



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – April 21, 2016 a.m.

Contact:

Bonnie Strawser, Alligator National Wildlife Refuge – 252.216.8667

Bill Swartley, ICP Fire Information Center – 919.218.3179

Whipping Creek Road Fire, Dare and Hyde Counties

Fire Doubles in Size Due To Yesterday's Gusty Winds

Driven by gusty northeast winds, the Whipping Creek Road wildfire grew quickly yesterday to an estimated 14,000 acres. The fire is presently 15% contained. Accurate mapping of the fire has been hindered by dense smoke obscuring the flame front. The good news is that no homes or businesses have been directly threatened by the flames. Today's southerly winds will again challenge firefighters as the fire is pushed in a northerly direction by an approaching cold front. Current suppression plans call for holding the fire south of Jackson and Maple Roads. Friday's predicted rainfall will not be bringing enough moisture to wet available fuels feeding the fire. Dry and sunny skies following the frontal passage will quickly dry what little precipitation falls on Friday.

The wildfire has caused local law enforcement to close a portion of US Highway 264 between the Communities of Stumpy Point and Engelhard. The highway was closed due to safety hazards associated with the fire's proximity, dense smoke and burned-out power poles and guard rail supports. The NC Department of Transportation has installed detour signs as needed to redirect traffic traveling this highway.

The fire has burned through a number of Federal, State and private landowner holdings of the US Department of Defense, US Fish & Wildlife Service, NC Wildlife Resources Commission and the Nature Conservancy. These agency and private land managers have been cooperating with the Incident Management Team to suppress the fire.

While the fire is large in size, its flames and smoke have not directly threatened any communities in the immediate area. The fire has had little impact on local commerce and all businesses and public facilities remain open. Smoke drift has been problematic within and adjacent to the fire footprint, but near-by communities have not experienced severe ground-level smoke. Fire officials recommend that if ground-level smoke does persist, it is best to remain indoors and keep windows closed.

####