

**WELLS:** Concern is for hay crop in Sisters Country

*Continued from page 1*

to five months with a cost of \$3,000 to \$10,000. Cost is not determined by depth nor by having to drill deeper as a result of the drought. It's determined by what the driller has to drill through to reach the 320-foot-deep (on average) water table.

While the depth to reach water has grown five to six feet this summer, this is not a reason to panic, drillers tell *The Nugget*. Abbas Drilling in Terrebonne say that conservation is the key to managing growers' water, so much of which is wasted to seepage and evaporation.

Some 90 percent of the streamflow from the Deschutes River is diverted through irrigation canals during the growing season between April through October.

"The diversions cause a dramatic reduction of streamflow — more than 1,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) in the Middle Deschutes, the stretch between Bend and Lake Billy Chinook," according to the Deschutes County watermaster in Bend.

The porous, volcanic soil characteristics of our high desert terrain allow nearly half of the water diverted from the river to canals to seep into the ground before it reaches the farm.

"As a result, irrigation districts need to divert twice the amount of water as they need to serve their patrons — an extremely inefficient and antiquated system," claims the Deschutes River Conservancy.

The Three Sisters Irrigation District canals have been piped at considerable effort over several years to prevent loss.

There are eight irrigation districts serving customers from the Deschutes River.

"Low streamflow leads to habitat degradation, water quality problems, and unhealthy habitat for fish and wildlife," the Conservancy states.

The City of Sisters is in no danger of running out of water anytime soon. While that is reassuring, every drop saved is worth considering. In the broader Sisters Country water is not taken for granted. Pump servicers remind well owners to be alert for failure, especially since many wells in the area are at least 40 years old.

The long-term forecast remains very hot and very dry.

# Alert construction crew helps battle fire

By Sue Stafford  
Correspondent

Employees of Crestline Construction who were checking equipment on Sunday, July 11, at Rimrock Ranch on Wilt Road were in the right place at the right time.

While making sure the heavy equipment would be ready to go Monday morning at 5 a.m., the men noticed the early plume of smoke from what became the Grandview Fire, which eventually burned 6,032 acres, coming frighteningly close to Gayle Baker's Rimrock Ranch, a Deschutes Land Trust (DLT) property (see related story, page 3).

After alerting authorities, the crew brought all the heavy equipment up the hill from the area next to Whychus Creek where they are doing habitat restoration work, cleared an area of vegetation near the ranch entrance, and parked the equipment. During that week, the spot became a staging area for firefighting equipment used on the Grandview Fire. For one week, work was stopped on the creek project and Crestline stayed on site, ready and willing to help. They put in a dozer road to help fight the fire, and their water truck provided water for some of the pumper trucks. Nick Jacob, project manager for Crestline, which is headquartered in The Dalles, and two of his employees manned their water truck and two bulldozers.

Evident today is how close the fire came to engulfing the ranch. Driving in the driveway, one can see all the burned trees on the ridge across the pasture as well as the large red swath of fire retardant dropped by a tanker plane on the edge of the pasture.

The main job for Crestline, according to Jacob, was "to keep Gayle safe and protect the property."

Jacob explained that on any jobsite where they are working, the potential for fire is always there. That is why they start work in the cool of day at 5 a.m. and quit at 1 p.m. Several of the crew must stay on site for three hours after work stops, to watch for any ignition.

Deschutes Watershed Council Executive Director Kris Knight said he was told by the fire crew that "there was a lot of concern about the Grandview Fire, especially because it started running fast." He gave special credit to the Prineville Bureau of Land Management engine 612 crew, saying, "They were a great group of guys who did an amazing job of cutting fire line."

Baker indicated that on the

Sunday evening when the fire started, fire personnel came right into the barn where she lives upstairs and told her, "Get out now!"

On Monday, July 26 Deschutes Land Trust hosted a picnic lunch at the ranch as a thank-you to all the people involved in containing the fire. Crestline received a certificate of appreciation from DLT Executive Director Rika Ayotte for their willingness to offer their crew and equipment to help fight the fire. Sisters District Ranger Ian Reid and members of the fire crews were unable to attend the lunch as they had already been assigned to new fires.



PHOTO COURTESY DESCHUTES LAND TRUST

Deschutes Land Trust Executive Director Rika Ayotte presented a certificate of appreciation to Nick Jacob of Crestline Construction for their help with protecting Rimrock Ranch from the Grandview Fire. Kris Knight, executive director of Deschutes Watershed Council, looks on.

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