperatures. The upcoming weekend may pose additional challenges, with a fire weather watch forecasting high winds, low relative humidity, and atmospheric instability for both Saturday and Sunday.

Safety: Fire danger remains extremely high. The public can help prevent the next wildland fire by observing outdoor burning bans and avoiding other common ignition causes.

Smoke: Smoke from the Sourdough Fire may affect communities around the region. Information about current conditions and a smoke forecast is located at: <https://wasmoke.blogspot.com>.

For information on how you can prepare for wildfire smoke go to:

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/smoke.html> and <https://www.wildlandfiresmoke.net/smoke-ready>

Closures and Evacuations: The State Route 20 closure has been extended due to the Blue Lake Fire on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. State Route 20 is closed between milepost 120 (Newhalem) and milepost 171 (Silver Star Campground). Trail, area and camp closures are in effect; for more information, go to: <https://www.nps.gov/noca/planyourvisit/fire-closures.htm>

