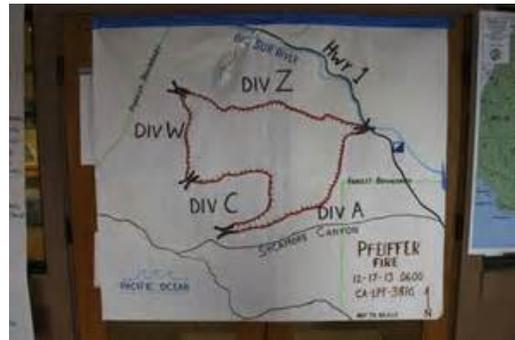


# Pfeiffer Fire Updates

## December 16 – 28, 2013

From the first full day of the Pfeiffer Fire on December 16, 2013, daily updates were posted on the Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade Website. Below are the daily updates beginning on December 16, 2013 and ending on December 28, 2013. The Fire was declared fully contained on December 20, 2013 at 6:00 PM



**December 28, 2013 @ 10:00 AM.** Due to damage to local phone lines, the the Big Sur Fire Station phone line went down on December 16th. The fire station phone line had been routed through Chief Karstens house which was destroyed in the early hours of the fire. Although phone service has been restored, we do not have message capability on our phone line. We hope to have phone message capability restored in the very near future. In the meantime, you can still contact us via email at: [bigsurfire@gmail.com](mailto:bigsurfire@gmail.com). We apologize for our lack of phone and message service during this incident.

**December 24, 2013 @ 11:00 PM.** As of yesterday evening, December 23, 2013, all road closures and evacuation orders have been lifted. PG&E work still continues in the affected areas. Power has been restored to all residents not destroyed by the fire. The US Forest Service has stated that they hope to release the cause of the fire very soon.

**December 23, 2013 @9:00PM.** Little has changed over the past 24 hours with all evacuation areas and road closures still in place. The major focus is to repair utilities and restore power to the affected areas. Personnel assigned to the incident have been reduced significantly down to 188 as of this morning. Community meetings will continue each day starting at 10:00 AM at the Big Sur Station.

**December 22, 2013 @7:30 PM:** Once full containment of the fire was achieved on Friday December 20th at 6:00 PM, many firefighting resources have been released from the incident and have returned to their home agencies. The basecamp at Pfeiffer State Park has been scaled back considerably with about 200 personnel still assigned to the incident. The amount of acres burned remains at 917 with the adjusted amount of total structures destroyed now at 38. Of the total structures destroyed, 34 are residents and 4 are out buildings. Additionally, numerous vehicles were also destroyed during the blaze. Until further notice, all current road closures, evacuation areas, and evacuation watches remain in effect. Andrew Molera State Park remains closed while Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park continues to stay open. As far as we know, all business in the Big Sur Area are open and operational.

The priority at this time is to re-establish utilities in the affected areas. Due to the narrow roads, and the complexity of the work, the roads remain closed until utilities can be restored. PG&E has several crews working around the clock to restore power in the area. PG&E has also established a mobile command post to coordinate the utility work.

Rehabilitation plans are being developed and implemented in coordination with local forest resource managers. Effective rehabilitation is critical to the area due to the approaching winter season. With the ground vegetation eliminated due to the fire, the chance of landslides and erosion are substantially increased.

The next community meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 23rd, starting at 10:00 AM at the Big Sur Station.

**December 21, 2013 @8:00 PM.** As expected, full containment of the fire was achieved by 6:00 PM yesterday evening. A special thanks to all the firefighters, from Monterey County and beyond, who without hesitation answered the call for help when the community of Big Sur needed it the most. Although December 21st marks the first day of winter, as we have clearly seen, the threat of wildfire continues. With that, we must all remain vigilant and aware that another wildfire is merely a spark away.

Even though the fire is contained, unsafe and dangerous conditions remain within the containment lines. Until the fire is completely extinguished, there still may be flare-ups and smoky conditions. Other threats include damaged utility lines, unsafe drinking water, and burned out trees that still may fall.

