

Taylor Creek Fire Klondike Fire

Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest
Grants Pass District BLM
Southwestern Oregon District Oregon Department of Forestry



Incident Summary

August 12 – August 25, 2018



Tom Kurth, Incident Commander
Tony Doty, Deputy Incident Commander
Alaska Incident Management Team



Alaska Incident Management Team



Overview

The Alaska Incident Management Team (Alaska IMT) assumed command of the Taylor Creek and Klondike fires at 0600 on Monday, August 13, 2018. The Alaska IMT was the fourth Type 1 IMT to manage the incident and replaced Pacific Northwest Team 2 (Schulte), which managed the fire from July 30th to August 12th. Both fires were actively burning in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest at the time, although the Taylor Creek Fire had started on BLM land in the Oregon Department of Forestry's protection area.

The fires were discovered on July 15 following a lightning event in Southwest Oregon that ignited dozens of fires in the area. At the time of transition to the Alaska IMT, the Taylor Creek Fire was estimated to be 48,257 acres with 45% containment and 986 personnel assigned. The Klondike Fire was estimated to be 55,248 acres, 15% contained, and had 569 personnel assigned.

The Alaska IMT received an in-briefing at the BLM Interagency Office in Grants Pass on August 11 then shadowed the PNW2 team at their Incident Command Post in Merlin the following day. The ICP was moved to Lake Selmac County Park on August 13. This location was chosen largely due to its proximity to the Klondike Fire which, at that time, posed a bigger threat than the Taylor Creek Fire.

The historical fire occurrence in the area added to the overall complexity of the incident. The threat the Chetco Bar Fire had posed the year before remained fresh in the minds of local residents, as did the 500,000 acre Biscuit Fire. Additionally, the frequency of off-shore wind events that create critical fire weather conditions such as strong gusty winds and low relative humidity values increase this time of year, creating anxiety for both local residents and agency personnel.

At the time of transition, evacuations were in place for private inholdings along the Illinois River Rd, and Galice, Merlin, and communities along the Redwood Hwy (199) remained threatened. As both fires spread west, there was also a potential for the community of Agness and other values to be impacted. Direct action along the western edge of the fire was complicated by difficult access and steep terrain and the IMT continued work previously initiated on alternate indirect containment lines. The highest priority for actions, however, shifted after the fire spotted south of the Illinois River. Up to this point, the strategy had been to keep the fire north of the river. By August 13th, the spot fire had grown to over 1,500 acres, and a new strategy of keeping the fire west of the Hwy 199 corridor, and away from an additional 1,500 private residences that became threatened was adopted.

On August 18, the Rogue-River Siskiyou NF made the decision to split the Taylor Creek and Klondike Fires into east and west zones. California Interagency Incident Management Team 4 was ordered to assume command of the west portion of the Klondike Fire. This allowed the Alaska IMT to focus efforts on the southeast portion of the fire closest to communities.

Extremely dry vegetation coupled with critical fire weather fueled the continued growth of both fires. The fires burned actively within the scar of the 2002 Biscuit Fire where snags posed a constant threat to fire personnel. The western edge of the Klondike Fire burned into the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, however progression slowed as the fire reached the 2017 Chetco Bar Fire footprint, which acted as a natural barrier to spread. The availability of resources was limited due to increased wildfire activity across the western United States. This, combined with steep, rugged, inaccessible terrain made suppression efforts throughout both fires a challenge.

Despite these challenges, containment was achieved along the southeastern flank by anchoring into previously contained areas of the Taylor fire to the north, and the Chetco Bar Fire footprint on the southwest. Night shift burnouts supported by Unmanned Aerial Systems for both holding and firing operations contributed greatly to this success. The progression of the Klondike fire towards Hwy 199 and the Illinois Valley was halted, and some of the evacuated residents along the Illinois River were able to return home.

Several stakeholders participated in the management of the incident. The Alaska IMT coordinated suppression strategies with three Agency Administrators - from the Bureau of Land Management, the Oregon Department of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service - as well as with representatives from the Rogue Valley Fire Chiefs Association, Josephine County Sheriff's Office, Josephine County Emergency Management and the Illinois Valley Fire District. In addition, approximately 200 members of the Oregon National Guard and 12 firefighters from Australia and New Zealand assisted with control efforts.

