

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. This is Jim Burke with local news and commentary for Tuesday, August 20, 2024.

Last evening I spoke with Steven Spradley of Valdosta, Georgia, who is with the Georgia Forestry Commission. He is one of many firefighters and other personnel from other states who are working with the western Washington management team on wildfires here. He gave me an update on the Road 2620 fire, also referred to as the Mt. Jupiter fire, which has been burning since Wednesday, August 14. As of yesterday, the fire was covering 398 acres, and is 8% “contained.” He explained that they can say part of the fire line is contained when it is cool and they are confident the fire will not cross that area.

The 2620 Road Fire is full of “heavy fuel” – tall, thick forest with thick undergrowth. As far as suppressing the fire goes, it’s strictly an aerial assault. The thunderstorms that passed through Sunday were a hindrance to operations for several reasons. First, the aircraft are grounded for a few hours when the storm cells are coming in. Strong winds and lack of visibility make airdrops impossible. They can only fly during daylight hours. And the personnel on the ground working on containment need to be brought in when the weather is severe, because of winds, which can topple burning trees, and lightning strikes. The precipitation over the area was 1/10th to 3/10ths of an inch and didn’t even reach the ground in some areas over the fire. There was also hail.

I asked about lightning strikes and Spradley said that lightning strikes can smolder for days after they occur and then become larger fires. Aerial surveillance of the forests after thunderstorms is one of the ways that forest watchers can detect new fires. Some were detected in the Olympic National Forest after this past weekend and recreational activities have closed in some areas of the forest.

Safety of all the people on the ground and in the air is the highest priority. The number of people assigned to this effort at this time is 167. That includes support personnel as well as firefighters on the ground. Spradley also said that the entire country is at Level 5 prep level which means that all local resources have been exhausted and local fire districts require assistance from other areas across the US when there is a wildfire. A state of emergency was declared by the state for the 2620 Road Fire and so more people will be brought in as some of those currently fighting the fire rotate out.

What follows is the official update as of Sunday: The fire is West of Brinnon, north of Duckabush Rd. on Mt. Jupiter. The cause is still undetermined. No structures have been damaged. Overnight storms brought winds in excess of 30 mph and some wetting rain, but less than the forecasted amount. Residents in the area should use caution, be aware of fire vehicles that may require longer stopping distance, and potentially displaced wildlife. Firefighter and public safety continues to be our number one priority. As the weather continues to warm and winds continue to pick up, firefighters are anticipating heavier fire activity with potential fire growth. They will continue to evaluate resources and order more resources as the fire activity increases.

The percentage of containment can sometimes be a confusing term, as I said before. A fire is considered contained when a control line has been established around the fire, and the fire is not expected to spread. Fireline supervisors evaluate these control lines daily to determine the percentage of actual fire containment based on current and expected fire behavior.

Road Closures include: Duckabush Road and Mt. Jupiter Road (2620 Road) which remain closed except for residents on these roads.

Air Space Restrictions: A Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) remains in place over the fire. If you fly, they can’t.

Evacuation Levels and Shelters: The 2500 block and above of Duckabush Road remains at Level 2. The 1000 block up to the 2500 block of Duckabush Road remains at Level 1. There are no shelters open at this time. Level 2 means that you have to ready to go at a moments notice.

In the *Sequim Gazette*, Sally Marrone, secretary/treasurer of the Brinnon Fire Department, is quoted as writing: “If you would like to donate to feed the firefighters and personnel working the Jupiter Fire in Brinnon, you can send donations through PayPal (brinnonfireassociation@gmail.com) or Venmo (@Sally-Marrone, last 4 of phone is 9415).”

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5 PM and at noon on Saturday. You can reach out to us at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.

WHAT FOLLOWS WAS NOT ON THE BROADCAST BUT IS INCLUDED HERE AS IT INCLUDES USEFUL INFORMATION, LINKS, AND PHONE NUMBERS:

To ensure the safety of the public and to facilitate the response to the 2620 Fire, the following trails and recreation sites on the Olympic National Forest are being temporarily closed:

- Trails:Duckabush Trail #803
- Interrorem Interpretive Trail #804
- Mt. Jupiter Trail #809
- Ranger Hole Trail #824
- Murhut Falls Trail #828

Facilities:

- Interrorem Cabin (reservations on Recreation.gov are being cancelled and refunds issued)
- Collins Campground
- Ranger Hole Trailhead
- Duckabush Stock Trailhead
- Duckabush Trailhead

Visitors with backcountry permits to hike the Olympic National Park that originate from the Duckabush Trailhead should contact the Olympic National Park Wilderness Information Center for further information and directions.

Forest Closures: Olympic National Forest has updated closures are located at www.fs.usda.gov and Olympic National Forest – Alert and Closures web page

Fire Information Phone Number: 360-323-1903

Email: 2024.2620Road@firenet.gov

Facebook: www.facebook.com/2620RoadFire2024

InciWeb: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/waolc-2620-road-fire>