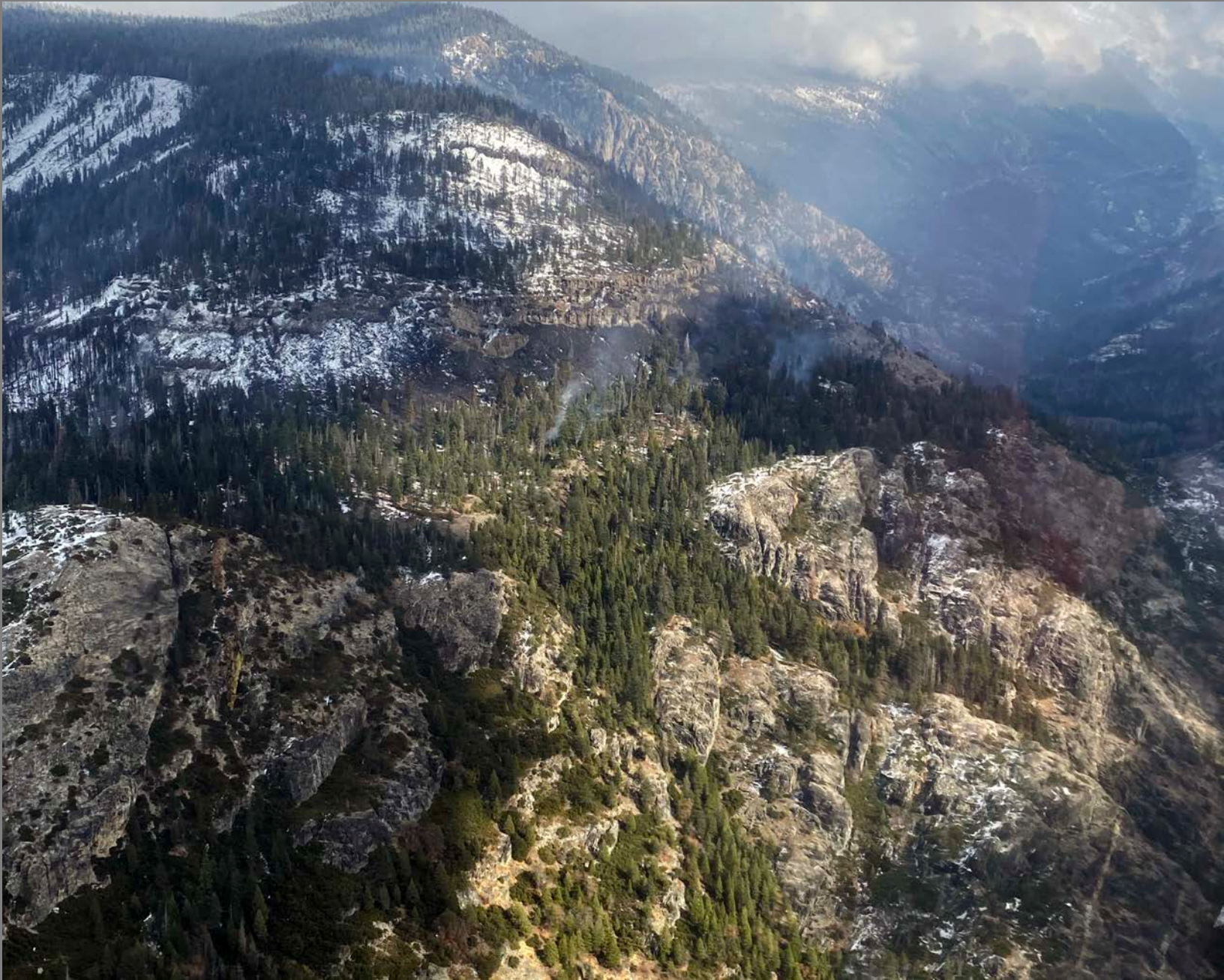


INCIDENT SUMMARY

CREEK FIRE, CA-SNF-1391

October 31-November 13, 2020



Alaska Black Team, Type 2 IMT
Ed Sanford, Incident Commander
Tom Kurth, Deputy Incident Commander



INCIDENT NARRATIVE

The Creek Fire started on September 4, 2020 and over the course of the next two months grew to be the largest, single incident (not a complex) in California history and the largest recorded fire on the Sierra National Forest. The fire resulted in the destruction of more than 500 residences and drew national media attention as the result of two dramatic rescues involving the California National Guard early in the incident. The Alaska Black Incident Management Team was the seventh IMT to manage the fire.

