

Wildfires threaten California's treasured Sequoias

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A firefighter douses flames from a backfire while battling the Butte fire near San Andreas, California, September 12, 2015

Wildfires sweeping through California are threatening an ancient grove of giant Sequoia trees considered a national treasure, officials said Tuesday.

The so-called Rough Fire, the largest of more than a dozen burning

across northern and central California, has edged closer to the famous [trees](#) in recent days with [firefighters](#) scrambling to protect them.

"The fire has moved into a number of Sequoia groves in King's Canyon National Park and Sequoia National Forest and we are taking [preventive measures](#) to make sure nothing happens to them," park spokesman Mike Theune told AFP.

Of particular concern is the General Grant tree, the second largest Sequoia in the world that stands 268 feet (81.6 meters) tall.

Theune said firefighters are monitoring the tree round-the-clock, spraying water and clearing the area around Grant grove.

"We have some of the best firefighters in the world working on this fire in order to protect these national treasures," he said.

Theune said crews had also installed a sprinkler system around the Boole Tree, the sixth-largest tree in the world.

Although Sequoias, which are a major attraction for tourists worldwide, need low-intensity fires to reproduce, extreme heat like that produced by the Rough Fire is too much for the giants to handle.

The Rough Fire has burned 139,000 acres near Sequoia and King's Canyon National Parks. More than 3,700 firefighters are battling the blaze which is 40 percent contained, according to the US Forest Service.

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