

Wolf Creek firefighters, regularly confronted by angry citizens, raising money for body cameras

By PATRICIA SNYDER
Grants Pass Daily Courier

GRANTS PASS — A few weeks ago, says Wolf Creek fire Chief Steve Scruggs, a man walked up to a firefighter and spit beer on her while she and an engine crew waited for law enforcement before going to a call.

Spitting beer, as it turns out, was hardly the worst offense committed against firefighters, most of them volunteers, in this tiny community north of Grants Pass.

In recent months, incidents have ranged from confrontations and vandalism to alcohol-fueled threats and attacks. Scruggs says he's been assaulted twice in the last year and a half. His glasses were knocked off and broken, and he had cut on the corner of his eye.

Now Scruggs says equipping firefighters with body cameras will document inappropriate or illegal behavior and hopefully discourage it.

In what appears to be a first in Oregon, the Wolf Creek Rural Fire Protection District has launched a crowd-funding attempt to

purchase 10 small Wolfcom Vision body cameras, which would cost a total of \$2,750.

The cameras, the same kind that police officers use, store 18 hours of video, 28,000 digital photos and 180 hours of audio. Crews would wear them while on duty.

Scruggs got the idea when he used a video camera to get images of people hanging out on the contentious Edgewood Road bridge, located across from the historic Wolf Creek Inn.

The bridge provides access to the fire department's sleeper station. In 1999, county officials declared the bridge as off limits. The Josephine County Sheriff's Office added a second deputy to patrol Wolf Creek because of the problems, but that was before loss of funding cut the agency's staffing by two-thirds.

A few weeks ago, someone chucked a full can of beer into the window of a fire truck crossing the bridge, and it hit the driver.

When Scruggs started using the hand-held camera, people were flipping him off, but they cleared out when they realized they were on

video. He's hoping body cams will bring the same type of response.

"I think it's a way to navigate the problem without somebody getting hurt," he said.

Statewide associations do not track use of body cameras by fire departments, but representatives at several associations — the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office, the Oregon State Firefighters Council and the Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association — were not aware of any departments in Oregon that use body cameras.

The Wolf Creek sleeper station, which has been a target of vandalism, allows staffing for around-the-clock response, part of improvements to the department that improved the insurance rating in March. It's a boost that could save property owners about \$200 in their insurance rates, Scruggs estimates.

He suspects the department is being targeted because it is taking a stronger stance on illegal fire activity. When he arrived five years ago, he steered practices toward educating people about fire

laws ahead of taking action, but no longer.

Some people appreciate that the law defines when and where you can burn debris on your property — an important tool in rural Oregon — but for others fire represents something else.

"A lot of people use that for their recreation," he said. Sometimes, the gatherings involve alcohol.

Fires might involve noxious materials, such as tires and plastics. Fire setters might lack the water or equipment to extinguish escaped flames.

"People have a tendency to start fires; they don't have the means to put them out," he said.

Some people responded to educational efforts over the years. Others indicated they felt harassed. The department posted information that scoff-laws promptly tore down.

Scruggs figured enough time had gone into education. In May the department implemented a policy citing people who violate existing fire laws.

"If you have an illegal fire, you're going to get a bill for us responding and putting it

out," he said. The department is basing the fine on the state fire marshal's conflagration deployment guidelines. Fines vary according to the effort involved.

Fire prevention is part of his job, Scruggs explained. "The people here are counting on us to protect them."

In the past few weeks, problems have escalated from fire scenes to other emergency calls, and Scruggs worries that people are listening to a dispatch scanner and showing up just to cause problems.

One incident with ongoing repercussions happened May 21, when a 20-year-old man was fatally injured in a rollover crash on Lower Wolf Creek Road.

After medics responded, several of the man's friends and relatives showed up. People wanted a medical helicopter summoned, Scruggs said. The fire department requested one, but a helicopter wasn't available. The scene turned confrontational, including someone driving recklessly and tailgating the ambulance as it left, according to a report to state police.

The fire department often depends on state police because the Sheriff's Office averages just 10 hours of patrol coverage a day, sometimes with only one deputy for the whole county, due to lack of funding.

