

Trump sees wildfire areas, consoles those harmed by shooting

By Jonathan Lemire
The Associated Press

PARADISE, California — President Donald Trump on Saturday acknowledged Californians suffering from twin tragedies, walking through the ashes of a mobile home and RV park in a small northern town all but destroyed by deadly wildfires and privately consoling people grieving after a mass shooting at a popular college bar outside Los Angeles.

“This has been a tough day when you look at all of the death from one place to the next,” Trump said before flying back to Washington.

Trump’s visits to areas of Northern and Southern California in the aftermath of unprecedented wildfires that have killed more than 70 people gave him what he sought in flying coast to coast and back in a single day — a grasp of the desolation in the heart of California’s killer wildfires.

“We’ve never seen anything like this in California, we’ve never seen anything like this yet. It’s like total devastation,” Trump said as he stood amid the ruins of Paradise, burned to the ground by a wildfire the president called “this monster.”

Before returning to Washington, Trump met briefly at an airport hangar with families and first responders touched by the shooting at the Borderline Bar & Grill in Thousand Oaks more than a week ago, which left 12 dead in what Trump called “a horrible, horrible event.” Reporters and photographers were not allowed to accompany the president to the session, which Trump later described as emotional.

“What can you say other than it’s so sad to see. These are great people. Great families, torn apart,” he told reporters. “We just hugged them and we kissed them — and everybody. And it was very warm.”

He added: “It was tragic and yet, in one way, it was a very beautiful moment.”

Trump had made only one previous trip as president to California, a deeply Democratic and liberal state that he has blamed for a pair of overheated crises, illegal immigration and voter fraud. He also has been at odds with the state’s Democratic-led government, but differences were generally put aside as Gov. Jerry Brown and Gov.-elect Gavin Newsom joined Trump in surveying the wildfire damage.

“We’re going to have to work quickly,” Trump said near the crumpled foundations of Paradise homes and twisted steel of melted cars. “Hopefully this is going to be the last of these because this was a really, really bad one.”

In a nod to his belief — not shared by all forest scientists — that improved forest management practices will diminish future risks, Trump added: “I think everybody’s seen the light and I don’t think we’ll have this again to this extent.”

With that bold and perhaps unlikely prediction, Trump evoked his initial tweeted reaction to the fire, the worst in the state’s history, in which he seemed to blame local officials and threatened to take away federal funding.

Hours later and hundreds of miles to the south, Trump found similar signs of devastation in the seaside conclave of Malibu, one of the areas of Southern California ravaged by wildfires that have killed at least three. Palm trees stood scorched and some homes were burned to the ground on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

At least 71 people have died across Northern California, and authorities are trying to locate more than 1,000 people, though not all are believed missing. More

than 5,500 fire personnel were battling the blaze that covered 228 square miles and was about 50 percent contained, officials said.

When asked in Paradise if seeing the historic devastation, which stretched for miles and left neighborhoods destroyed and fields scorched, altered his opinion on climate change, Trump answered, “No.”

The president has long voiced skepticism about man’s impact on the climate and has been reluctant to assign blame to a warming earth for the increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters.

Wearing a camouflage “USA” hat, Trump gazed solemnly at the devastation in Paradise. Several burned-out buses and cars were nearby. Trees were burned, their branches bare and twisted. Homes were totally gone; some foundations remained, as did a chimney and, in front of one house, a Mickey Mouse lawn ornament. The fire was reported to have moved through the area at 80 mph.

“It’s going to work out well, but right now we want to take care of the people that are so badly hurt,” Trump said while visiting what remained of the Skyway Villa Mobile Home and RV Park. He noted “there are areas you can’t even get to them yet” and the sheer number of people unaccounted for.

“I think people have to see this really to understand it,” Trump said.

The president later toured an operation center, met with response commanders and praised the work of firefighters, law enforcement and representatives of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Trump took a helicopter tour en route to Chico before he toured Paradise. A full cover of haze and the



Evans Vucchi/The Associated Press

President Donald Trump talks with FEMA Administrator Brock Long, Jody Jones, Mayor of Paradise, and California Gov. Jerry Brown, second from right during a visit to a neighborhood impacted by the wildfires Saturday in Paradise, California.

smell of smoke greeted the president upon his arrival at Beale Air Force Base near Sacramento.

