Rain brings welcomed relief for Pinnacle Mountain fire

Table Rock State Park reopened, burning ban lifted for all Piedmont counties

THE JOURNAL STAFF

PICKENS — Air operations were grounded and containment lines went unattended, but firefighters got the best help they could have hoped for Tuesday at Pinnacle Mountain at Table Rock State Park.

Officials reported 2 inches of rain fell in the area, and higher humidity levels have slowed the wildfire's progress, in turn helping hand crews get some much-needed rest.

As of 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, the three-week-old blaze covered 10,560 acres, but it was 62 percent contained.

With more rain in the forecast during the overnight hours and into this morning, crews will likely be held off the lines again today, as trails remain slick and difficult to traverse.

And with the rain, officials are hopeful the end of the blaze — which has an estimated total cost of $4.5 million thus far — is now in sight.

"Hopes are high that demobilization efforts may begin later this week or early next week as firefighting moves into a mop-up phase," a Tuesday-night news release from the South Carolina Forestry Commission read.

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FIRE: Ban revoked

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The park was reopened Tuesday as well, with all facilities and roads open with the exception of the Carrick Creek Trail, the Table Rock Trail, the Pinnacle Mountain Trail and the Foothills Trail portion that is located on Table Rock. The trail to the Carrick Creek Falls overlook is also open, as is the Pinnacle Lake Trail.

Furthermore, it was announced the burning ban for all Piedmont counties — including Oconee and Pickens counties — was lifted as of 6 p.m. on Tuesday. The revoking of the ban allows legally permitted burning statewide, though forestry commission officials still urge vigilance when burning outdoors.