The Alaska Black team shadowed California Interagency Incident Management Team 1 on October 30, 2020 and assumed command of the incident on October 31, through a Delegation of Authority from the Sierra NF agency administrators. At the time the Alaska Team took command, the fire was estimated at 380,002 acres with 70% containment and there were 986 personnel working on the incident. The remaining uncontained



portion of the fire was in wilderness areas and mostly confined by natural barriers such as exposed rock and water features. During the first six days of the team's management, fire growth was limited to relatively minor activity in areas where little or no suppression activity was taking place due to their remote and inaccessible nature in wilderness areas. Containment percentage remained stagnant throughout the Alaska Team's tenure due to applying indirect strategies and tactics using natural barriers to contain fire growth due to the uncontrolled sections of line being located in rugged, steep, dangerous terrain located in wilderness areas, where suppression options were severely limited.

Winds and dry weather aided the fire in moving through sparse fuels and rocky wilderness terrain early in the incident. The largest growth in that period was 2,037 acres on November 1. Total acreage was actually reduced by approximately 1,933 acres on Nov. 3 after several large, unburned islands in the interior of the fire were subtracted due to more accurate mapping. Suppression actions by three hotshot crews with helicopter support along the easternmost finger of the fire, just north of Lake Thomas A. Edison, were successful in stopping the spread of that part of the fire in the early part of the team's tenure. At the same time a module of rappellers dealt with a small spot fire near Pond Lily Lake that seemed like it might have potential to grow and spread toward the community of Mammoth Lakes.

Given the size of the fire and limited fire activity, the primary focus during the Alaska IMT's stint managing the fire was suppression repair. Approximately 600 miles of fireline was constructed during earlier suppression efforts, including roughly 350 miles of dozer line, 150 miles of road that was improved as fireline and 100 miles of handline. Of those 600 miles of fireline, approximately 500 were deemed in need of repair. A small army of heavy equipment was mobilized to address suppression repair on the east, west and south sides of the fire perimeter. As of November 10, more than 450 miles of suppression had been completed.



On November 6, a frontal system moved through the area, inundating the fire area with rain and snow at higher elevations. The moisture and continued cold weather following the front significantly slowed any remaining fire spread at that point, also slowing or stopping repair operations in some areas that were impacted by the snow. The snow created dangerous driving conditions at higher elevations that were a major safety concern that was addressed repeatedly by safety officers at morning briefings and in the field.

An infrared flight on November 10 showed small growth in the area of Cora Lakes, on the northwest side of the

of the fire even after the precipitation, but other activity was largely limited to the heavy fuels consuming, akin to campfires burning throughout the fire area. The sudden loss of access to areas needing repair work resulted in a fairly rapid push to demobilize resources from the incident beginning on November 8.

The Alaska IMT transferred command of the fire to California Interagency Incident Management Team 10 on November 13. At that time, the fire was estimated at 379,802 acres with 455 personnel assigned. Containment remained at 70%.

INCIDENT COMMANDER

Key Decisions

- Rostering a long team in a short time, the Alaska Incident Management Team coordinated with the Alaska Wildland Coordinating Group, Alaska Operations Committee, National Multiagency Coordinating Group and USFS Sierra National Forest to determine scope of mission. The Agency Administrator then provided the team with intent and the IMT was able to tailor roster to meet the needs of the assignment. Although the roster modification was right for the tasking, modifying the standard roster took creative IROC work for Type 1 C&G. Coordination with the outgoing California Team 1 and early access to the transition plan improved our operations.
- The WFDSS decision document was specific to full perimeter control objective, implementing tactics to keep the fire to the smallest size possible. When full perimeter control was not possible because of limited resources, unsafe activity, or weather conditions, the objective was to slow,

Check or delay fire spread, specifically on the NE and NW perimeters. Direction was also given to provide point protection to values if direct action was not feasible.