According to the US Forest Service, the fire is 100% contained, 665 personnel remain assigned to the incident, and the total acres burned are at 917. The total number of structures destroyed now stands

34, which includes all types of structures. All road closures, evacuation areas, and evacuation watches are still in effect. PG&E is diligently working to restore power in Sycamore Canyon and on Pfeiffer Ridge. Their work on these roads precludes vehicle traffic except for emergency vehicles. Residents living on Clear Ridge, Middle Ridge, and Front Hill are allowed back to their homes but must gain access from Brewers Bridge at Highway 1 just north of the River Inn. There is no access to Sycamore Canyon or Pfeiffer Ridge from the Brewers Bridge entry point.

Along with US Forest Service firefighters and strike teams of municipal firefighters from other parts of the State, fire agencies from neighboring Monterey County were some of the first outside help to arrive. Two Monterey County Strike Teams, XMY 2175 C, and XMY 2176 C, each with five engines and a supervisor, responded immediately to the call. Strike Team 2175 C included Cal Fire Carmel Highlands, Monterey, Seaside, and two engines from the Monterey County Regional Fire District with the Strike Team Leader being Division Chief Miles Schuler from the MCRFD. Strike Team 2176 C was made of agencies from the Presidio of Monterey, Marina, North County Fire Protection District, Salinas, and Cal Fire Soledad with the STL being Division Chief Doug McCoun from the North County Fire Protection District. Along with the local Strike Teams, which have since been released, the Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade members responded with the initial call. At this time, BSVFB has three units and seven personnel still committed and on patrol within the containment lines.

There will be no community meetings this weekend. The next scheduled meeting will be on Monday, December 23rd starting at 10:30 AM at the Big Sur Station.

**December 20, 2013 @2:30 PM.** Due to a tremendous effort by all the personnel and agencies assigned to the fire, full containment is still expected by 6:00 PM this evening. Although containment may be achieved at that time, hotspots, flareups, and smoke generation may still occur due to unburned vegetation within the containment lines. According to the US Forest Service, the fire is now at 93% containment with 999 personnel assigned to the incident. Total acreage burn is at 917. The fluctuation in amount of acres burned is due to increase mapping detail that has occurred over the past few days. All previous road closures, evacuation areas, and evacuation watch areas remain in effect.

Utility crews have been hard at work restoring power and services to the affected areas. PG&E will be conducting extensive work over the next several days along Pfeiffer Ridge Road. Once residents are allowed back into the area, a water boil order will be in effect.

Community meetings will continue each day starting at 4:00 PM at the Big Sur Station. A special moment occurred yesterday evening during the community meeting when Fire Chief Martha Karstens shared to the gathered residents that while looking through the rubble of her burned out home, she discovered a jewelry box that she had inherited from her grandmother that still contained usable jewelry items. Truly a "Phoenix" moment.

**December 19, 2013 @11:00 PM.** Based on the amount of work being performed, full containment is still expected for 6:00 PM on Friday. As of earlier this evening, the US Forest Service reported 88% containment, 937 acres burned, with 1,018 personnel still assigned to the incident. All previous road closures and evacuation areas remain in effect. Damage assessment teams were in the area today assessing properties, utilities, and road conditions. Hopefully, with full containment by Friday evening, residents may be allowed back into the burn area and to their properties in the very near future.

Mop-up operations and structure protection continued today with traffic control in place along Highway 1 due to fire crews extinguishing hot spots along Highway 1 from the State Park entrance to Sycamore Canyon Road. Firefighters have saved 24 threatened structures since the fire began earlier Monday morning. At least 22 structures have been destroyed, including 14 homes along Pfeiffer Ridge Road.