On August 25, the Alaska IMT transitioned command of the Taylor Creek and East Klondike Fires to Northwest Team 12 (Harrod) while CIIMT4 remained in place to manage West Klondike. At the time of transition, the Taylor Creek Fire was estimated at 52,825 acres and 95% contained while the Klondike Fire was estimated at 82,015 acres with 39% containment.

Incident Objectives

Based on the Delegation of Authority and Leader’s Intent provided by the Agencies to the IMT, the following Management Objectives were developed:

- Provide for firefighter and public safety through deliberative risk management, implementation of appropriate mitigations and clear understanding of assignments.
- Protect communities, infrastructure, private lands, timber, cultural sites, and other identified values at risk.
- Initial attack within the designated response area and support local IA efforts with intent to confine, contain, and minimize acreage burned.
- Enhance community, stakeholder, and cooperater relationships through respect, communication, and delivery of timely and accurate information.
- Coordinate with Klondike Fire West Zone IMT. Supplement resources for West Zone.

Values at Risk

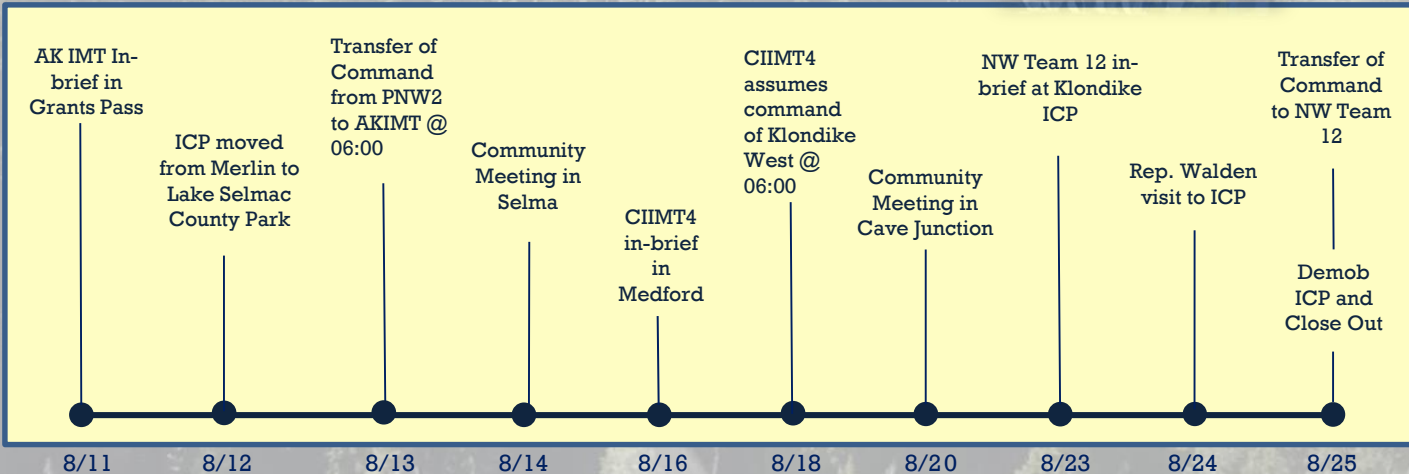
- ❖ Firefighter and public safety.
- ❖ Private property and structures.
- ❖ Community and public relationships.
- ❖ Infrastructure on private, State and Federally protected lands.
- ❖ High value timber lands.
- ❖ Cultural, biological, and archaeological sensitive sites.
- ❖ Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species.
- ❖ Commerce and Tourism.

General Control Objectives

- Use direct strategies in the suppression of the Klondike fire to protect the 199 corridor, Selma, Kerby, Cave Junction, and private lands in the Illinois Valley. Look for opportunities to confine, contain, and minimize acreage.
- Mop up to the degree necessary, based on terrain, weather, fuel conditions, and experience that will result in the highest probability of success, with the least exposure to firefighters.
- Implement suppression tactics using Resource Advisors to avoid cultural sites, resource values, threatened and endangered species, noxious weeds, and Port Orford Root Disease.
- Address suppression repair needs and repair damage caused by suppression activities to prevent the long-term degradation of land and encourage recovery.



