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Air support helps battle lightning fires

Cooler weather on Sunday assisted firefighting crews in gaining increased containment on Sisters Country fires that were sparked by lightning in a storm that moved across the region last Thursday, August 5.

The Bean Creek Fire and Monty Fire started about a mile apart east of the Monty Campground near Lake Billy Chinook.

Air resources were a significant help in keeping the fires from getting big.

Central Oregon Helitack deployed three trucks and a helicopter within hours after lightning ignited the fires. The BLM team based in Prineville included firefighters from Montana. They stationed themselves and extensive gear at Sisters Eagle Airport.

Gusty winds challenged crews on the Bean Creek Fire on Friday afternoon, but after multiple large air tankers dropped retardant, crews on the ground were assisted by helicopters dropping water to cool hot spots, and dozers constructed preliminary containment lines.

A local Central Oregon Fire Management Service (COFMS) Type 3 team has now taken command of the



PHOTO BY BILL BARTLETT

Helicopters operating out of Sisters Eagle Airport have helped ground crews battle two small blazes that erupted from lightning strikes on August 5.

fire. Additional resources arrived on the two fires on Sunday to add capacity to containment efforts. Crews mopped up heat around the perimeter to continue securing containment lines. As of Sunday night, the Bean Creek Fire remained at 138 acres and the Monty Fire remains at 23 acres.

A Level 1 evacuation notice (Get Ready) issued by Jefferson County

Sheriff's Office for houses on Montgomery Shores on the Metolius Arm was lifted late Monday afternoon.

Monty Campground on the Sisters Ranger District remains closed.

Temperatures are expected to soar into the high 90s and may crack 100 degrees this week, which makes fire conditions more dangerous and firefighting more arduous. Fire officials emphasized that

the important thing members of the public can do to help firefighters is to help prevent human-caused fires. With an increasing number of acres on fire in the Pacific Northwest, fire and aviation resources are stretched thin.

The public is reminded that the region remains in extreme fire danger and public use restrictions are in place on all federally managed public lands.

McDonald's did not turn away firefighters

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

Sisters McDonald's has taken a severe beating in the news and on social media for the past month — for something that did not happen.

A viral Facebook post, amplified by a story run on KTVZ-21, led people across the nation to believe that the local McDonald's had refused service on July 13 to firefighters battling the Grandview Fire, who were then treated to a steak dinner at another Sisters restaurant. But a timeline and evidence from security cameras, confirmed by Oregon Department of Forestry officials, demonstrates that, as owner Scott Acarregui asserts, "McDonald's did not at any point refuse service to ANY firefighters."

He told *The Nugget*, "We refused service to the general

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Tensions over masking at school board meeting

By Charlie Kanzig
Correspondent

The boardroom at the Sisters School District office was packed with over 30 citizens for the monthly meeting held Wednesday, August 4. Most were there to express their opposition of the recent mask mandate for K-12 students handed down by Governor Kate Brown two days earlier.

Twelve of those in attendance spoke during the community comment portion of the meeting, addressing concerns about masks along with the issues of critical race theory, bullying, and Black Lives Matter (BLM).

Board members in attendance included Jeff Smith,

Edie Jones, Don Hedrick, and David Thorsett. Jenica Cogdill was absent.

After a robust recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, Board Chair Don Hedrick opened the meeting for community comments, which filled the first half of the hour-long meeting. Most of the comments centered on Brown's announcement that took place a few days earlier.

In a statement Thursday, July 29, Brown said, "The science and data are clear: the Delta variant is in our communities, and it is more contagious. My priority is to ensure our kids are able to safely return to full-time, in-person learning this fall,

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Will the well run dry in Sisters?

By Bill Bartlett
Correspondent

Some property owners have reported that their water wells had run dry. Fortunately, those cases are sparse. The larger issue remains water curtailment for farmers, especially hay producers, who are facing uncertainty that they will have enough water for a second cutting.

The second cutting is the difference between profit and loss. Worries are mounting particularly in the north county.

Canvassing four well drillers and pump service outfits leads to the conclusion that the vast bulk of their calls remain repair or replacement of pumps — typical jobs for this time of the year. There are few calls to deepen wells.

Well drillers are busy — but mostly with new wells and routine repair and replacement. So far, Sisters Country has not seen the severe drop in well water experienced in other parts of Oregon.



PHOTO BY BILL BARTLETT

New wells, however, are in high demand commensurate with countywide population growth and property subdividing. When 40 acres are

developed as eight five-acre tracts, that's seven new wells. The backlog is generally four

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