

BURNS: Visual impacts to be taken into account in planning

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burn overnight, we're burning in conditions that are out of prescription, frankly."

The burn boss inspected the Indian Ford burn area at 6 a.m. on Friday and all was under proper control.

What looks like dead trees are usually not; local ponderosa pine forests are fire-adapted and underburning is actually good for them, even when trunks get blackened and needles scorched. There is always some mortality on burns, within allowable specifications, but the majority of trees will eventually green up again and be strong and healthy. Allowable scorching height is usually set at about 15 feet above ground.

Reid said that the conditions on the Indian Ford burn were just what they were supposed to be.

"What I saw, the fire behavior was perfect," Reid reported. "What I saw on the east side was textbook."

An earlier burn in Camp Sherman last month did create some problems, Reid acknowledged.

The burn was set in the

triangle of land where the road into Camp Sherman forks, with the right fork leading to the head of the Metolius and the Wizard Falls Fish Hatchery and the left fork taking motorists into the Metolius Meadows residential area and Camp Sherman itself.

Along that left fork, the 1419 Road, the burn was too intense. Trees are scorched up to the top, with some scorching extending across the road, and some trees are severely blackened.

"Along the road, it burned hotter than we would have liked," Reid said.

A team of new lighters moved too fast under pressure to complete the burn within its allotted time window.

"We were going a little fast on our lighting," Reid said.

Smoke started impacting the road and the focus turned to traffic management and

safety considerations.

"That was the primary focus," Reid said. "Some of our other objectives became secondary at that point."

The overall burn accomplished objectives. Unfortunately for all concerned, the part that burned too hot is the part that everybody sees.

"Visually, that's not what we want in there," Reid said. "It's a very visible spot... It's a visual kind of shock to drive in there and see all those red needles."

Reid said there will be a monitoring report on the mortality levels in the burn to determine if they exceed acceptable levels of zero to 2 percent for trees larger than 21 inches in diameter.

And he said that he thinks that visual impact in such areas needs to be incorporated into burn plans to prevent such areas from being so hard hit by a burning mishap.



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

A prescribed burn last month got too hot in an area along the 1419 Road in Camp Sherman, leaving the area more severely burned than planned.

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