Incident Timeline



Vital Statistics – Klondike

Fire Number: OR-RSF-000354

Budget Code: P6L00P (0610)

Jurisdiction: Rogue River-Siskiyou NF
Oregon Dept. of Forestry

Fire Origin:

- Lat: 42 22'10" N
- Long: 123 51'37" W

Fire Cause: Lightning/Natural

Detection: July 15, 2018 @ 22:43 Total
Acres: 82,015

Vital Statistics – Taylor Creek

Fire Number: OR-MED-000395

Budget Code: P6L001 (1502)

Jurisdiction: Rogue River-Siskiyou NF
Medford District BLM
Oregon Dept. of Forestry

Fire Origin:

- Lat: 42 31'41" N
- Long: 123 34'17" W

Fire Cause: Lightning/Natural

Detection: July 15, 2018 @ 14:18
Acres: 52,825

Transfer of Command

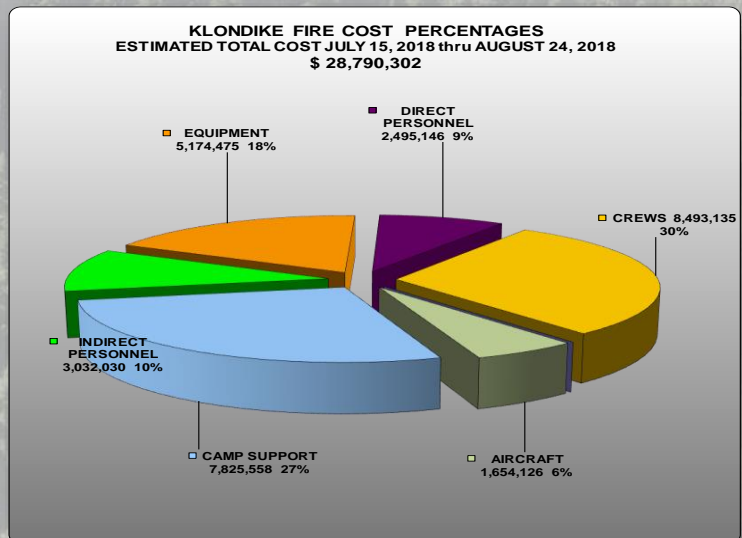
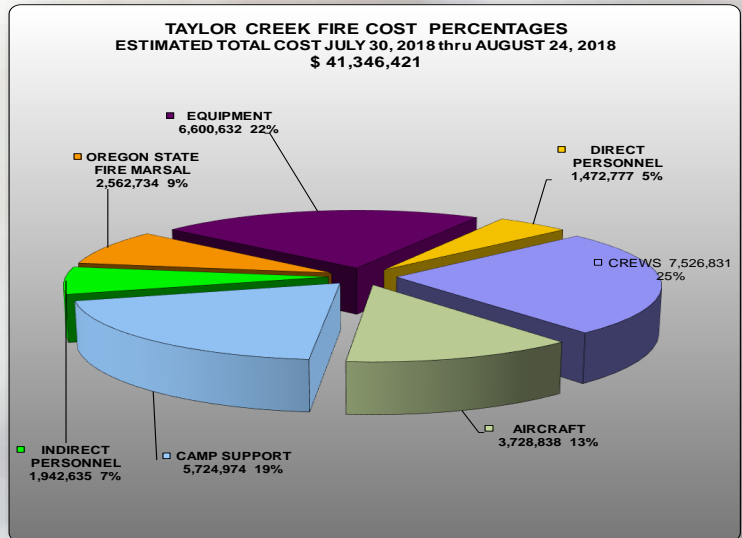
- August 13, 2018 @ 06:00 hours
- Contained/Completed:

- ✓ Klondike 39%
- ✓ Taylor Creek 95%

- Transitioned Taylor Creek and Klondike East Fires to NW Team 12

Safety:

- 335,000 person hours worked with 0 reportable accidents.



