

Winds whip Markleeville fire to 6,500 acres

Updated 11:45pm

The Washington Fire had consumed 6,500 acres as of late Sunday.

The blaze nearly 10 miles south of Markleeville continues to be a threat to multiple structures.

“The entire fire area is under extreme winds. The fire is continuing short uphill runs and single tree/group torching,” authorities said.

Winds on June 21 were from the south, with the fire burning northeast.

Updated 5:45pm

Sustained winds are making it difficult for firefighters to get a handle on the fire burning south of Markleeville. By Sunday afternoon 3,500 acres had burned.

No structures have burned, but about two dozen remain threatened.

A spot fire started on the west side of Highway 4, forcing the evacuation up the Carson River to the north end of Markleeville. Protecting that town – the county seat of Alpine County is the highest priority right now.

The fire is in the Bagley Valley, having moved to the north side of Highway 89.

Monitor pass is closed at Highway 89 and Highway 4 is closed.

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The Washington Fire burning about 10 miles south of Markleeville has grown to more than 1,300 acres.

Five residences are threatened and evacuated, and an additional 15 historic cabins are threatened.

The fire started in a remote and rugged area in the Silver Creek Drainage, which is making hard for crews get a handle on the blaze. The fire is now in the Wolf Creek Drainage. Five helicopters and three air tankers are working the fire along with crews on the ground.

The cause of the fire that started the night of June 19 is still unknown. However, there was no lightning a that time.

Highway 4 is closed to the top of Ebbetts Pass. Campgrounds have been evacuated.

This has been declared a red flag day – meaning a severe fire threat because of winds and humidity.

The U.S. Forest Service is the lead agency.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report