



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Prince William Forest Park

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Prince William Forest Park News Release

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Wildland Fire Update - Preventive Measures and Quick Response Eased 100% Containment

TRIANGLE, VA – On Sunday, April 2nd, 2006, a federal interagency crew of almost 70 firefighters completed the initial attack and containment phases for a wildland fire at Prince William Forest Park, a unit of the National Park Service (NPS). Over the next few weeks, Prince William Forest Park staff will continue to patrol and monitor the burned area for any possible hot spots or flare ups. The fast response and skill of local and federal fire crews and the preventive fire measures put in place by park staff are responsible for the quick containment of this fire.

Park staff provided an immediate attack once the fire was first reported on Monday, March 27th at approximately 1:30 p.m. near the Oak Ridge Campground. Within hours, assistance arrived from several local NPS areas including: Antietam National Battlefield, Monocacy National Battlefield, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Shenandoah National Park, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, Greenbelt Park, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, National Capitol Parks – East and the National Mall and Memorial Parks. The NPS crew had the fire nearly contained when the afternoon winds increased and the fire spread. Later that evening, Prince William County Fire Department had several engines on scene. The following day, additional NPS and United States Forest Service teams arrived from as far away as Kentucky and California. These two fire crews worked together throughout the week to contain the fire. In addition to the skill of the fire crews, park staff credit preventive wildland fire measures for the quick containment of this fire.

In 2004, the park began multi-year Hazardous Fuel Reduction projects in which park staff removed all dead and standing brush within 50 feet of any roadbed or park boundary line. This preventive measure aided in containing this fire by hindering the fire's ability to jump across roadbeds and

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spread onto additional forest land. Also in 2004, the park began a Wildland Hazard Assessment Methodologies (WHAM) project which assessed the fire danger to houses along the park's boundary. The WHAM information enables the Incident Commander to quickly assess whether any residences are in danger. No residences were threatened or endangered by this fire.

The fire was ruled 100% contained at 318 acres on Thursday, March 30th. A fire is considered 100% contained when a fuel break around the fire has been completed. Throughout the weekend and into Monday and Tuesday, crews in Prince William Forest Park continue mop-up activities. These activities include: extinguishing or removing burning material along or near the control line, felling snags or moving logs so they won't roll downhill. Prince William Forest Park staff and other National Park Service personnel will continue to closely monitor the fire area for any activity over the next few weeks. Investigators believe the fire to be human-caused, but are still investigating whether it was deliberate or accidental. No structures were damaged in the fire and only one minor injury occurred when a firefighter cut his hand while sharpening his chainsaw.

Any effects of the fire on the forest ecosystem are yet unknown, but Prince William Forest Park staff expect most effects to be positive. A 50-acre stand of white pine trees was engulfed by the fire. Though some damage may have been done to the standing trees, white pine seeds germinate after fire. Resource Managers in the park are eagerly looking forward to monitoring and observing regrowth and Park Rangers hope to lead fire ecology tours through the burned area once visitor safety is assured.

To protect visitor and resource safety, the Superintendent of Prince William Forest Park has closed all trails leading to the fire area and put in place a temporary "burn-ban" in the park. All camp and charcoal fires are prohibited in the park until further notice. Oak Ridge Campground, where the fire originated, is temporarily closed. Oak Ridge Trail and a portion of the South Valley Trail are also closed. Visitors are reminded to obey all posted trail closure signs. Individuals looking to camp in Prince William Forest Park may still access the Turkey Run Ridge Group Campground area (by reservation only) and the Chopawamsic Backcountry area (by permit only). For more information, call the visitor center from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 703-221-7181 or visit the park website at www.nps.gov/prwi.

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