- Developing a strategic plan for the incident. The initial task was full suppression with repair strategy. Having several days to plan an operational approach, this gave the team time to organize and assist the Sierra National Forest with a strategic plan to implement a course of action appropriate for the incident. Hosting two strategic planning sessions improved common operating picture and a shared risk and decision making, which in turn resulted in clear direction to the firefighters operating in the field.

INCIDENT COMMANDER

Key Decisions

- Ordering of another Type 2 IMT as the complexity analysis completed by the Alaska IMT and validated by the Agency Administrators identified a Type 2 organization was needed to manage incident. Complexity of incident was driven by cooperator involvement, hazards, fire information, and logistics and operation supporting 800 personnel, and large repair plans with safety oversight.
- As the seasonality of the event continued, the Alaska IMT was determined to right-size the organization appropriately for the time of year. Emphasis was placed on lowering the overall daily costs from \$1.2 million to a target of \$800K. Personnel were reduced from 1000+ to 300 personnel. In addition, aircraft, heavy equipment, and crews were also demobed.
- Allowing per diem for resources assigned. Although minor in the long run, the decision to allow per diem vs catering or fresh food was significant that allowed the team to focus on the planning mission and not logistical support requirements.



Significant Events

- Initiated monitoring instead of burning operations. One of the decisions coming out of the strategic planning meeting was to proceed with monitoring the N/NE section of the fire and take action if it threatened the community of Mammoth Lakes. The monitoring alternative was discussed due to current values near the fire and risk to the firefighters. This justification was time of year, availability of resources and high probability of success using natural barriers.
- Suppression Repair was a large part of the workload for the duration of the incident. Standards were established by the two Ranger Districts, the High Sierra, and Bass Lake. The original repair plan was from the early in the incident was updated with more specific direction and is in place.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- A substantial change in the weather occurred on the weekend of November 6 – 8. The Incident Meteorologist contribution to the planning outlook gave the IMT opportunity to act before the event. This allowed focus to evolve from suppression to repair in totality. However, fire access had to be evaluated daily for safe driving conditions, particularly with heavy equipment. This assisted to clarify all direction for repair. Resource advisement with oversight from the Sierra National Forest was coordinated with the AK IMT READ Coordinator. Emphasis via WFDSS direction included: 1) minimum impact suppression tactics in the wilderness areas (both John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness Areas); 2) avoidance of cultural and resource values; 3) minimizing camps, helispots, and visual impacts. A Burned Area Response Team (BAER) will continue to provide mitigations to post-fire damages and/or threats.

INCIDENT COMMANDER

COVID Coordination

- The concept of “module of one” paid dividends when, twice, symptomatic individuals showed up within crews. Both times, crews had practiced module concepts with limited outside contact. As a result, contact tracing involved limited individuals, and was quickly undertaken.
- Assigning an Agency Representative, COVID-19 Advisor, and agency advocate was critical to team success. USFS was instrumental in securing isolation quarters, facilitating testing payments, and follow through with post isolation program.



