

California fire cancels bike ride, prompts evacuations

July 17 2021



Smoke rises from the Dixie Fire burning along Highway 70 in Plumas National Forest, Calif., on Friday, July 16, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger

A rapidly growing wildfire south of Lake Tahoe forced evacuations of a mountain town and the cancellation of an extreme bike ride through the

Sierra Nevada, leaving thousands of riders and spectators stranded Saturday.

The Tamarack Fire, which was sparked by lightning on July 4, exploded overnight to about 10 square miles (26 square kilometers) and was burning near the small town of Markleeville, close to the California-Nevada state line. It has destroyed at least 3 structures, authorities said. A notice posted on the 103-mile (165-kilometer) Death Ride's website said several communities in the area had been evacuated and ordered all riders to also evacuate immediately.

Meanwhile, the largest wildfire in the U.S.—burning in southern Oregon—grew significantly overnight as dry and windy conditions took hold in the area, but containment of the inferno more than tripled as firefighters began to gain more control, authorities said Saturday.

The Bootleg Fire grew to 427 square miles (1,105 square kilometers) and was just one of numerous fires burning across the drought-stricken U.S. West, as new fires popped up or grew rapidly in Oregon and California. There were 70 active large fires and complexes of multiple fires that have burned nearly 1,659 square miles (4,297 square kilometers) in the U.S., the National Interagency Fire Center said.



In this photo provided by the Bootleg Fire Incident Command, the Bootleg Fire burns at night near Highway 34 in southern Oregon on Thursday, July 15, 2021. Firefighters scrambled Friday to control a raging inferno in southeastern Oregon that's spreading miles a day in windy conditions, one of numerous wildfires across the U.S. West that are straining resources. The Bootleg Fire, the largest wildfire burning in the U.S., has torched more than 377 square miles (976 square kilometers), and crews had little control of it. Credit: Jason Pettigrew/Bootleg Fire Incident Command via AP

A fire in the mountains of northeast Oregon was also growing rapidly and was 15 square miles (39 [square](#) kilometers) in size on Saturday. The Elbow Creek fire started Thursday and has prompted evacuations in several small, [rural communities](#) around the Grande Ronde River about 30 miles (50 kilometers) southeast of Walla Walla, Washington.

In southern Oregon, fire crews have dealt with dangerous and extreme fire conditions, including massive "[fire](#) clouds" that rise up to 6 miles (10 kilometers) above the blaze. Earlier in the week, firefighters had to retreat after one of these clouds started to collapse, threatening them with strong downdrafts and flying embers.

The Bootleg Fire has destroyed at least 67 homes and 117 outbuildings and flames are surging up to 4 miles (6 kilometers) a day.

The conflagration has forced 2,000 people to evacuate and is threatening 5,000 buildings, including homes and smaller structures in a rural area just north of the California border. The main Oregon blaze was 22% contained.



In this photo provided by the Bootleg Fire Incident Command, the Bootleg Fire burns at night near Highway 34 in southern Oregon on Thursday, July 15, 2021. Firefighters scrambled Friday to control a raging inferno in southeastern Oregon that's spreading miles a day in windy conditions, one of numerous wildfires across the U.S. West that are straining resources. The Bootleg Fire, the largest wildfire burning in the U.S., has torched more than 377 square miles (976 square kilometers), and crews had little control of it. Credit: Jason Pettigrew/Bootleg Fire Incident Command via AP



In this photo taken with a drone provided by the Bootleg Fire Incident Command, a pyrocumulus cloud, also known as a fire cloud, is seen over the Bootleg Fire in southern Oregon on Wednesday, July 14, 2021. Smoke and heat from a massive wildfire in southeastern Oregon are creating "fire clouds" over the blaze—dangerous columns of smoke and ash that can reach up to 30,000 feet (9,144 meters) and are visible for more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) away.

Authorities have put these clouds at the top of the list of the extreme fire behavior they are seeing on the Bootleg Fire, the largest wildfire burning in the U.S. Credit: Bootleg Fire Incident Command via AP



In this photo provided by the Bootleg Fire Incident Command, smoke from the Bootleg Fire rises behind the town of Bonanza, Ore., on Thursday, July 15, 2021. Firefighters scrambled Friday to control a raging inferno in southeastern Oregon that's spreading miles a day in windy conditions, one of numerous wildfires across the U.S. West that are straining resources. The Bootleg Fire, the largest wildfire burning in the U.S., has torched more than 377 square miles (976 square kilometers), and crews had little control of it. Credit: Bootleg Fire Incident Command via AP



In this photo provided by the Bootleg Fire Incident Command, columns of smoke from the Bootleg Fire rise behind a water tender in southern Oregon on Friday, July 16, 2021. Firefighters scrambled Friday to control a raging inferno in southeastern Oregon that's spreading miles a day in windy conditions, one of

numerous wildfires across the U.S. West that are straining resources. The Bootleg Fire, the largest wildfire burning in the U.S., has torched more than 377 square miles (976 square kilometers), and crews had little control of it. Credit: Lisa Chambers/Bootleg Fire Incident Command via AP



Smoke billows behind power lines as the Dixie Fire burns along Highway 70 in Plumas National Forest, Calif., on Friday, July 16, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Jessica Bell watches as the Dixie Fire burns along Highway 70 in Plumas National Forest, Calif., on Friday, July 16, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Jessica Bell takes a video as the Dixie Fire burns along Highway 70 in Plumas National Forest, Calif., on Friday, July 16, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Jessica and Benjamin Bell watch as the Dixie Fire burns along Highway 70 in Plumas National Forest, Calif., on Friday, July 16, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Benjamin Bell watches as the Dixie Fire burns along Highway 70 in Plumas National Forest, Calif., on Friday, July 16, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Firefighters spray water from Union Pacific Railroad's fire train while battling the Dixie Fire in Plumas National Forest, Calif., on Friday, July 16, 2021.

Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Firefighters spray water from Union Pacific Railroad's fire train while battling the Dixie Fire in Plumas National Forest, Calif., on Friday, July 16, 2021.

Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Firefighters spray water from Union Pacific Railroad's fire train while battling the Dixie Fire in Plumas National Forest, Calif., on Friday, July 16, 2021.
Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger

A Red Flag weather warning was issued for the area through Saturday night.

Extremely [dry conditions](#) and [heat waves](#) tied to [climate change](#) have swept the region, making wildfires harder to fight. Climate change has made the West much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

Firefighters said in July they were facing conditions more typical of late

summer or fall.

© 2021 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: California fire cancels bike ride, prompts evacuations (2021, July 17) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-07-california-cancels-bike-prompts-evacuations.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.