STILL BURNING



PHOTOS COURTESY OF OCONEE COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES

The blaze at Pinnacle Mountain at Table Rock State Park in Pickens County covered 2,312 acres and was 25 percent contained on Monday, according to officials.

As smoke remains, progress made at Table Rock

BY ERIC SPROTT
THE JOURNAL

PICKENS — Officials reported gains in their efforts to put out the massive wildfire at Pinnacle Mountain at Table Rock State Park over the weekend, but air quality across the area was arguably at its worst Monday after close to a week of effects from numerous fires across the region.

As of Monday morning, the South Carolina Forestry Commission reported the Pickens County fire was at 2,312 acres and was 25 percent contained. A light, but steady, rain on Sunday helped the cause, as more containment lines were dug, and door-to-door assessments of structures in the path of the blaze took place.

"We made good progress constructing fire lines," said Mike Bozzo, the incident commander with the SCFC. "After we are able to strengthen these lines with burnout operations, we will feel more confident that these fire lines will hold."

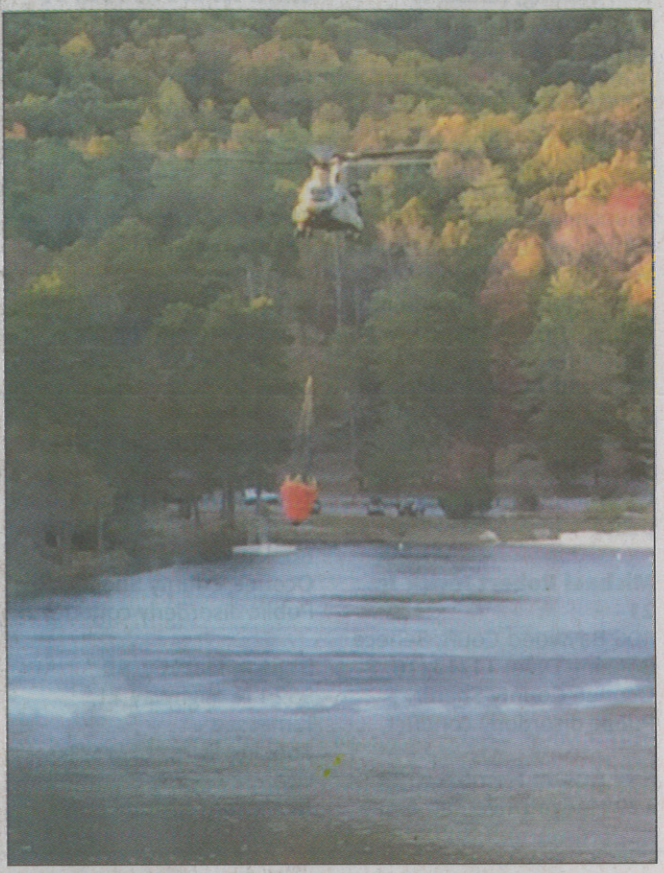
Recommended evacuations immediately south and southwest of the mountain announced Saturday were later repealed, and sprinkler systems have also been installed near the Table Rock Reservoir to help hold the fire in that area.

About 140 personnel were working the fire Monday, with Oconee and Pickens fire departments and Clemson University personnel among the numerous agencies helping to battle the blaze.

And with light winds providing no relief from the smoke, the National Weather Service issued an air quality alert Monday that's in effect until 7 p.m. tonight for northwestern South Carolina, north Georgia, western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee.

DHEC released a state-

SEE **BURNING**, PAGE **A5**



Continued water drops, coupled with a light, steady rain on Sunday, have slowed the spread of the wildfire that has consumed more than 2,000 acres at Pinnacle Mountain at Table Rock State Park in Pickens.

FROM PAGE A1

ment saying the smoky conditions may continue for "the next several days," and warned residents to limit their time outdoors.

"Smoke from these fires can irritate the eyes and respiratory system, as well as aggravate or exacerbate chronic heart and lung diseases," said Rhonda Thompson, the chief of the DHEC Bureau of Air Quality.

Adam Rondeau, spokesman for the U.S. Forest Service, said Monday the agency is tracking 33 wildfires totaling about 80,000 acres across the South.

He said some fires are up to 75 percent contained, while others may be only 15 percent contained, depending on ground conditions and what's fueling the fire.

The largest are Georgia's Rough Ridge fire, which has consumed 19,411 acres, and North Carolina's Tellico fire, which covers approximately 13,676 acres. Other fires are being reported in Kentucky and Tennessee in addition to the blaze at Pinnacle Mountain.

About 5,000 federal, state and local firefighters are trying to knock the flames down.

"With the dry conditions as they are, this is a long-term response effort," Rondeau said. "This isn't going to happen in a couple of days. We're going to be looking at weeks."

— The Associated Press contributed to this report