Incident Information

The Alaska IMT's public information office had a tall task when it arrived at the Taylor Creek and Klondike fires . The Pacific NW IMT 2 had put in place a new social media product that proved popular with the public and reached a large virtual audience. Information Officer Sam Harrel continued to host a live-streamed daily Facebook broadcast that aired at 5 a.m. to provide the public the latest information on the fire.

Facebook turned out to be the primary tool used to disseminate information to the public. The incident Facebook page had more than 7,000 followers and allowed the information office to engage the public on a daily basis. Given the positive feedback, this new format for delivering information to the public is becoming an IMT standard.

Other more traditional methods to deliver information included:

- **Trapline** – PIOs traveled nearly 300 miles a day posting information on bulletin boards in communities impacted by the fires and delivering information to places frequented by local residents.
- **Inciweb** – The info shop maintained Inciweb pages for both the Taylor Creek and Klondike fires, posting information daily in the form of updates, maps, evacuation advisories, smoke forecasts, pictures and videos.
- **Joint Information Center** – A JIC was already in place in Merlin when the team arrived and was utilized as the primary public phone number for fire and evacuation information.
- **Community meetings** - The info office held two public meetings – one in Selma on 8/14 and one in Cave Junction on 8/21. More than 300 people attended and 200 tuned in to live streams of the meetings and recorded videos had 12,000 views on Facebook.
- **Media** - There was a steady stream of interest in the incident from media in Grants Pass, Medford and the Illinois Valley including Grants Pass Daily Courier, Medford Mail Tribune and three television stations in Medford. Reporters made several visits to the ICP and were escorted to the fireline on multiple occasions. The Illinois Valley News provided regular coverage of the fire. The PIO in charge of the media branch handled most media interviews but other IMT personnel (Operations, weather, medical) also were interviewed when available.

Outreach

Media Interviews

Television – 22

Radio – 2

Newspaper – 28

Fireline media tours – 8

Trapline

Total stops – 37

Miles per day – 295

Total miles – 2,456

Total contacts – 1,857

Social Media

Page views – 14,446

Total reach – 636,816

New page likes – 895

Posts – 87

Post engagements – 103,832

Videos posted – 43

Video views – 210,000

Total followers – 7,250

New followers – 1,099

Mailchimp (Email listserv)

Subscribers - 559

Morning Update with Sam Harrel



Key Decisions & Significant Events

- Combining Resource Advisor units in Grants Pass, Agness, and Selma into a single team based at Klondike IP resulted in enhanced communication and an overall efficiency of the READ support effort. This included an 1800 daily READ meeting at ICP with Agness resources conferencing in as well as the creation of functional READ groups. The Lead READ or IMT Resource Advisor Coordinator met with Division Supervisors daily in the field to discuss issues and planned activities.
- The BLM Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Plastic Sphere Dispenser (PSD) was used to burnout steep rugged terrain at night under manageable and favorable burning conditions with minimal risk to firefighters.
- Seventy-two hours into the incident the IMT and agency administrators conducted a strategic assessment that provided clear intent and a common operating picture that allowed operational strategy to be implemented without setbacks.
- Implementation of a swing shift added additional force and focus for conducting successful burnout operations. A 3 shift approach for day and night operations facilitated a direct strategy in line with the WFDSS intent to minimize area burned.
- Mobilizing with a large roster (97 persons) allowed the IMT to get on step more rapidly – especially considering that in PL 5, additional resource orders were difficult to fill.
- The decision to share the eSuite database between the East and West Zones presented some technical and functional challenges, but should ultimately lead to a cleaner, more organized financial package for the affected agencies.
- Relocation of the Incident Command Post to Lake Selmac Campground provided the IMT with an excellent location close to the focus of operations and plenty of room to expand.
- All fire line checkpoint security and roads were maintained by the Oregon National Guard with oversight support from IMT Team. Additionally, Security along with Ground Support identified traffic patterns to establish safe and efficient travel for the camp along with a plan for expansion as the incident grew.



