

Wildfire rekindles in US state Georgia; hundreds evacuate and at least four houses burned

By RUSS BYNUM, Associated Press Writer
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WAYCROSS, Ga. — Hundreds of residents were told to leave their homes Thursday as one wildfire rekindled and destroyed at least four houses and another threatened to jump a highway, authorities said. A fire near Nahunta, east of Waycross, that firefighters said they had contained last week began raging again Thursday afternoon, 911 dispatcher Elaine Wilson said.

She was also unsure how extensive the fire was but said it spread about four miles along U.S. Highway 301. Ware County sheriff's deputies visited about 100 homes in and near Astoria, a tiny community three miles southeast of Waycross, asking people to leave as a wildfire in the Okefenokee Swamp approached. Most had just returned home after evacuating for several hours Wednesday. Waycross, a city of about 15,300 resident three

miles to the north, was not in immediate danger, though thick smoke blanketed the city, fire officials said. However, smoke remained thick near the swamp about seven miles away.

In the past 11 days, wildfires have blackened 95 square miles (245 square kilometers) or about 61,100 acres of forest and swamp parched by drought. Officials say 18 homes have been destroyed. Emergency officials closed 16 miles (26 kilometers) of U.S. Highway 1 and railroad tracks running alongside near the Okefenokee Swamp.

The wind blew hot embers from the swamp across the highway, igniting small spot fires near the Georgia Forestry Commission district office that fire officials had been using as a command center. Firefighters contained the small fires quickly, but the command center had to be evacuated, said Eric Mosley, a spokesman for the Commission.

Sustained winds of up to 20 mph from the southwest were forecast Thursday, increasing chances the fire would spread across the four-lane, divided highway that connects Waycross with Jacksonville, Fla. If the blaze crosses the highway, firefighters said it could threaten two towns. "All there is between U.S. 1 and Nahunta and Hoboken is just timber, tons and tons of timber with unlimited fuel," Mosley said.

About 1,000 people were forced to evacuate their homes near Waycross last week, and most have not been allowed to return. An additional 5,000 people had been urged to voluntarily evacuate because of health risks posed by heavy smoke.

1. On a separate sheet of paper sketch a map of southeastern Georgia and include as a *minimum* the following: Waycross, Nahunta, Ware County, Astoria, Okefenokee Swamp, Highway 301, U.S.1, and Hoboken.
2. A hectare is a unit of area, equal to 10,000 square metres, commonly used for measuring land area. Its base unit, the are, was defined by older forms of the metric system, but neither it nor the hectare are part of the modern metric system. Basically, 1 hectare = 100 ares. How many hectares have been blackened thus far?
3. Approximately how many a) square kilometers, b) miles, c) acres, d) hectares, and e) feet did the fire spread along U.S. Highway 301?
4. According to the Internal Revenue Service 2006 tax information, the population of Georgia currently stands at 9,363,941 and McDonough 12,319 up from 8,493 just seven years prior. Henry County stands at 179,033 whereas in 2000 was 119,341. What percentage of the overall residents do not live in Waycross? Percentage reside in McDonough? Henry County? Percent of change in McDonough's population? Henry County?
5. Assuming the areas blackened by wildfires were burned at the same rate, how many square miles and acres were consumed per 24-hour time period?
6. What impact has the fires had on the upcoming Georgia Studies field trip? What changes to the trip itinerary have been to accommodate the change of plans?
7. What natural existing factors (climate, etc.) may impact Firefighter's ability to put out the fire?
8. In the passage above, in paragraph form, explain at least five ways using the "Four-Step Reading" poster simplifies understanding of the material. Be specific.
9. In complete sentences, using contextual clues only, explain the meaning of the italicized words: *rekindled*, *sustained*, and *embers*. Additionally, use each in a sentence to demonstrate further comprehension.
10. In paragraph form, explain at least five legitimate and educational purposes behind The Daughtry Times.