



PHOTO BY CODY RHEAULT

Sisters saw smoky skies over the weekend due to the Green Ridge Fire — and drift from other fires across the West.

FIRE: Blaze is burning on public and private forest land

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establishing and holding containment lines on the Green Ridge Fire, in spite of being challenged by repeated spot fires. The Prineville and Wolf Creek Interagency Hotshot crews successfully completed burnout operations on the western side of Green Ridge (near Camp Sherman), bringing the edge of the fire down to more defensible, flat ground. Additional hand crews, engines and heavy equipment arrived yesterday to begin the process of mopping up, improving containment lines and patrolling for additional spot fires.”

Residents of Metolius Meadows reported that the fire is ominous-looking at night, but the community has been safe from incursions by the blaze.

In a virtual briefing held last Friday, Fire Behavior Specialist Forest Ownbey explained why Camp Sherman has not been more threatened by a fire in such close proximity.

The fire started on the steep west slope of Green Ridge.

“Fire does not want to run downhill, and so that is why it hasn’t made it to Camp Sherman,” Ownbey explained. “It’s been slowly backing down the hill... That’s a very advantageous aspect that we have had for our firefighters.”

The rapid growth of the fire led to evacuation alerts being issued for residents in the fire area.

On Monday morning, Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office Emergency Services Manager Sgt. Nathan Garibay announced that the Level 2 (Get Set) Evacuation notices for residences north of Indian Ford between Green Ridge Road (FS 11) and Fly Lake Road (USFS 2050/2055) have been reduced to Level 1 (Be Ready) Pre-Evacuation Notice.

Current maps including evacuation areas can be found at: www.deschutes.org/emergency.

As often happens when a small lightning fire blows up into a major blaze, local residents ask why the fire wasn’t put out when it was just a handful of acres.

“The short answer is, we tried,” said Reid.

The lightning strike on Green Ridge was one of many lightning strikes in the area that caused fires, including a rapidly developing one on Abbot Creek in the Metolius Basin. The strike on Green Ridge was “in a tough spot,” Reid said — on a very steep slope in dense vegetation that was very dry. The ridge did not get the heavy precipitation that accompanied the thunderstorms in town.

Night was approaching quickly.

“We had helicopters on that as soon as it started — it was prioritized,” Reid said.

But water drops from the air cannot put fires out by

themselves.

“That’s not going to put the fire out without boots on the ground to support the aircraft,” Reid said.

The personnel on the ground were limited, and they could not get hose line laid from trucks a half-mile away in the steep, dense terrain. Once night fell, they could not stay on the fire.

“It was not safe,” Reid said. “It was dark; there were rolling snags and rocks coming down that could not be seen.”

Reid and the Sisters Ranger District staff knew early on that the fire was going to become complex and difficult to fight.

“We made it a Type 3 Incident as soon as we got eyes on it Monday morning (August 17),” he said.

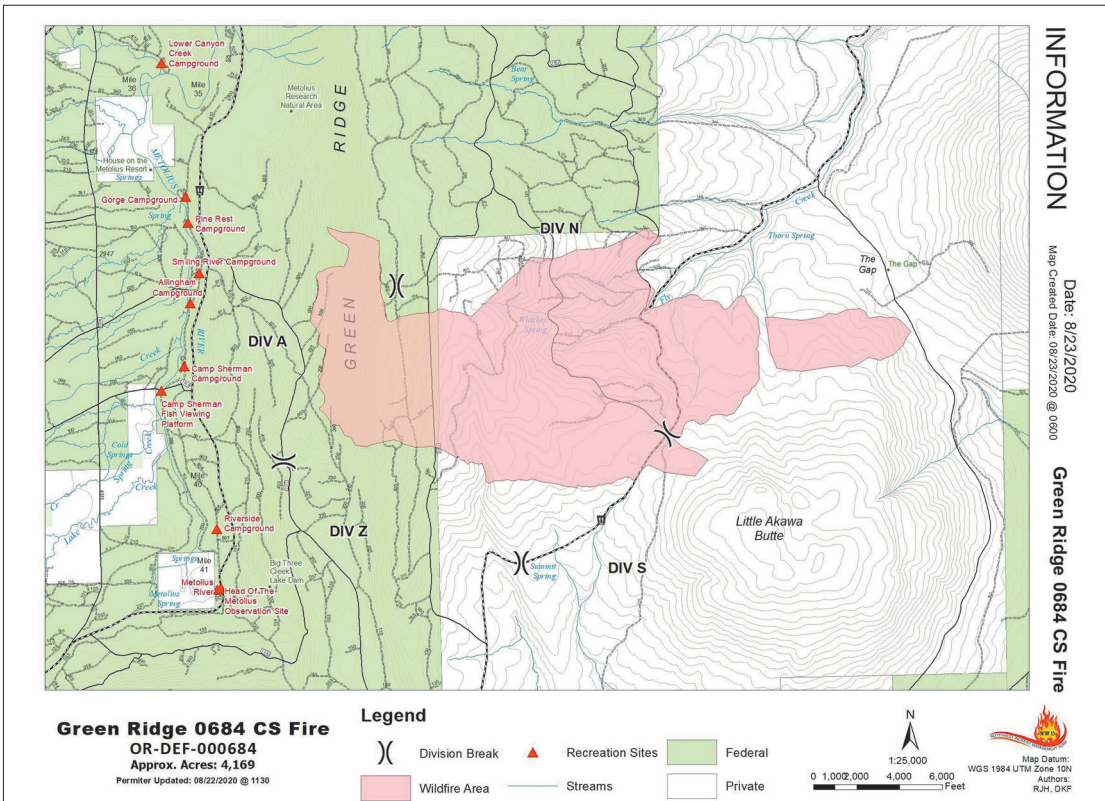
The fire moved upslope and over the ridge and was pushed by winds each afternoon toward the east onto private timberlands.

Reid said that observation on the fire indicates mixed severity. There are some areas that burned at high intensity, with heavy mortality among the trees.

“There is a lot of nice underburn as well, so that will be a good thing in terms of future fires,” he said.

Oregon Department of Forestry Team 3 took over management of the fire on Monday, with 5,099 total personnel working the blaze.

The Nugget will continue to update news on the Green Ridge Fire at www.nuggetnews.com and on *The Nugget’s* Facebook page.



The Green Ridge Fire grew to 4,169 acres on National Forest and private lands.

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