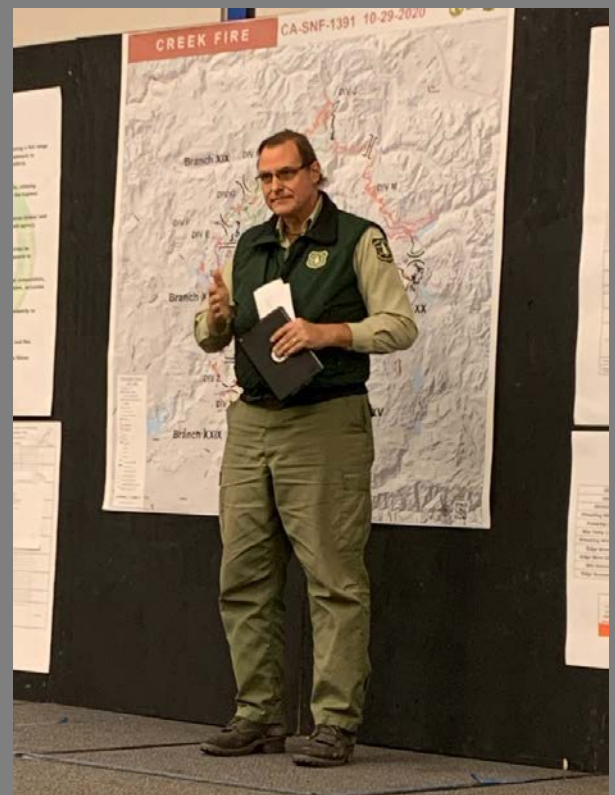
LIAISON OFFICERS

Notable Successes

- Keeping the same Liaison Officer(s) assigned and engaged for the last month eased some of the challenges that cooperators were previously experiencing. Multiple cooperators had expressed frustrations with the all the changes in Liaison Officers as teams cycled through. Some information and documentation was not being shared during team transitions.
- The continued involvement, availability and assistance from the Sierra National Forest officials and staff was an invaluable part of the success of the Liaison function. Officials were consistently engaged and available for local knowledge and to provided clear direction and leaders intent from the Forest.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- Previous Liaison Officers did not all utilize a common document sharing and storage system. Recommend that all documentation be kept in an electronic storage system that is passed between teams and ultimately given to the agency or storing all shared files in the fire specific Teams Channels.



PUBLIC INFORMATION

Key Decisions

- Establishing a virtual info shop with two PIOs working in Alaska to assist on-site PIOs with video production, editing and documentation and ensuring 508 compliance, among other things.

Significant Events

- Held two virtual community meetings (11/5 and 11/9) that aired live on the Sierra National Forest Facebook page and the Creek Fire Information YouTube channel.



Notable Successes

- Excellent production by Josh Bennett made for very high-quality morning briefings and community meetings through virtual channels.
- At community meetings, having eye contact with the Subject Matter Experts made the interaction feel more like a real conversation for the public. Having PIOs monitor and document questions as they came in during the meeting worked well and allowed SMEs to answer questions after their presentations.
- Providing the Ops section chief with talking points for the daily Information Ops briefing video made for a smoother flow and helped ensure that the topics we wanted to get out to the public were covered.
- Continuing the Story Map that CAIIMT1 started to help maintain a daily timeline for the incident and served as another documentation tool for the Forest Service.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- Obtaining enough photos/video to utilize on social media. This was partially resolved by reaching out to incident personnel for photos/video and bringing in another PIO videographer. In similar situations in the future, it might be worth spiking PIOs out in the field to get photos/video.

Information Statistics

Community Meetings – 2

Phone calls – 55

Media Interviews – 11

Facebook

Posts – 92

Followers – 801 new

Post reach – 717,899

Post engagements – 59,458

Video views – 89,106

Twitter

Tweets – 52

Followers – 27 new

Engagements – 10,735

Impressions – 186,000

YouTube

Videos – 28

Subscribers – 131

Views – 6,162

Story Map

910 views

- Post Reach – Number of people who saw a specific post in their news feed.
- Engagements – Any action taken on a post (like, comment, share, retweet etc.)
- Impressions – Number of times a tweet appears in someone's feed

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- Conflicting acreages on maps and the 209. The info shop worked with GIS to solidify the acreage numbers and removed or adjusted acreage numbers on maps to make them uniform.
- There were component failures on three of the rental laptops.
- Two PIOs encountered computer problems related to Internet connectivity and Inciweb editing on their agency laptops during the incident. This was resolved by obtaining rental computers from the IT section.
- Sharing the incident email, 2020.creek@firenet.gov, with the liaison led to confusion. Communicating with the liaison officer via Teams helped to prevent duplication of work. Firenet normally does not offer role-based liaison accounts but the help desk created an account for this incident with the expectation that the AKIMT would report on its effectiveness.
- Getting fresh information for updates and social media postings from the Operations section. Suppression activity was minimal, and briefings didn't change much from day to day, making it hard to get new info for daily updates. Partially resolved by being added to the aviation ops daily email list to get info on flight activity (i.e. water drops), as well as incorporating information from the IMET, FBAN and READs for updates.



HUMAN RESOURCES

Notable Successes

- There were two reportable HR issues and one non-reportable issue; these issues were resolved at the incident. One of these issues was a civil rights issue, and there were no sexual harassment violations reported.
- The priority trainee program facilitated bringing in an HRSP(t) from out of region to aid in covering the large area of the fire.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- Many contractors assigned to the incident were unfamiliar with either the role of the HRSP on a federal incident or the standard for enforcement of mandated federal policies.

