

Wildfire burns big in Georgia

by UPI

ATLANTA - Firefighters from six states battled a blaze in southern Georgia that had burned more than 55,000 acres by Sunday.

Nearly 700 firefighters from Georgia, Florida, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Mississippi joined to fight the fire that reached into the Okefenokee Swamp, reported the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

"It's in the swamp, but so far not in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge itself," said Blaine Eckberg of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department. The refuge is one of America's most diverse ecosystems and contains about 85 percent of the Okefenokee Swamp.

The fire began last Monday when a tree fell on a power line. Eighteen homes have burned and nearly 6,000 people have been urged to leave the area because of health hazards from the heavy smoke.

Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue toured the burned area Saturday.

Copyright © 2007, by United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

Wildfire burns big in Georgia by UPI