Scruggs' voice tightens when he says he doesn't know if the distraction was a factor in the driver not surviving. "We can take care of the patient, or we can take care of the crowd," he said.

Body cameras would also help offset complaints about firefighters, providing some liability protection, Scruggs hopes.

Fire remains an issue related to the rollover, including conflict over a private memorial bonfire downtown that officials were concerned was too large and too near the Wolf Creek Inn's wood shake roof.

Fires have been set, then abandoned, several times at a crash site memorial. The site includes a ring built on the road's shoulder inches from the white lane line. The department has responded multiple times to extinguish it.

Two years after Bundy standoff, federal land managers return

By KEN RITTER
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — More than two years after an armed standoff with followers of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy prompted a pullout of researchers from Gold Butte, federal land managers are returning to the scenic, historic and ecologically fragile area.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management said work is resuming toward opening the area across the Virgin River from the Bundy ranch for hiking, camping and geological and archaeological exploration.

"Very limited work continued after April 2014," bureau spokesman Craig Leff said Monday. "Then, in the summer of 2015, the

BLM fully suspended work in the Gold Butte region after multiple gun shots were fired in the vicinity of student contractors."

No one was injured in the June 2015 shooting near researchers from the Reno-based nonprofit Great Basin Institute. They had been monitoring water seeps and springs in the area about 100 miles northeast of Las Vegas. They reported the gunfire came at night, after they were first approached by two men who asked what they were doing.

Agency national chief Neil Kornze and state director John Ruhs toured parts of the area last week with a Clark County commissioner and a Las Vegas police captain, cataloging apparent vandalism and damage during stops at the scenic

Whitney Pockets sandstone formation and the archaeologically significant Falling Man rock art site, according to the BLM.

Nevada Sen. Harry Reid wants federal lawmakers to designate almost 550 square miles of the remote land northeast of Lake Mead as the Gold Butte National Conservation Area.

The return by federal officials to the area comes months after Bundy, four of his sons and 14 other men were arrested on federal charges in the gunpoint standoff that stopped government agents from rounding up cattle on public land. All 19 men remain jailed, with trial scheduled in February. Each has pleaded not guilty to various conspiracy, obstruction, weapon, threat

and assault charges.

Bundy doesn't recognize federal jurisdiction in the area where he's accused of failing to pay more than \$1.1 million in fees and penalties while illegally allowing his cows to roam.

His lawyer, Joel Hansen, said the BLM has no authority in Gold Butte. He suggested that boundary shifts after Nevada became a state in 1864 left the federal government with no legal claim in the area where Bundy is accused of trespassing.

"The Bundys are in full support of preserving the archaeological treasures of the Gold Butte area," Hansen said. "However, that work should be undertaken by the state of Nevada. The state of Nevada owns Gold Butte,

not the BLM."

Hansen also blamed federal land policies for problems including invasive weeds and wildfires, and alleged that designating the area as critical habitat for the endangered desert tortoise and other plant and animal species is a Reid effort to please political backers.

The BLM said agency efforts will include projects to address the spread of noxious weeds and to reduce the threat of wildfire. Plans also include road maintenance, communication line repairs and the establishment of a route numbering system to help visitors find their way around.

Corrections

The Friday, June 10 article "Robbed of Justice" listed an incorrect phone number for Bernard and Julianne Lind. The correct number is 509-961-9309.

The Saturday, June 18 article "Brown declines traditional summer debate with Pierce" incorrectly stated Gov. Kate Brown's office's response to an invite to the ONPA governor's debate. Her office did not ask for debate questions in advance.