COVID-19 Specific Challenges and Resolutions

- Adherence to COVID-19 mitigation measures at spike and base camps was notably lacking without the presence and persistent messaging of leadership personnel.

OPERATIONS

Key Decision

- Re-locating helicopters from the Mammoth Lakes helibase to Auberry due to predicted snow prevented loss of helicopter use after the weather event.

Significant Events

- Having the preceding ASGS stay on for 4 days helped the transition process.
- The TFR expired overnight, unbeknownst to air operations. The local dispatch decided to reorder a new TFR, without consultation of the air ops branch. The TFR was not adequate and had to be reordered by air operations personnel.
- Close, daily coordination with Southern California Edison was necessary to facilitate their helicopter operations within the TFR.

Notable Successes

- Use of aerial assets which included the USFS Cobra Firewatch platform and NIROPS allowed the team to monitor daily movement of the fire, most notably on the NE portion of the fire that was most active. Sparse fuel loading and a large rock ridge allowed us to use a confine strategy on this portion of the fire.
- Air operations branch received a good briefing from the Cal Team 1. Emphasis was placed on the importance of coordination with the utility contractors.
- The aviation organization was fully staffed, and we inherited an organized unit.
- Coordinating the documentation of the 3 different helibases with the DOCL.
- Sharing the Firewatch Cobra intel with the team, which proved extremely valuable to the public information office in helping to illustrate fire activity or the lack of fire activity in the NE corner of the fire south of Mammoth Lakes.
- The ASGS position was filled with an Alaska trainee.



Air Operations

Flight hours	70.7
Cargo hauled	13,710 lbs
H2O dropped	154,800 gallons
Helispots	23
Aviation cost	\$975,341

Notable Successes

- Established an excellent rapport with all Line Safety Officers by group texting, cell phone and in person visits to share and download daily issues and concerns. Line Safety Officers were all spiked out or in remote camps away from the ICP. This provided 24 hour coverage at all spike and remote camps.
- Positive interaction between Operations and Safety assisted us in placing line Safeties in strategic locations to meet the operational needs. There was great teamwork in updating the 215A as well as relevant hazard and risks input for the daily Safety message and briefings.
- Increased compliance with COVID-19 mitigations leading to a safer work environment.



Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- Initially, all Line Safety Officer orders were UTFed but we were able to contact known Safety Officers via name requests to fill critical needs.
- Driving was a major concern since this was a large fire with three camps, four large divisions and four groups spread over the fire area. Drive times ranged from 45 minutes to two hours in order to engage with resources. Multiple power and electric companies were also operating in the area, as well as various contractors doing post-fire clean-up and road repair. This created high traffic flow on narrow, winding, mountainous roads. There were two minor vehicle accidents involving fire personnel and one vehicle rolled on its side. There were numerous close calls and complaints of speeding and unsafe driving involving the public and utility companies. Messaging and briefings, as well as contacting utility company agents regarding speeding and driving concerns relayed through the Liaison Officer led to a safety standdown by Southern CA Edison. This, combined with increased awareness of fire personnel, led to fewer complaints and close calls on the incident and overall safer driving habits.
- Fire-weakened hazard trees and heavy equipment operations represented significant risk throughout the fire area. This was mitigated through good leadership on the fireline and by messaging and briefings addressing hazard trees and heavy equipment operations.
- A significant weather event involving high winds, rain and snow was predicted to impact the fire area. Resources were relocated to lower elevations to stage in safe areas. Briefings and messaging focused on new driving dangers, hazard tree awareness, and hypothermia to help mitigate the impacts of the event.



Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- There was initial lack of compliance with COVID-19 requirements in most spike and remote camps at the beginning of our tour. With strong presence of COVID-19 monitors in each camp and the help from the Human Resource Specialist, we were able to obtain up to 100% compliance during briefings and meetings.

Covid-19 Mitigations

- Daily messaging on wearing a mask and social distancing was done. Leadership from the IC down, setting an example by following recommended COVID-19 mitigations and enforcing them with messaging during briefing and divisional breakouts, assisted with compliance by the troops. In addition, the team carried a full time COVID-19 Coordinator and COVID-19 monitoring was done in every spike camp, including daily temperature checks and the use of wristbands to show compliance. Emphasis was placed on mask usage.

