# IV. The 2017 Fire Season Timeline

## June

* Wet winter and spring had everyone anticipating a mild fire season based on past data
* Preparedness reviews within the path of totality for the Solar Eclipse often involved mock responses to potential incidents during the eclipse
* Malheur National Forest prepared to “host” the Rainbow Family gathering at the end of the month
* By mid-month, rain shut off and conditions began to turn hot and dry. Snowmelt in the mountains accelerated
* By the end of the month, large rangeland fires in cured grasses burned and the first significant lightning bust occurred on June 26
* Sutherland Canyon, Straight Hollow, and Spartan fires in Central Washington threatened both greater sage-grouse habitat and structures
* Sheep Springs Fire in the Deschutes National Forest started within the B&B Burn scar and handled using indirect attack tactics due to the number of snags.

## July

* By July, fires happening all over the Northwest, including in locations not typically associated with July fires, such as the Noisy Creek Fire on the Colville National Forest.
* Indian Creek and Chetco fires both started in wilderness areas and initially handled as confinement fires due to inaccessibility, dangerous terrain, and, in the case of Checto Bar abundant snags from previous fires.
* Rangeland fires such as Powerline, Bowden, and Hawk continued in eastern Oregon and eastern Washington.
* Indian Creek – July 4
* Powerline – July 8
* Lone Pine – July 9
* Chetco Bar – July 12
* Noisy Creek – July 15
* July 24-26 – second significant lightning bust
* Diamond Creek – July 23
* Whitewater – July 23
* Bowden – July 25
* High Cascades – July 25
* Hawk – July 27
* Suiattle – July 31

## August

* Air quality deteriorated affecting human and firefighter health, making it difficult to locate new starts, and to support larger fires using aircraft.
* National preparedness level moved to 5 on August 10 and the Northwest moved to preparedness level 5 on August 12.
* Firefighting resource shortages intensifying due to demand in the Northern Rockies and Great Basin in addition to the Northwest. National Guard mobilizations began to support firefighting efforts.
* The 2017 solar eclipse brought an estimated one million visitors to Oregon during August’s hot, dry and unstable conditions. The visitors would be concentrated in the narrow 70-mile wide strip of the path of totality in rural towns and counties that lacked the infrastructure to support large scale emergencies, as well as the capacity to host the amount of expected visitors. Emergency services personnel expressed concerns about potential ignitions and fast moving fires in areas with many eclipse visitors. The logistical complexity to evacuate and account for the public, and transport fire responders quickly to fires during times with high traffic congestion added to these concerns.

The Whitewater Fire near Mt. Jefferson closed miles of trails, including 30 miles of Pacific Crest Trail and hundreds of acres of forest and wilderness, potentially pushing more visitors to central and eastern Oregon each time the area and road closures increased. As the eclipse event drew near, fuel shortages were reported in central and eastern Oregon and traffic was backed up for 50 miles in parts of central Oregon. However, the fire prevention and education efforts were a success. No worst-case scenarios played out and human impacts were less than expected. No known human caused ignitions evolved into any fires of significance.

* Cinder Butte – August 2
* Bear Butte – August 4
* Falcon Complex – August 8
* Nena Springs – August 8
* The week of August 9 saw several thunderstorms that started a large number of fires across the Northwest.
* Jones – August 10
* North Pelican – August 10
* Staley/Tumblebug 2 – August 10
* Umpqua North Complex – August 11
* Jolly Mountain – August 11
* Milli – August 11
* On August 13 international firefighting resources were sent from Australia, New Zealand, and Mexico to support firefighting efforts in British Columbia, making these resources unavailable to support fires in the United States.
* Miller Complex - August 14
* On August 18-21, Chetco Bar made a big run to the west towards Gold Beach and Brookings under strong east-northeast winds, resulting in evacuations and the loss of structures.
* Horse Creek Complex – August 21
* Horse Prairie - August 26
* Potato Hill – August 29
* Uno Peak – August 30
* August 17 – Hurricane Harvey hits Texas. August 30 - Hurricane Irma hits Puerto, US Virgin Islands ,Florida. Hurricanes Harvey and Irma placed pressure on incident management team and contract crew availability in order to support hurricane relief efforts.

## September

* Burning conditions in early September were a continuation of those in August. Significant spread events occurred on new starts, such as Eagle Creek in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.
* Eagle Creek – September 2
* East Crater – September 3
* Rim – September 3
* On September 4, Diamond Creek spread across 45,000 acres, burning well into British Columbia and Norse Peak made a 25,000 acre run under the influence of a thermal trough.
* On September 5 under strong east winds, Eagle Creek ran 13 miles to west towards Troutdale, Oregon and spotted across the Columbia River, starting what became the Archer Mountain Fire in Washington.
* The last lightning episode of significance occurred in the September 9-11 period but more of these storms had some moisture with them, resulting in fewer fire starts.
* Desolation – September 9
* On September 9, crews from the U.S. Army joined the firefighting effort due to shortages of firefighting resources.
* Nash – September 10
* Crab Creek – September 15
* More general rains finally returned in mid-September, slowing or halting fire spread and allowing firefighters to start getting ahead of the large fires.

## October

* Most of October was spent conducting suppression repair work on the larger fires and areas with greater impacts from fires. Considerable effort was spent felling hazard trees along highways and major travel routes, removing fire-related debris from near culverts, improving drainage on firelines, and assessing the level of additional restoration work needed.