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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| | Today | | | Wed. | | |
|---------------|-------|----|----|------|----|----|
| | Hi | Lo | W | Hi | Lo | W |
| Astoria | 66 | 51 | pc | 66 | 53 | pc |
| Baker City | 75 | 37 | s | 82 | 44 | s |
| Bend | 76 | 42 | s | 77 | 44 | s |
| Brookings | 70 | 52 | pc | 65 | 52 | pc |
| Burns | 77 | 39 | s | 83 | 43 | s |
| Enterprise | 73 | 43 | s | 79 | 48 | s |
| Eugene | 78 | 46 | pc | 79 | 54 | pc |
| Heppner | 78 | 48 | s | 81 | 52 | s |
| Hermiston | 84 | 49 | s | 88 | 60 | s |
| John Day | 79 | 45 | s | 85 | 51 | s |
| Klamath Falls | 81 | 44 | s | 79 | 44 | s |
| La Grande | 76 | 46 | s | 80 | 49 | s |
| Meacham | 73 | 38 | s | 77 | 46 | s |
| Medford | 87 | 52 | s | 84 | 54 | s |
| Newport | 63 | 48 | pc | 63 | 52 | pc |
| North Bend | 67 | 52 | pc | 66 | 56 | pc |
| Ontario | 86 | 51 | s | 91 | 57 | pc |
| Pasco | 85 | 50 | s | 87 | 59 | s |
| Pendleton | 81 | 51 | s | 83 | 57 | s |
| Portland | 75 | 54 | pc | 76 | 58 | pc |
| Redmond | 78 | 40 | s | 80 | 45 | s |
| Salem | 76 | 51 | pc | 77 | 57 | pc |
| Spokane | 75 | 52 | pc | 78 | 55 | s |
| Ukiah | 74 | 40 | s | 78 | 45 | s |
| Vancouver | 73 | 52 | pc | 74 | 57 | pc |
| Walla Walla | 82 | 53 | s | 84 | 59 | s |
| Yakima | 85 | 51 | pc | 85 | 53 | s |

WORLD CITIES

| | Today | | | Wed. | | |
|-------------|-------|----|----|------|----|----|
| | Hi | Lo | W | Hi | Lo | W |
| Beijing | 94 | 74 | c | 97 | 72 | pc |
| Hong Kong | 92 | 84 | pc | 93 | 82 | pc |
| Jerusalem | 89 | 69 | s | 89 | 70 | t |
| London | 70 | 57 | pc | 73 | 61 | t |
| Mexico City | 70 | 53 | t | 71 | 54 | t |
| Moscow | 82 | 65 | pc | 74 | 59 | pc |
| Paris | 70 | 61 | sh | 81 | 68 | t |
| Rome | 79 | 62 | pc | 82 | 66 | s |
| Seoul | 86 | 68 | c | 85 | 70 | t |
| Sydney | 64 | 51 | pc | 66 | 50 | s |
| Tokyo | 75 | 69 | r | 78 | 69 | pc |

WINDS

| | Today | Wednesday |
|-----------|----------|-----------|
| (in mph) | WSW 7-14 | WSW 6-12 |
| Boardman | WSW 8-16 | W 6-12 |
| Pendleton | | |

UV INDEX TODAY

2 5 7 7 5 2

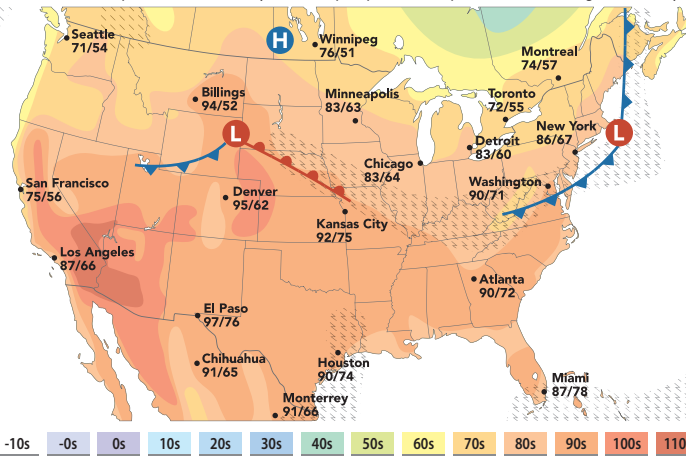
8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.
0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High;
8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

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NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



National Summary: Showers and locally severe thunderstorms will erupt from the central Plains to the lower mid-Atlantic today. A few storms will dot South Florida and coastal Texas. The Southwest will remain very hot.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 122° in Palm Springs, Calif. Low 30° in Boca Reservoir, Calif.