Injuries and Illnesses

- Two injuries were reported. One was a cut to the hand of a 34-year-old male with no lost time. The second was a crushed finger injury to a 34-year-old female who was put on light duty. There was also one medical cardiac arrest of a 60 year old male. He was treated, released from hospital on 11/06/20, and returned home. Two crews reported flu-like symptoms. The first crew tested negative for COVID-19 and were released back to their home unit due to the completion of their tour. The second crew also tested negative but was isolated in a motel as a Module of One for monitoring. They took a second test, all tested negative, and they were released back to duty.



PLANS

Key Decisions

- Assigning all check-in and e-ISuite database management to one Resource Unit Leader (RESL) and production of the daily IAPs to the other.
- Making the decision on 11/09 to move one RESL to ECCO Camp to assist with demob. This could not have occurred had we not obtained a Status Check-in Recorder (SCKN) trainee who performed exceptionally well (see below).
- Demobilization Unit Leader at China Peak (later Mill FOB/Auberry) would manage air travel, in person checkouts, and process.
- Virtual Demobilization Unit Leader would manage database, prepare custom reports, daily demobilization lists, and instructions for the IAP, and coordinate with other units.
- As more camps close and the footprint is reduced ICP will become the point of contact. A third Demobilization Unit Leader was added at ICP to:
 - a. manage AKIMT air travel
 - b. in person checkouts at ICP
 - c. assist with processing crew swaps/extensions
 - d. DMOB contact for C&G
 - e. assist with printing and dissemination of DMOB custom reports.
 - f. a fourth DMOB was added to ECCO Camp to manage the rapid demobilization of resources after the weather changed.
- The unit consisted of 2 GISS(t), 1 FBAN, 1 IMET, 1 LTAN and 1 SITL working onsite; working remotely were 2 GISS and 1 SITL.



Acres Burned By Ownership

- Bureau of Indian Affairs 220 acres
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife 474 acres
- California State Lands Commission 121 acres
- U.S. Forest Service 356,389 acres

Acres Burned in Wilderness

- Ansel Adams Wilderness 83,353 acres
- John Muir Wilderness 4,224 acres
- Kaiser Wilderness 9,261 acres



PLANS

Significant Events

- Shadow day and transition was completely virtual. CAIIMT1 DMOB and AKIMT DMOB took advantage of available technology – phone, Firenet, Teams – to share ongoing demob processes and upcoming demob needs.



Notable Successes

- Continued use of the previous IMT's virtual demobilization process provided a seamless transition with no impact to resources on the incident.
- Having a SITL on site with the GISS. While some folks in the Northern Rockies seem to be fond of the remote situation unit concept, our experience indicates that it is valuable to have at least a SITL or lead GISS on site.
- Utilization of Microsoft Teams. Good sink or swim learning curve. Valuable tool but fairly complex, easy to get lost in it. Overall positive experience and it aided in the necessary collaboration with remote workers. Does then come with the challenges of ensuring that tone and meaning are not misinterpreted.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- The IR vendor was not working off the same fire data as the GIS specialists. Made for some hiccups and in a fire that is not in this relatively mellow stage has the potential to cause a ton of issues. Not so much a team issue, will be conveyed to NIOPS coordinator.
- Sprawling, multi-camp nature of the organization on this fire made it challenging to track where products were needed, what products were needed. Feedback from outlying OPS regarding needs was minimal. Hopefully that means their needs were met. Having a Plans rep at each location is helpful. Increased communication with Logistics did ease this, as did having Plans reps at outposts.
- Reporting remotely leads to a potential for multiple communication problems. Incident summary ICS209 inputs were to be emailed or phoned in to SITL by 1500 daily. For personnel that submitted daily inputs this became a function of habit. Personnel that were only required to provide inputs if certain trigger points occurred, often forgot to notify remote SITL of changes. Reminder emails or calls were required to obtain information. Sometimes information was reported on ICS209 the following day.
- Operating demob out of various camps with different demob processes. This was resolved by adding additional DMOB staffing at ICP and China Peak/Auberry at the beginning of the incident.
- Supporting a massive demob of resources at ECCO Camp after the weather changed. This was resolved by adding additional DMOB staffing at ECCO.

COVID-19 Specific Challenges and Resolutions

- Maintaining social distancing at China Peak and then Auberry.

