

Firefighters make big gains on Soda Complex

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson
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MENDOCINO NATIONAL FOREST – The Soda Complex reached 85-percent containment Monday, with firefighters hopeful that the last of the original four fires in the complex will be contained by Saturday.

The complex is located north and northwest of Lake Pillsbury on the Mendocino National Forest's Upper Lake Ranger District. The fires were ignited by a dry lightning storm June 21.

US Forest Service spokesman Marc Peebles reported that the last fire burning actively, the Mill Fire, had burned 2,981 acres as of Monday, a growth of only nine acres over the previous day. At the same time, containment grew from 60 percent on that fire to 80 percent.

Overall, the Soda Complex has burned 8,590 acres, with total containment rising from 79 percent Sunday to 85 percent Monday.

Peebles reported that spot fires continue to challenge firefighters on the Mill. However, he said both day and night shift crews made good progress as they continued to construct direct and indirect line around the slop over and spot fires.

He said firefighters will continue to construct indirect contingency line around the southern/eastern portion of the fire.

On the fire's east flank, between Deadmans Flat and Sunset Gap, seven residences in Lake and Mendocino counties remain under evacuation at this time, according to Peebles.

On the western and southwestern flanks, Peebles said fire crews continue to improve and hold containment lines and mop up along Thomas Creek, while multiple aircraft continue to support firefighters on the ground with water and retardant drops.

While the complex's other three fires – the Monkey Rock, Big and Back – have been contained, firefighters continue to patrol their areas, Peebles said.

The Vinegar Fire, which is part of the Yolla Bolly Complex – which now is managed as part of the Lime Complex – has burned 10,565 acres on the Mendocino National Forest and is 30-percent contained, said Forest Service spokesperson Phebe Brown.

County Deputy Air Pollution Control Officer Doug Gearhart reported Monday that the county's air quality should continue to improve this week, falling in the good to moderate range.

However, some smoke might reappear in Lake County's air basin Tuesday night and into Wednesday, Gearhart reported, as north to northwest winds are predicted. Gearhart said continued west to southwest winds have kept smoke to the north of Lake County.

For more information about the forest fires visit Forest Service Web site at www.fs.fed.us/r5/mendocino or www.inciweb.org. For information about other fires around the state, visit www.cdf.ca.gov.

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