NATIONAL CITIES

| | Today | | | Wed. | | |
|----------------|-------|----|----|------|----|----|
| | Hi | Lo | W | Hi | Lo | W |
| Albuquerque | 97 | 70 | s | 100 | 70 | t |
| Atlanta | 90 | 72 | s | 91 | 73 | pc |
| Atlantic City | 81 | 67 | t | 82 | 68 | s |
| Baltimore | 89 | 66 | t | 88 | 67 | s |
| Billings | 94 | 52 | pc | 85 | 56 | s |
| Birmingham | 92 | 71 | s | 92 | 72 | pc |
| Boise | 83 | 55 | s | 91 | 58 | s |
| Boston | 84 | 63 | t | 77 | 59 | pc |
| Charleston, SC | 90 | 73 | s | 94 | 76 | pc |
| Charleston, WV | 82 | 62 | t | 83 | 69 | t |
| Chicago | 83 | 64 | pc | 82 | 66 | t |
| Cleveland | 83 | 64 | pc | 81 | 67 | t |
| Dallas | 96 | 78 | s | 96 | 77 | s |
| Denver | 95 | 62 | t | 86 | 62 | pc |
| Detroit | 83 | 60 | t | 81 | 63 | t |
| El Paso | 97 | 76 | s | 103 | 77 | pc |
| Fairbanks | 59 | 51 | pc | 69 | 48 | pc |
| Fargo | 82 | 59 | s | 75 | 55 | t |
| Honolulu | 85 | 74 | sh | 85 | 73 | pc |
| Houston | 90 | 74 | t | 92 | 72 | t |
| Indianapolis | 85 | 66 | pc | 82 | 72 | t |
| Jacksonville | 88 | 65 | s | 93 | 70 | pc |
| Kansas City | 92 | 75 | t | 97 | 74 | pc |
| Las Vegas | 115 | 87 | pc | 113 | 85 | pc |
| Little Rock | 95 | 78 | pc | 96 | 79 | s |
| Los Angeles | 87 | 66 | s | 82 | 64 | pc |
| Louisville | 87 | 70 | t | 86 | 77 | t |
| Memphis | 95 | 78 | t | 95 | 78 | pc |
| Miami | 87 | 78 | t | 90 | 79 | t |
| Millwaukee | 81 | 62 | s | 77 | 62 | t |
| Minneapolis | 83 | 63 | s | 79 | 60 | t |
| Nashville | 91 | 73 | t | 94 | 75 | pc |
| New Orleans | 90 | 75 | pc | 90 | 76 | s |
| New York City | 86 | 67 | pc | 84 | 65 | s |
| Oklahoma City | 94 | 73 | t | 94 | 75 | pc |
| Omaha | 92 | 75 | t | 94 | 67 | pc |
| Philadelphia | 88 | 69 | pc | 88 | 69 | s |
| St. Louis | 114 | 88 | pc | 113 | 88 | pc |
| Portland, ME | 82 | 56 | pc | 73 | 58 | pc |
| Providence | 85 | 61 | t | 83 | 58 | s |
| Raleigh | 93 | 70 | s | 91 | 72 | pc |
| Rapid City | 93 | 59 | s | 86 | 53 | s |
| Reno | 95 | 59 | s | 95 | 58 | s |
| Sacramento | 99 | 60 | s | 95 | 58 | s |
| St. Louis | 89 | 76 | pc | 99 | 80 | pc |
| Salt Lake City | 97 | 66 | s | 95 | 70 | pc |
| San Diego | 84 | 67 | pc | 76 | 66 | pc |
| San Francisco | 75 | 56 | s | 72 | 55 | pc |
| Seattle | 71 | 54 | pc | 69 | 55 | pc |
| Tucson | 110 | 79 | t | 108 | 79 | t |
| Washington, DC | 90 | 71 | t | 89 | 73 | s |
| Wichita | 96 | 75 | pc | 101 | 77 | pc |

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.