“They’re out there fighting and they’re fighting like hell,” Trump said of the first responders.

He pledged that Washington would do its part by coming to the Golden State’s aid and urged the House’s Republican leader, Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California, a Trump ally and frequent White House visitor, to “come to the office” to help secure the needed funding.

Trump long has struggled to convey empathy to victims of national disasters and tragedies. His first reaction to the fires came in a tweet last week that drew criticism as unnecessarily critical and tone-deaf given the devastation: “There is no reason for these massive, deadly and costly forest fires in California except that forest management is so poor. Billions of dollars are given each year, with so many lives lost, all because of gross mismanagement of the forests.”

After the negative reaction to that response, Trump shifted gears, expressing words of encouragement to first responders and those of sympathy for hit victims.

Nature and humans share

blame for the wildfires, but fire scientists are divided as to whether forest management played a major role. Nature provides the dangerous winds that have whipped the fires, the state has been in a drought and human-caused climate change over the long haul is killing and drying the shrubs and trees that provide the fuel.

When Trump was asked during an interview set to air on “Fox News Sunday” whether climate change played a role in the number of serious fires, he said “maybe it contributes a little bit. The big problem we have is management.”

In Northern California, Trump continued to show skepticism about the impact of climate change on wildfires. His grasp of forests was shaky at times, at one point invoking fire prevention efforts in Finland — it has a very different climate than California — as an example for the Golden State to follow.

Asked if he thought climate change played a role in the fires, Brown responded: “Yes. Yes. And we’ll let science determine this over a longer period of time.”

A reporter asked if climate change was discussed with the president, but Trump jumped in to say, “We didn’t

discuss it.”

A reporter then said, “Well, you obviously disagree on this issue.” Trump answered, in part: “Maybe not as different as people think. Is it happening? Things are changing. And I think most importantly we’re doing things about. We’re gonna make it better. We’re going to make it a lot better. And it’s gonna happen as quickly as it can possibly happen.”

Brown and Newsom said they welcomed the president’s visit, with the governor suggesting they set aside political differences since it “now is a time to pull together for the people of California.” A fierce advocate of addressing climate change, the governor pointed to several causes and said they need to deal with them.

“If you really look at the facts, from a really open point of view, there are a lot of elements to be considered,” Brown said. “The president came, he saw and I’m looking forward over the next months and beyond to really understand this threat of fire, the whole matter of drought and all the rest of it. It’s not one thing, it’s a lot of things and I think that if we just open our minds and look at things we’ll get more stuff done.”

BRIEFLY

From staff reports

Umatilla National Forest offering free Christmas trees

Every fourth-grader in the region can cut their own Christmas tree in the Umatilla National Forest for free this holiday season.

As a part of its Every Kid in a Park program, the U.S. Forest Service is offering students a free tree cutting permit as long as they obtain a paper voucher from www.everykidinapark.gov.

They can study forest maps and submit their vouchers at forest offices in Pendleton, Ukiah, Heppner, Walla Walla, and Pomeroy, Washington.

If someone wants to obtain a permit outside the Every Kid in a Park program, they can purchase them at Ace Hardware in Hermiston, Bi Mart or Southgate Mini-Mart in Pendleton, Zip Zone in Milton-Freewater, J&D Food Mart or Mentzer and Elliott in Pilot Rock, Athena Grocery, Rhode’s Supply in Ukiah, Alpine Outpost in Tollgate, and Heppner Mobil.

Permits are \$5 and limited to one per household. The permits apply only to the national forest system and not private, state, or other federally managed lands.

For more information, contact the forest service office in Pendleton at 541-278-3716.

Writer accused of killing husband wants jail log sealed

PORTLAND — A lawyer

for a self-published romance writer accused of killing her chef husband is asking a judge to seal the woman’s jail visitor log.

A spokesman for the Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office says a judge is hearing the defense motion Monday afternoon.

Nancy Crampton Brophy is charged with shooting and killing her husband of 27 years, Daniel Brophy, at the Oregon Culinary Institute. Daniel Brophy was a well-liked instructor there. The 63-year-old was alone in a kitchen early on June 2 when he was killed, and there were no obvious suspects.

