

Burning season opens in Sisters Country

Fire Chiefs with the Black Butte Ranch Fire District, Cloverdale Fire District and Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District announced that open burning was allowed as of Saturday, October 24, at 7 a.m. Residents are encouraged to contact their local fire department for current regulations prior to burning.

Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) Central Oregon District also terminated fire season as of Saturday.

Widespread rain across the district last weekend combined with forecasted cool, moist weather patterns has brought an end to another long, difficult fire season. Oregon and the Pacific Northwest experienced the third historic fire season in a row, with drought conditions across much of the landscape.

Burn permits are required for all open burning. Permits can be obtained from your local fire department or from the Department of Forestry. Follow all instructions on the burn permit prior to ignition.

Ben Duda, wildland fire suppression specialist in Sisters, emphasizes the need to call the local burn information line before you burn, explaining, "Debris burning may be closed on days with forecasted high winds or poor smoke management conditions, such as poor mixing or wind blowing smoke toward populated areas. Since conditions change you really need to call daily."

Contact your local ODF office at 541-549-2731 if

you have questions regarding burn restrictions.

The termination of fire season doesn't mean there is no risk of fire or threat of fire spread. Central Oregon has not experienced a widespread season-ending rain event; however, fire managers for the district believe the risk of large fire growth is low. Managers encourage landowners to hold off burning until a significant rain event. Practice fire safety and use caution in activities which could ignite a fire. Never leave a campfire or warming fire unattended, and be certain it is dead out before you leave. To fully extinguish a fire, douse the flames, stir, and douse again.

Regulations differ between land managers and landowners. Determine any additional restrictions imposed by landowners prior to traveling into the woods. Contact your local U.S. Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management office for current restrictions on federal forest and rangeland.

Now is the time to begin preparations for next year's fire season. Technical advice for creating defensible space around your home and reducing hazardous fuels is available from local ODF offices. ODF Stewardship Foresters can also provide guidance for landowners who have been affected by fire, including suggestions for reforestation and planting native plants to provide improved soil stability and water quality.

KZSO loses its frequency

By Jim Cornelius
News Editor

Outlaw radio is off the air. The local low-power community radio station KZSO 94.9 lost its frequency to a commercial radio station based out of Sunriver.

Michael Richards, general manager of KZSO, housed at Sisters Art Works, explained: "The bottom line is that commercial stations trump the low-power FM license."

Richards said that he would have expected that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) would have provided notice that a commercial user was taking 94.9, but for some reason that did not occur.

Richards noted that KZSO originally had to switch from 106.5 to 94.9 when a commercial operation out of Terrebonne took the 106.5 frequency. However, the radio station was never inaugurated. The rights were sold to a commercial user operating out of Sunriver. But the 106.5 frequency interfered with communications for air traffic into the Redmond airport, Richards said.

"The FCC said the only frequency that's available is 94.9," Richards said.

The first Richards heard of the change was when the Sunriver operator called to let him know he was firing up and that it might interfere with KZSO's broadcast. With

significantly more power, the commercial signal overwhelmed the low-power Sisters signal and KZSO was forced to shut down earlier this month.

A Facebook message on October 14 notes, "We will continue streaming online through the www.kzso.org website or you can get us on the Tune-in app."

KZSO has featured local talk programming and music, as well as serving as an emergency information resource for the Sisters community. Richards said that the ratings outfit Nielsen projects that a low-power community radio station like KZSO should draw about 400 listeners. There's no real way to track that, but anecdotal evidence and Facebook "likes" indicate that KZSO probably has in the neighborhood of 1,200 listeners, Richards said.

"We're providing at least what Nielsen would project," Richards said.

Richards believes that it would be relatively easy to regain the 106.5 frequency and return the station to the air. However, it has taken a lot of effort and expense to keep KZSO up and running, in a variety of different homes, over the years. Richards is uncertain whether the station should continue.

"I'm reluctant to go out and ask people to support the radio station if there's not a bona fide need, quite frankly," he said.

Program director Rick Olson said that the Sisters School District contributes about \$10,000 per year to the program, but expenses are expected to run to three or four times that amount, including reconfiguration of equipment, licensing and paying employees to operate the station.

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— Michael Richards**

"Me and Nick (Newport) have kind of been doing it for a song," Olson said.

He also noted that the school district will have to assess the station's value in allocating always-tight funds.

"We're at a crossroads here," he said.

Richards will gauge the value of the station to emergency services providers like the Forest Service and the local fire and police departments. He's also seeking community input. Contact him to weigh in on the station's value at peterosonridge@gmail.com or search KZSO Radio on Facebook.

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