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OC Parks Canyon Fire 2 Status Update 10/13/17

Of the more than 9,000 acres estimated damaged in the Canyon Fire 2, the large majority are within four primary OC Parks regional properties: Irvine Regional Park, Santiago Oaks Regional Park, Peters Canyon Regional Park, and Irvine Ranch Open Space. Other facilities, including several regional trail segments, are also damaged.

Red flag conditions, including high winds, are predicted through midday Sunday, Oct. 15. OC Fire Watch volunteers will be deployed at locations outside the current fire containment zone. Due to these conditions and the risk of re-ignition throughout the burn footprint, no portion of the affected parks will be reopened to the public until at least Monday, October 16.

Additional information about projected partial openings will be provided following reassessment on Monday. OC Parks staff, in collaboration with OCFA and CalFire, have completed initial visual assessments of each facility, although in many cases, trails within the wilderness areas of each park remain impassable due to flare-ups and hotspots.

Incident Command has indicated that air reconnaissance by drone should be allowable next week, and OC Parks has arranged with OC Public Works to initiate drone photo-documentation of the burn footprint next week, contingent upon weather. Physical inspections of structures and trees are being conducted by OC Parks staff wearing fire retardant protective equipment in accessible areas, and will expand to include contractor support once the green light is provided by fire officials.

These inspections will likely begin next week, and combined with the aerial reconnaissance, will assist OC Parks in prioritization of hazard remediation, strategies to address debris flows, and operational determinations such as which areas of each facility may be safely re-opened to the public in the near term.

Up-to-date information regarding the status of the parks and the recovery effort will be posted on OC Parks website, and being regularly updated with photo on OC Parks [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts.

Status and projection for each facility is provided below.

Irvine Regional Park

- Burn area includes the majority of the natural habitat spaces along the entire perimeter of the park, including the open spaces surrounding the Boy Scout Outdoor Education Center leading into Weir Canyon.
- Ranger station, nature center, Soda Fountain Pavilion, regional trails office, maintenance yard, and majority of picnic shelters and restroom buildings unharmed. Structural assessment complete and all buildings safe for occupancy. Restroom 11, across the wash from Peacock Hill Stables, is completely destroyed.

- OC Zoo is intact. Structural and electrical assessment complete and safe for occupancy. Repopulation of animals expected to be complete by Friday, October 13.
- Irvine Park Railroad/concession building/Wheel-of-Fun structures are intact, minimal cosmetic damage to fences/bollards.
- Pony Rides structures intact.
- Peacock Hill Stables significantly damaged, red-tagged by CalFire and OC Public Works Building Inspector. OC Animal Care assisting with identifying stables that may receive displaced horses.
- Boy Scout Outdoor Education Center main buildings and grounds intact. One or two outbuildings were seen with scorching and minor damage.
- Tree damage assessment completed within developed areas of park (including turf, oak groves, picnic areas, playgrounds, parking lots, etc.). Initial count of dead/damaged trees that must be removed for public safety is 200 to 250. As of Thursday afternoon, dying trees were collapsing and re-igniting fires adjacent to structures and amenities. Pending any additional hazards identified, OC Parks staff plan to begin tree removal this weekend.
- OC Parks will prepare to open portions of Irvine Park, including the OC Zoo, and clearly identify the areas of the park that are safe for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- Irvine Park is the top priority for reopening to public use.

Santiago Oaks Regional Park

- Burn area includes the majority of the natural habitat spaces along the canyons and within the watershed, including the orange groves adjacent to the ranger office and special event facility.
- Ranger station, nature center, restroom buildings and playgrounds are intact. One wall of a garage at the front entrance of the park sustained non-structural burns and will require repair/reconstruction. Structural and electrical assessment complete and safe for occupancy.
- Tree damage assessment has not yet been initiated, as flareups and hotspots throughout the park present a hazards. Inspection may begin early next week, contingent upon conditions in the park and availability of resources.
- Prior to re-opening any portion of Santiago Oaks Park, staff will clearly identify the areas that are safe for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- Informal/pedestrian access points from surrounding residential neighborhoods will be clearly marked, with additional patrols to prevent trespassing into hazardous burn areas.
- Santiago Oaks Park will remain closed until hazard assessment, abatement, and control measures are complete.

Peters Canyon Regional Park

- Burn area includes the majority of the natural habitat spaces within the upper half of the park, surrounding the reservoir.
- Ranger trailer and restroom buildings are intact. Fencing, footbridges, picnic benches, and other visitor amenities are significantly damaged or destroyed.

- Tree damage assessment has not yet been initiated, as flareups and hotspots throughout the park present a hazard to staff and contractors. Inspection may begin next week, contingent upon conditions in the park and availability of resources.
- Prior to re-opening any portion of Peters Canyon Park to the public, OC Parks staff will clearly identify the areas of the park that are safe for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- Informal/pedestrian access points from surrounding residential neighborhoods will be clearly marked, with additional patrols to prevent trespassing into hazardous burn areas.
- Peters Canyon Park will remain closed until hazard assessment, abatement, and control measures are complete.

Irvine Ranch Open Space

- Burn area includes areas of critical habitat and/or wildlife corridors such as Weir, Gypsum, Fremont, and Coal Canyons. Extent of penetration of burn footprint into Black Star has not yet been mapped and will be completed with drone reconnaissance in the upcoming week.
- Damage to archeological/cultural resources unknown at this time. Surveys will be completed and incorporated with recovery plans.
- Damage to trailheads and trails identified during initial visual inspection, but more thorough inspection will take place once open space fire is contained and OCFA gives greenlight for staff and contractors to access the backcountry trails.
- Tree damage assessment (including to coast live oaks, sycamores, and other old-growth natives) has not yet been initiated, as flareups and hotspots throughout the park present a hazard to staff and contractors. Inspection will take place in months ahead.
- As with the closure of Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park and surrounding open space following the 2007 Santiago Fire, it is anticipated that portions of the Irvine Ranch Open Space may be closed for a sustained period of time to allow the land and habitat to recover, and because damaged trees have been known to collapse months after a fire incident of this magnitude.
- Trail access points from surrounding parks and neighborhoods will be clearly marked, with additional patrols to prevent trespassing into hazardous burn areas.