Notable Successes

- The use of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) increased situational awareness with both aerial firing capability, and real-time visual and infrared displays. The use of UAS resources at night mitigated risks that enabled a large force of firefighters to establish and strengthen otherwise hazardous nighttime operations under optimal conditions for holding and burning.
- Co-locating the Liaison Officers in the same yurt with the Agency Representatives and assigning one LOFR with the Oregon National Guard was a great way to facilitate communication with key agency cooperators.
- Integration of local resources from multiple agencies and contractors provided operational expertise that was key to the successful implementation of the operational strategy and tactics. These resources also helped strengthen relationships with local representatives and stakeholders.
- Eleven Australian single resources were integrated in the operation. They provided competent line supervision as Division Supervisors, Task Force Leaders, and Heavy Equipment Bosses.
- The Resource Advisor Coordinator provided a needed bridge between the READs and the IMT, allowed for swift identification of needs, and was able to quickly resolve issues as they arose.
- Solar panels (established by the previous team) were used on all repeaters not only to reduce battery replacement costs, but more importantly to reduce travel exposure to COMTs. The panels allowed the repeaters to remain operational during long periods when the sites were not accessible due to smoke, fire and/or downed trees.
- One of the SITLs was able to liaison with the LOFR staff and attend daily Cooperator Meetings leading to better coordination and understanding of cooperators needs and issues.
- Cooperators from Josephine County Sheriff's Office, Illinois Valley Fire District, and nearby emergency services provided evacuation oversight, timely pres releases, local knowledge, and meeting facilities
- The IMETs provided a link on the IAP for IRAWs deployed on the fire. This provided an easy to use link to site-specific weather for multiple locations on the fire.

Staffing at Maximum Level

Total Personnel	1583
Hand Crews – Type 1	2
Hand Crews – Type 2IA	6
Hand Crews – Type 2	34
Camp Crews	5
Engines – Type 3	5
Engines – Type 4	11
Engines – Type 5	5
Engines – Type 6	35
Water Tenders	35
Dozers	15
Masticators	6
Skidders	5
Helicopter – Type 1	3
Helicopter – Type 3	4
Fixed Wing	2

Operations

Miles of chipping completed:	18
Miles of dozer line built:	25
Miles of handline built:	4
Miles of dozer line repaired:	12
Miles of hand line repaired:	7
Structure assessments completed:	170

Air Operations

Air Operations	84
• Flight hours:	84
• Delivery:	
• Gallons of water	611,300
• Passengers Transported	351

Logistics

Meals Served:	35,621
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Trainees

By Section:

• Command	24
• Operations	27
• Logistics	34
• Plans	19
• Finance	11
Total	115

By Agency:

• USFS	43
• State	47
• DOI	23
• NOAA/NWS	1

* 25 individuals were recommended for certification; 1 individual was recertified; and 26 Priority Trainees gained experience with the AKIMT.



Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- Coordination of Resource Advisor data collection, GIS input, and READ products was challenging. Upon arrival of Alaska IMT, Resource Advisors were using two data platforms (Collector and Avenza) and uploading to both the local BLM unit and PNW2. The IMT Resource Advisor Coordinator worked with PNW2, BLM, and the Lead READ to develop a single coordinated workflow to carry forward. Additional work by the IMT is needed to be prepared to incorporate field data on future incidents.
- Ensuring that repair work was aligned with the appropriate Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) or federal agency standards was initially addressed by identifying differing repair standards in the IAP. Eventually a signed repair standards agreement was put in place and State and Federal repair standards were incorporated into a supplemental “green sheet” provided to all units involved in repair activities.
- Transition of the Resource Advisors from suppression to repair posed several challenges. As READS timed out they were replaced with expertise in road engineering, archaeology, hydrology, and botany to better meet the needs of repair. An ODF landowner liaison with operational knowledge and local field experience was brought on to facilitate and track repair work on ODF-protected lands.
- Cost apportionment needs and analysis for agencies took significant time and energy from operational staff while actively running the incident operations. Planning Operations added an additional trainee to assist with the demands of the high tempo and large workload.
- The agency’s decision to order a second IMT and zone the fire ultimately reduced the complexity faced by the Team, but in the short-term set back operations and made it more difficult for the Team to ramp up.
- The IMT was asked to develop and implement a solution to share the eISuite databases between two teams at remote sites via the internet. Using existing team network and working with the existing ISP vendor to get internet connectivity to the Gold Beach ICP the IMT was able to get the server up on both sides. Lessons learned on this incident should simplify the process in the future.
- The IMT managed two separate databases for the incident and shared them both with the West Zone. Numerous complications arose related to managing and tracking resources coming in from multiple incidents on old resource orders without complete information. To help mitigate issues resulting from this, we established a point of contact for each Zone for database information.
- A significant challenge for safety and a high risk to fire personnel was having to use Hwy 199 to access the fire area. This highway is known for its frequent vehicle accidents. The hazard was mitigated down through the construction of various signs to alert civilian drivers to the presence of fire vehicles entering and exiting the highway, which seemed to have a positive effect on driver’s speed.
- Surge resources with only two to three days does not allow for sufficient time to scout and buy into a developed operations plan. Surge forces need at least four effective days in order to assist in completing a successful fire operation.