The Big Sur Volunteer Firefighters have been on the front lines since the fire started and are committed to staying with the effort until the threat has passed. Many local firefighting resources from around Monterey County are in the process of being released; some of which were called in for the initial attack of the fire. Firefighters and fire agencies from around Monterey County have a tremendous reputation for offering full cooperation to a local agency when disaster strikes. Along with an extremely effective mutual aid system in Monterey County, the State of California is known for having one of the best, if not the best, firefighting mutual aid systems in the nation. The Incident Command System, now used by thousands of public safety agencies around the country, started in California following a series of disastrous southern California wildland fires during the 1970's. Firefighting mutual aid resources in the State is coordinated and managed by the California Emergency Management Agency. (CAL EMA)

**December 19, 2013 @1000 AM.** Firefighters are moving towards complete containment which is still anticipated for 6:00 PM on Friday, December 20th. Firefighting operations are now including backfire techniques that allow for the removal of unburned vegetation between containment lines in order to reduce the threat of flare-ups and spot fires that could linger beyond the time of full containment. With full containment close at hand, some firefighting resources will be released from the incident. With this process, many fire vehicles will be moving along the highway so use caution as you travel about. Additionally, backfiring may be occurring along Highway 1 so please stay aware of those operations.

The evacuation area remains in effect from Sycamore Canyon Road on the south, Clear Ridge Road to the north, Highway 1 on the east, and the Pacific Ocean on the west. Clear Ridge Road, Pfeiffer Ridge Road, and River Inn Road to Pfeiffer Ridge Road remain closed. Highway 1 remains open but traffic control may be in place as the need arises. The Evacuation Watch remains in effect for the area between the River Inn and Fernwood.

According to the US Forest Service as of this morning, the fire is 79% contained with 917 acres burned. Total personnel assigned to the incident are at 1,007 but that number will decrease as resources are released. Crews will be out today conducting damage assessment of properties and road conditions.

**December 18, 2013 @8:00 PM.** Excellent progress was made today on all perimeters of the fire which brings the fire containment up to 74%. This is good news since strong winds are predicted beginning this evening and continuing through Thursday night. Firefighting personnel will be stationed in all areas of the fire in anticipation of this upcoming strong wind event. A total of 1,007 personnel are assigned to the incident operating out of a basecamp established at Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. Local fire agency Strike Teams along with the US Forest Service, CAL Fire, Big Sur Volunteers, Monterey County State Parks, the Monterey County Office of the Sheriff, the California Highway Patrol, Monterey County OES, along with several other agencies including the American Red Cross and SPCA are all participating to the efforts to contain and control the fire. The efforts of all agencies and organizations involved, both public and private, should be commended highly.

Road closures remain in effect including Sycamore Canyon Road, Pfeiffer Ridge Road and Clear Ridge Road. Evacuations continue along Pfeiffer Ridge Road and Sycamore Canyon Road. The Evacuation Watch remains in effect for the area west of Highway 1 from Fernwood Resort to the River Inn. Highway 1 remains open to public traffic and many hotels, resorts, and restaurants are still open for business. Unless the need arises, today will be the last day of operation for the American Red Cross service center. Another public meeting was held earlier today which will continue daily starting at 4:00 PM at the Big Sur Station. There is light at the end of the tunnel, and hopefully, with the outstanding efforts of all the personnel involved, full containment will be achieved by 6:00 PM on Friday, December 20th.

**December 18, 2013 @10:00 AM.** Firefighters are making good progress as more resources are being brought in and the Incident Management Team is becoming fully established and operational. According to the US Forest Service, the size of the fire is at about 769 acres, estimated containment is at 20%, and 879 total personnel are assigned to the incident. The fire is estimated for complete containment on Friday at 6:00 PM. Although the fire may be completely contained at that time, active fire, hot spots, and smoke may still be present within the containment lines. Complete extinguishment may occur much later.

At least 22 structures have been destroyed, including 14 homes along Pfeiffer Ridge Road. On the better end of the spectrum, firefighters have saved 24 structures directly threatened by fire. All road closures remain in effect including Pfeiffer Ridge Road, Sycamore Canyon Road, and Clear Ridge Road. The Evacuation Watch remains in effect west of Highway 1 between Fernwood Resort and the River Inn.

Community meetings for Big Sur residents will continue daily starting at 4:00 PM at the Big Sur Station. The American Red Cross and the Monterey County SPCA have established daily service centers at the Fernwood Resort. For local residents, the annual arrival of Santa Claus and toy giveaway previously scheduled for Thursday evening has been cancelled. Hopefully we can get Santa here for the kids before Christmas. More to follow. And speaking of children, students from Captain Cooper Elementary School have been moved to the Carmel River School due to poor smoke conditions.

