

FIREFIIGHTERS: Local team assisted with structure protection

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Ward said that the damage reinforced the message that keeping properties clear and creating defensible space is critical to fire defense and survival. In a catastrophic blaze such as the one that hit the mountain towns last week, nothing can guarantee that a house is going to survive. But preparation at least gives firefighters a fighting chance.

“People that prepped their property had the best chance,” Ward said.

Ward also noted the importance of having a plan for evacuation. In the fires that struck the Cascades, residents often had only minutes to get out of their homes before the fire was upon them.

“Living in the wildland/urban interface like this, it’s something that definitely has to be in the forefront of everybody’s mind,” he said.

The Sisters firefighter has deployed to catastrophic wildfires before, including a massive blaze that devastated Sonoma, California.

As he experienced in Sonoma, Ward was astounded at the appreciation expressed to firefighters by people who had been through an almost incomprehensible trauma and loss.

He acknowledged that the impact is greater when the fire has devastated an area you grew up visiting.

“It’s a bit more of a personal fire when it’s close to home,” he said.

Commentary... Bull by Bull

By **Judy Bull**
Columnist

• I got lost in Sisters the other day, after living here for over 34 years. When I needed to return from where I’d just come, my plan was to hang a U-turn on Brooks Camp Road, knowing it was a dead end. Not only is Brooks Camp Road now a through street, I was met by huge apartment buildings and houses on both sides of the street. McDonald’s Golden Arches ahead was the only thing I recognized.

• It’s beginning to feel a lot like fall in Cloverdale. The acrid smell of hemp fields and the smoke from wildfires permeate the air, the nearby elk can be heard bugling, and the Three Sisters are as bare of snow as I can remember. Oh, and the badgers are back.

• George Carlin once said, “When I was a kid, if a guy got killed in a Western movie I always wondered who got his horse.” Somehow, it makes me wonder, too, who gets all those beautiful horses on the controversial statues that have been torn down.

• Around this time of the year I always enjoy stacking my pellets and getting hay in for the upcoming winter. This is the first year, however, that I have felt the need to lay in books for the winter to come. Thus far I have stashed 14 whodunits, three autobiographies, and 99-year-old Raymond Alden’s newest release,

“Exploring the God Idea.”

• Some nights before going to bed in the summertime, I drag my bare feet through the newly watered lawn to remove the day’s dust. Works great, especially right after I’ve mowed. Talking mowing, Lee Christensen found me the greatest used mower on Craig’s List (who is Craig, anyway)? Just one pull and I’m good to go. Seeing my old mower going down the road in the back of Lee’s pickup, though, made me feel like I was attending my own estate sale.

• The doc has me monitoring my BP lately. I feel as though I’m taking a lie detector test every time I check it; it’s impossible to fool. Talking docs, some of the best advice I ever got from one a few years back: “When it gets in the way of your bowling, call me.” I was all signed up to get my knee replaced this summer and decided to take care of a big toe problem before surgery. Long story short, fixing my toe allowed me to use my entire foot properly for the first time in many, many years and straightened my leg right up. Bingo: no knee surgery and back to bowling — for now.

• One day after COVID house arrest I came across a tiny, dead, dried up, shriveled mouse in the carport closet. Instantly, I realized it looked exactly like I felt when we were first set free from stay-at-home orders.

WILDLIFE: Government has scaled back protections

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using public lands for recreation, grazing or energy development.

The U.S. Supreme Court called into question the definition of “critical habitat” in a 2018 ruling. The Trump administration this year put forward a definition it says will “balance effective, science-based conservation with common-sense policy designed to bring the ESA into the 21st century.”

Critics say the administration’s definition appears to rule out land or water that needs restoration work or sites that could become suitable for imperiled wildlife in the future, particularly when climate change is considered.

Since taking office, President Donald Trump has sought to scale back environmental protections in favor of industry, ranging from shrinking national monuments to opening up areas for oil and gas drilling. He’s also lifted or suspended environmental regulations intended

to prevent pollution during the coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier this month, the administration released a proposal that would change the Endangered Species Act to allow the government to deny protections for critical habitat to benefit development.

Trump has also sought to scale back or alter endangered species rules, including lifting blanket protections for animals newly listed as threatened and setting cost estimates for saving species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for example, designated critical habitat earlier this year for slickspot peppergrass, a rare desert flower in southwestern Idaho, that protected about 65 square miles. But that’s about 30 square miles less than the agency proposed in 2014.

Western Watersheds Project, an environmental group, blasted the decision as reducing critical habitat to only places where the plant already grows rather than including enough uninhabited areas where the plant could expand to and recover.

A final decision on the definition for habitat is expected by year’s end.

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