Ownership Map August 24 2018

Taylor Creek Fire
OR-MED-000395
52,825 ac

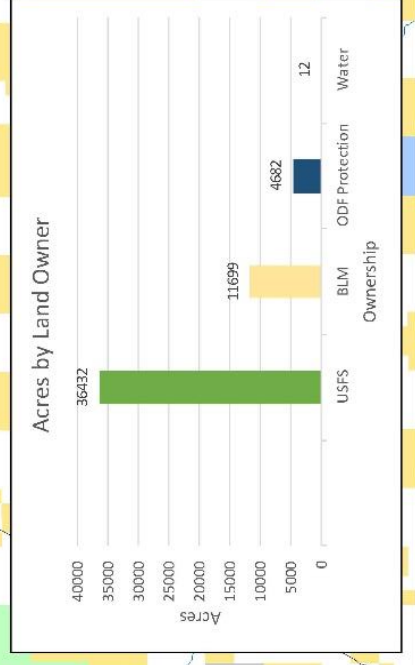
Klondike Fire
OR-RSF-000354
82,015 ac

- Financial Boundary
- Zone Break Line
- Uncontrolled Fire Edge
- Completed Line
- Oregon Department of Forestry
- Oregon Parks and Rec Department
- BLM
- US Forest Service
- Lands within City Limits: Local Govt

Updated: August 24, 2018 @ 06:23 PM

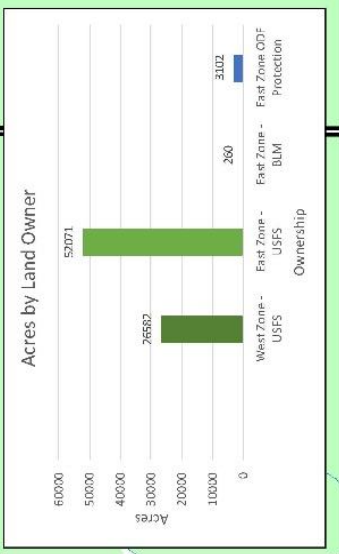
Taylor Creek

Land Owner	Acres	% Acres Burned
USFS	36432	0.69
BLM	11699	0.22
ODF Protection	4682	0.09
Water	12	0.00
TOTAL	52825	100.00%



Klondike

Land Owner	Acres	% Acres Burned
West Zone - USFS	26582	0.32
East Zone - USFS	52071	0.63
East Zone - BLM	260	0.00
East Zone ODF Protection	3102	0.04
TOTAL	82015	100.00%



Progression Map

Klonkita Fire
Approx. 82,015 acres
As of 8/23/18

Taylor Creek Fire
Approx. 52,825 acres
As of 8/23/18



Mileage		Total Acres	
Area	Perimeter	Area	Perimeter
0-1000	1000	1000	1000
1000-2000	2000	2000	2000
2000-3000	3000	3000	3000
3000-4000	4000	4000	4000
4000-5000	5000	5000	5000
5000-6000	6000	6000	6000
6000-7000	7000	7000	7000
7000-8000	8000	8000	8000
8000-9000	9000	9000	9000
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