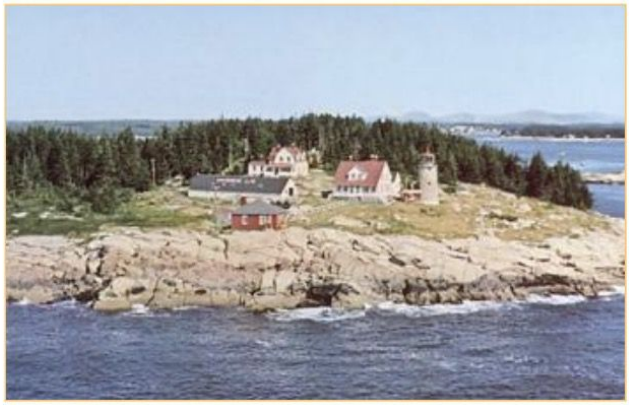
South Thomaston, St. George fire crews catch rides to blaze via lobster boats

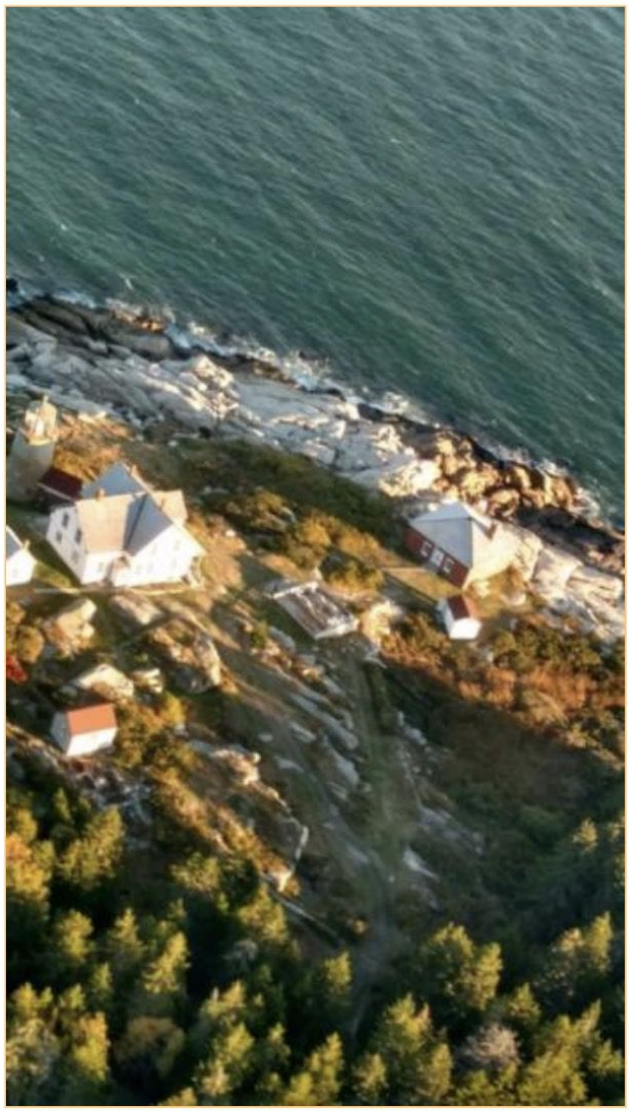
By Sarah Thompson | Posted: Wednesday, October 18, 2017 - 12:15am

Whitehead Light Station – South Thomaston and St. George fire crews fought a fully-engulfed outbuilding blaze at Whitehead Light Station, Tuesday, Oct. 17. The lighthouse, located on an island two miles from shore, is maintained by the Coast Guard of Portland. Due to dry environmental conditions, along with strong winds, the fire then spread into nearby woodlands on the island, which is owned by Pine Island Camp, according to its website.



Whitehead Light Station.

The initial reports of fire, called in to dispatch at about 8:40 p.m., indicated that the lighthouse itself was on fire. However, on-site investigations by crews found the blaze to be contained to outbuildings on an area of ledge facing Spruce Head Island and South Thomaston. At least one incidence of explosions was noted prior to responders arriving on the island. According to South Thomaston Fire Chief Bryan Calderwood, the explosions were believed to be caused by lawnmowers and gas cans stored within the shed.



Another report referred to two people at the site when the fire started. St. George and South Thomaston EMS crews were called to the staging area, but their services were not utilized.

Jason, of McLoon's Lobster, made a call of his own to 911 about the unexpected light coming from the island opposite his food shack.

"I looked up once and saw a small light coming from over there," he said. "When I looked again, it was fully engulfed."

Ulitmately, the cause of fire is considered electrical-related, according to Calderwood.

Fire crews staged their vehicles at Atwood Lobster, where they received the help of Alan Knowlton, Eric Harjula and their lobster boats. Knowlton and Harjula made several trips each from shore to the island, transporting at least nine South Thomaston responders and at least seven St. George responders, along with hoses, water pumps, and as many axes and tools as could be scrounged up.

Other crew members on land made multiple trips to the St. George fire station for the various resources needed to pump ocean water onto the flames, overhaul the vegetation, and saturate the ground.

The lighthouse itself, and it's solar array panels, remained unscathed.

Due to the forest fire, which ended up being minimal, according to Calderwood, the forestry service had to be called. The representative, who happened to be an hour and a half away, went out to the island close to midnight.

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