Crampton Brophy once penned an essay titled “How to Murder Your Husband.”

She pleaded not guilty when arraigned in September.

The judge has sealed other documents in the high-profile case.

Up to 350 jobs headed to Butte with a new call center

BUTTE, Montana — A provider of outsourced call center and other business services is planning to open a new facility in western Montana, bringing up to 350 new jobs by next spring to Butte.

Oregon-based FCR announced Friday its new office will offer customer service and technical support jobs answering telephone calls, emails, text messages,

and social media communications for a variety of companies and industries. New jobs include supervisory and management positions.

Joe Willauer, of the Butte Local Development Corporation, tells The Montana Standard that he is excited both for the variety and quality of jobs it will mean.

Butte Chamber of Commerce executive director Stephanie Sorini says the new jobs could have broad economic effects for the local economy.

FCR opened a center in Great Falls in 2017.

Man stabbed while volunteering at Portland church

PORTLAND — Police are looking for a man who stabbed another man who was volunteering at The Well Community Church in Northeast Portland.

KOIN reports that the victim of the Sunday afternoon attack was found with a serious stab wound. He had been volunteering for a program at the church.

The man was taken to the hospital and is expected to survive.

Six arrested after rightists, leftists face off in Oregon

PORTLAND — Police in Oregon arrested six people after a faceoff between right-wing Patriot Prayer members and left-wing counter-

demonstrators in Portland.

KOIN reports the arrests came after six hours of rallies, chants and skirmishes on Saturday.

Five were charged with interfering with a peace officer, including one who also faces a disorderly conduct charge. A sixth person is charged with harassment.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports the day began with a rally in support of survivors of sexual assault organized by Portland Popular Mobilization. It drew about 200 people.

Patriot Prayer member Haley Adams separately hosted a #HimToo rally countering the #MeToo movement. About 40 people attended.

Federal and municipal police kept the groups separate for most of the day.

Police say protesters tossed bottles and flares at officers. A few demonstrators tossed smoke bombs.

Authorities investigating mass bird death in Hillsboro

HILLSBORO — Federal and state authorities are investigating a mass bird death in northwestern Oregon.

Officials say a bald eagle, red-tailed hawk and dozens of red-winged blackbirds and European starlings were found dead in a field in Hillsboro earlier this week.

Oregon State Police are

investigating, and some birds have been taken to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lab in Ashland for testing.

Portland General Electric says crews checked a nearby transformer but it’s designed to be safe for birds, and it’s unlikely the birds were electrocuted.

Audubon Society of Portland Conservation Director Bob Sallinger says it’s possible the smaller birds were poisoned, and the larger, predatory birds died after eating them.

Former police officer guilty in ice cream stand incident

EUGENE — A former Springfield police officer has pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of harassment following an encounter with another woman while standing in line for ice cream.

The Register-Guard reported in a story on Friday that 39-year-old Elizabeth Mae Thomsen was initially charged in July after an altercation at Lone Pine Farms in Junction City.

Police reports say Thomsen’s dog possibly nipped at a 2-year-old boy standing in line.

The boy’s grandmother made a comment about not allowing dogs, police say, and Thomsen reacted.

Police reports say the boy’s aunt intervened, and witnesses reported that Thomsen punched the aunt

in the arm. Thomsen denies punching the woman.

Thomsen was on medical leave from the police department at the time and retired shortly after the incident.

Man gets prison after repeatedly injuring his son

PORTLAND — A man has admitted in court that he repeatedly injured his 7-year-old son after state child welfare workers placed the boy in his custody despite his lengthy history of domestic violence and an order barring him from seeing his two younger sons.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports Robert Lamb pleaded guilty in Multnomah County Circuit Court Friday to two counts of criminal mistreatment.

Judge Katharine von Ter Stegge sentenced him to a year and a half in prison followed by three years of supervision.

In a separate development, court records show that a civil lawsuit filed in August by the boy’s guardian against Oregon’s Department of Human Services has settled for \$600,000, pending court approval.

The suit alleged the child welfare agency never should have placed the boy in his father’s custody in October 2017.

Department spokesperson Laura McGinnis said she couldn’t comment on the settlement.



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