Even though we have units assigned to the Pfeiffer Incident, the Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade fire station is staffed with personnel available to respond to emergency incidents not related to the fire. Although her home was lost in the early hours of the fire, BSVFB Fire Chief Martha Karstens

remains dedicated to the Big Sur community by staying on-duty managing fire brigade resources and responding to emergency incidents. Updated information will be posted here as it becomes available.

**December 17, 2013 @ 3:00 PM.** Per the US Forest Service, an Evacuation Watch was issued this afternoon by the Office of the Sheriff, Monterey County for the area west of Highway 1 between Fernwood Resort and the River Inn. When an Evacuation Watch is issued, a warning is given to people within the affected area that a threat to life or property exists. People issued this type of warning are not required to evacuate.

A community meeting will be held for the residents of Big Sur this afternoon, December 17th, starting at 4:00 PM at the Big Sur Station.

The total acreage burned remains estimated at around 500 acres with 5% containment. Per the US Forest Service, there are 495 total personnel assigned to the incident at this time. Related to the fire, drift smoke as far north as Moss Landing has been reported to local emergency communication centers.

[News Release – Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District – Wildfire Smoke Advisory – December 16, 2013](#)

**December 17, 2013 @9:00 AM.** Although the fire continues to burn in rugged terrain along Pfeiffer Ridge between Highway 1 and the Pacific Ocean, firefighters are beginning to make progress. According to the latest news reports, about 550 acres have been burned with containment at about 5%. Due to the amount of heavy smoke in the area, obtaining exact numbers of total acreage and the amount of structures burned will be difficult until the fire is more contained and smoke conditions improve. Highway 1 remains open but may be congested due to the increased number of emergency vehicles in the area. Please use extreme caution when driving along Highway 1.

Although the American Red Cross has closed the evacuation center at the Grange Hall, according to local news reports, the Red Cross has opened a Service Center at the Fernwood Resort from 10:00 AM until 7:00 PM for the next several days. Anyone looking to help can call the 24hr. Red Cross hotline at 831-320-9989. Additionally, according to the American Red Cross, several local hotels and resorts are opening their doors to those who have been displaced including the Riverside Campground, Ripplewood Resort, Fernwood Resort, and the Big Sur Lodge.

Fire suppression efforts remain under the control of the US Forest Service with assistance from CAL FIRE and local government firefighting resources. The amount of firefighting personnel assigned to the incident is about 625. Numbers of firefighting personnel vary during operational periods due to certain resources being released and new resources being brought in. The Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade wishes to thank all the firefighting resources assigned to this incident for their tremendous efforts in containing and controlling this fire. We will do our best to post new information here as it becomes available.

**December 16, 2013 @12:30 PM.** (Updated on Dec. 28, 2013) In the early morning hours today, a vegetation fire began in an area near Buzzard's Roost Trail, across from the Big Sur Lodge in Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, on the northeast aspect below Pfeiffer Ridge. As of 1230 PM today, the fire is estimated at around 500 acres with little or no containment. Due to an off-shore wind, the fire is generally moving northwest towards the Pacific Ocean. At last count, between 15–20 homes have been destroyed in the Pfeiffer Ridge area including the home of our Fire Chief Martha Karstens. Although her home has been lost to the fire, Chief Karstens remains on the fireground managing fire suppression resources along with the US Forest Service and CAL FIRE.

Hundreds of firefighters are on the scene with numerous engines from the US Forest Service, CAL FIRE, the Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade, and at least 10 engines from two local government Strike Teams from around Monterey County. The fire, known as the "Pfeiffer Incident" is currently under the control of the US Forest Service. Evacuations in the area are continuing with an evacuation center established at the Grange Hall by the American Red Cross. Local restaurants are feeding firefighters as the need arises. Pfeiffer Ridge Road and Sycamore Canyon Road have been closed. Please understand that this is an active incident in the early stages and all efforts are being directed towards fire suppression activities. As we obtain more information, we will do our best to post it here in a timely fashion.