RESOURCE ADVISOR COORDINATOR



Notable Successes

- Suppression repair was completed on over 450 miles of dozer line, roads and handline despite significant weather challenges.
- Two engines from the Chumash Fire Department carried staff with archaeological, cultural resource, and tribal liaison expertise. They were a unique resource that completed repairs in sensitive cultural areas and around archaeological sites.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- Suppression repair plan was completed early in the fire and did not adequately address concerns; re-writing of the plan aided operational staff to prioritize repairs.
- Resources including Lead READs, REAFs and ARCHs were difficult to order. A larger READ organization would have allowed for more proactive involvement with operational staff and heavy equipment operations.

Repair Statistics

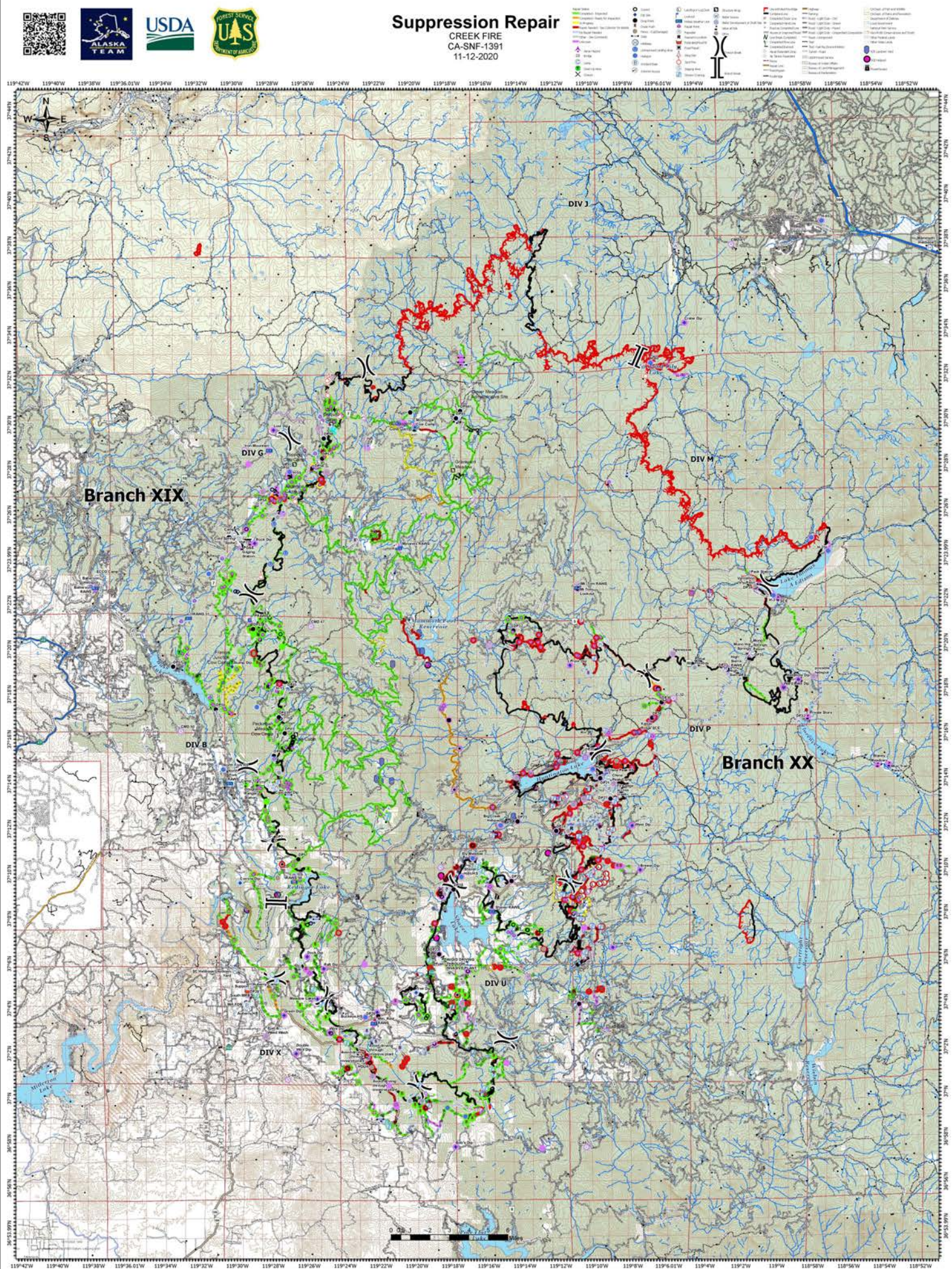
Suppression repair was completed on over:

