



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks Fire Update

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Congress Fire Prompts Partial Trail Closure in Sequoia National Park

Park managers have partially closed a short section of the Congress Trail in Giant Forest due to a fire burning in the top of a giant sequoia tree. Park staff are escorting visitors through an additional short section of the trail. These restrictions are necessary due to the hazard of falling debris from the burning tree.

The following sections of trail are affected:

- A short stretch of the Congress Trail is closed between the House Group and the Senate Group of giant sequoias and will remain closed until conditions are safe for visitors.
- Hikers will be escorted through the Congress Trail segment between the junction of the Alta and Congress trails and the President Tree between 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. During hours outside of this time frame, this stretch of trail will be closed. It will be re-evaluated by Tuesday, July 9.

Ninety-five percent of the Congress Trail remains open, and visitors can hike out to the McKinley Tree.

This fire is a hold-over from the Circle Meadow Prescribed Fire, conducted in the summer of 2012 to maintain a regular fire cycle that improves forest health by reducing the amount of dead, woody debris that can lead to larger, more intense fires.

An unusual combination of conditions enabled this fire to smolder through the winter and re-surface as the weather became warmer and drier. The severe drought conditions of the past winter created the dry environment that allowed this fire to continue to burn within the giant sequoia. This is an unprecedented event unknown to have occurred previously in the 45-year history of the parks' prescribed fire program.

This fire will be closely monitored by park staff. Spot fires from falling embers will be suppressed when safe to do so.

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Mature giant sequoias are well-adapted to survive many fires during their long lives. Their thick bark and branches that are elevated far off the ground help to protect them from fire impacts to their trunks and foliage. Some sequoias will sustain fire impacts due to fuel and forest conditions, drought, and individual tree condition. These impacts may include fire scars at their bases, blackening of portions of their bark, foliage scorch, and structural changes to the tree (loss of tops or limbs). The loss of portions or all of a giant sequoia to fire or wind storms is part of the process of death and re-birth for these forests.

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