

# Honey Prairie Fire Update

Thursday, October 27, 2011~ 5 p.m.



## Honey Prairie Fire—Six Months Old



As the Honey Prairie Fire reaches its six month anniversary, it continues to creep and smolder burning three to four feet deep into the peat, dropping undermined trees left and right. The Honey Prairie Fire has been burning longer than the fires in 2007 which started on April 19 and were declared out on October 1. The fires in 1954-55 burned for a year and month.

How long will the fire last? Rains have been hit and miss in the area—mostly miss on the fire. Since September 20, the east entrance had about 11 inches while the no more than 3 inches were recorded on the west side near the fire.

The Okefenokee Swamp is the headwaters of the Suwannee River. On October 27, 2011 the US Geological Survey river gage near US 441 in Fargo, GA indicates a discharge of only 9.6 cubic feet per second. The average flow on this date, over the past 78 years, is 894 cubic feet per second. The minimum recorded was 0.00 in 1955.

Incident Commander Steve Abbott says, “We need a storm to dump at least six to eight inches of rainfall over the entire swamp to bring the water level up and extinguish the fire. The US Drought Monitor indicates that most of Georgia including the Okefenokee Swamp is in an extreme drought. The NOAA Drought Outlook predicts that drought will persist or intensify in the area through January 31, 2012. It does not look like the fire will be out soon.”

Firefighters must remain vigilant. The fire has shown that it can flare up at any time. It made a run over east boundary of the refuge on May 9, which firefighters quickly contained. The fire seemed to settle down for about a month then spotted over the line and burned a few thousand acres of valuable private timber. The fire reached Chesser Island on May 13, eventually settled down, then flared up suddenly on June 12 burning the boardwalk and coming to within 500 feet of the visitor center the next day. In an area where the fire was creeping since late June, it spotted over the line on September 12 creating a new fire which quickly grew to 1,350 acres.

The lightning ignited Honey Prairie Fire has burned about 483 square miles and unknown cubic feet beneath the surface since April 28, 2011.

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### Assigned Resources

6 Engines

6 Tractor /Plows

1 Helicopter

59 Personnel

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[www.fws.gov/okefenokee](http://www.fws.gov/okefenokee)

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