- 77 miles of handline
- 122 miles of road improved as line
- 258 miles of dozer line





CREEK FIRE
CA-SNF-1391
11-12-2020



LOGISTICS

Key Decisions

- Having a MEDL and a MEDL (t) at ICP and a MEDL who worked virtually allowed us to divide the workload to successfully manage the unit and meet the expectations of the team.

Significant Events

- There were two injuries, one of which was reportable .



Notable Successes

- The system was very effective and designed well. Spread between three camps, each had ample stock for immediate distribution among the operations group.
- Excellent personnel. We had a blend of State, Federal and NIFC technicians and radio operators from around the country with considerable experience. The trainees were all involved and contributed a great deal to the effort.
- Having an ORDM at spike camps or FOB really helps when main ordering is located at ICP, which made sense here due to access to expanded dispatch and the buying team.
- Moving supply to Mill FOB from China Peak both made it more centralized and closer to the local supply cache, reducing order turnaround time.
- Having a dedicated COVID Coordinator as part of the medical staff created a working relationship that allowed us to better disseminate information and coordinate testing and supplies between the IC, the forest, spike camps and the medical unit. This increase in staffing also gave us the ability to work to improve overall firefighter health and fitness to reduce the risk of both COVID-19 and other health issues such as camp crud. Having an EMT in each camp and at ICP who were dedicated to working on COVID-19 issues and mitigations allowed us to constantly monitor firefighters through temperature checks and also gave us the ability to enforce COVID-19 mitigations implemented by the team.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- The records were the shortfall left behind from the past 6 teams. It took significant work to get to 100% accountability.

Meals Served (Nov.1-9)

Breakfast	4,284
Lunch	6,618
Dinner	4,163

FINANCE

Key Decisions

- Confirmed that final incident package would be in electronic format at request of Agency Administrators.
- Enacted processes to ensure existing paper files would be converted to electronic format as resources demobed.
- Verified that older paper documentation would be fully scanned and uploaded to incident database at close of incident.
- Due to issues with incorrect and/or duplicate resource numbers, an audit was performed to determine number of resources affected.
- Manual corrections were made within the e-ISuite database to prevent future payment processing errors; the manual correction prevented incorrect resource names and types from populating in the daily IAPs.
- Continuously evaluated finance staffing at support camps to ensure timely and adequate resource demob processing.



Notable Successes

- Deputy FSC with e-ISuite affiliation was able to identify and correct cost accrual duplications.
- PROC(t) executed new LUA requests in an expedited manner.
- Deputy FSC with e-ISuite affiliation was able to identify and correct cost accrual duplications.
- Maintained base camp finance sections at base and spike camps which significantly added to the success of supporting resources in the field.
- Consolidated finance files from China Peak Base Camp and ICP and moved finance headquarters to new Mill Forward Operating Base on Day 5.
- COST developed a process to provide an estimated cost for just the North Zone as requested by the Agency Administrator.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- As the seventh team on this incident, a multitude of file types and naming conventions were used, making it difficult to follow the incident financial timeline.
- A \$4 million dollar spike in incident costs was posted prior to our arrival.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- Additional section resources ordered were continually UTF'd.
- The finance email inbox had many unposted or unread emails.
- The outgoing team had separate files and seemingly little communication between the two spike camps and ICP; each location processed documentation differently.
- Cal Fire resources from earlier in the incident were told they would be hired by SNF effective October 17, 2020; issues with missing shift tickets and CTRs prior to the transition.
- Apparent lack of coordination between buying team and expanded dispatch caused duplicate resource numbers.
- Finance spent a large amount of time sorting through E numbers that were wrong or changed several times.
- Numerous resources arrived at the incident with "pending" resource orders, i.e., no fill on the Resource Assigned. Then when the fill information came through on the resource order, the wrong vendor was assigned, or it showed that the resource order was cancelled. This caused a domino effect with contractor's resource.

