

The Nugget

News and Opinion
from Sisters, Oregon

POSTAL CUSTOMER

PRE-SORTED STANDARD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Sisters, OR
Permit No. 15

Vol. XLIII No. 38

www.NuggetNews.com

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

Sisters firefighters help save homes

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

When homes and businesses are under threat from wildfire, firefighters mobilize across the state to help.

Sisters firefighters David Ward and Emily Spognard were part of Central Oregon Task Force 2 that rolled out on the afternoon of September 9 to assist with structure protection operations in Santiam Canyon, where fire driven by heavy winds out of the east had ripped through the Highway 22 corridor.

The task force included firefighters from Crook and Jefferson counties, Black Butte Ranch, Redmond and Bend. Spognard and Ward manned a small Type 6 brush engine and were assigned to stage in Idanha, where they linked up with a crew of Prineville Hotshots.

“Our primary goal was just structure protection,” Ward explained. “And then

if there were some spot fires that were getting tossed around, extinguish those.”

Ward said that debris from the heavy winds littered the highway before they hit the fire zone.

“We had to cut a couple of trees out of the way,” Ward said.

Then they started seeing melted powerlines and poles on fire. Smoke became dense and visibility dropped. Once they arrived, it was clear that “fire was definitely coming down toward Idanha.”

The firefighters conducted burnout operations to create firebreaks around structures. They were aided by one bit of good fortune:

“Idanha still had working fire hydrants, we were able to be liberal with water,” he said.

Their operations were successful.

“We didn’t lose any structures in Idanha while we were there,” Ward said.

Detroit was in much



PHOTO COURTESY SISTERS-CAMP SHERMAN RFPD

Central Oregon firefighters deployed to some of the areas hit hardest by last week’s catastrophic fires.

tougher shape, Ward said. Smoke was very dense.

“It got to the point where you couldn’t see 15 feet in front of your bumper,” he said.

Fire crews spotted smoke coming out of basements of homes and stopped and extinguished fires,

saving homes.

But Ward acknowledged that the area was very hard hit.

Damage was “pretty extensive,” he said. “Definitely it catastrophically impacted the town.”

See **FIREFIGHTERS** on page 14

Felling the wrong tree can be costly

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

On May 7, Sisters lost a 130-year-old healthy ponderosa pine tree, measuring 100 feet tall with a diameter of 39 inches. It had been here since before Sisters was settled.

The tree stood in the City-owned right-of-way on South Larch Street and, therefore, was the property of the City of Sisters. The adjacent property owner had previously approached the City about removing the tree because the needles were dropping into his yard. The permission from the City was denied.

The homeowner at 425 E. Washington Ave., and the tree service employed to remove the mature ponderosa, were presented with demand letters from the City on June 8, concerning the timber trespass committed by them. The amount demanded by the City was \$26,865.

Cascade Tree Works

See **TREE CUTTING** on page 29

“Our primary goal was just structure protection, and then if there were some spot fires that were getting tossed around, extinguish those.”
— David Ward

Sisters Woodlands wins first approval

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

The first step in the long process of developing the middle section of the Forest Service property has been taken. On Thursday, the Sisters Planning Commission approved — with conditions — a request by developers for a rezone from Public Facilities to Multi-Family Residential. Five commissioners voted in favor and one abstained. The area is now called Sisters Woodlands.

There are no development plans yet, although the applicants and their representatives offered some possible scenarios they are

considering.

The applicant’s land use planner, Tammy Wisco, painted a picture for the commissioners of the possible development, with 25 acres of workforce housing made up of cottages, town homes, and multi-family units in the interior of the property. She called it a true community that will be walkable and bikeable.

The staff report presented by Senior Planner Nicole Mardell recommended approval with conditions to the City Council for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan Map and Zoning Map to redesignate and rezone

See **WOODLANDS** on page 28

Smoke created dire air quality locally

By Reecy Pontiff
Correspondent

The hazardous air quality in Sisters — and much of the western U.S. — over the past week has been apparent from the permanent haze across town.

When the Air Quality Index (AQI) is rated as hazardous or unhealthy, “everybody should be staying indoors as much as possible” said Laura Gleim, spokesperson for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. “Folks that are at the most risk are people who are over 65, young children, and people with heart and lung conditions.”

Even people without pre-existing conditions can feel the effects of wildfire smoke. Symptoms may include



PHOTO BY REECY PONTIFF

Sisters had the worst air quality in the world at times during the past week, according to the Air Quality Index. Air quality was expected to improve through this week.

respiratory and sinus issues, headache, burning eyes, scratchy throat, increased heart rate and even fatigue, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

A high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter can help with indoor air quality, as can running air conditioning with

See **SMOKE** on page 31

Inside...

Letters/Weather	2	Hike	8	Entertainment	11	Of a Certain Age	18-25	Classifieds	26-28
Meetings	3	Announcements	10	State of the City	16-17	Crossword	25	Real Estate	28-32