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UP IN FLAMES

The gusty winds of October howled across fire-scarred Gordon Ridge overlooking the Deschutes River, prompting Molly Belshe to shield her face from swirling dirt and debris.

It was here last July that the 78,425-acre Substation Fire raced out of control across north-central Oregon through tinder dry grass and standing wheat. Farmers like Molly Belshe and her husband, Marty, lost an estimated 2 million bushels of what was expected to be a bumper crop of wheat in Wasco and Sherman counties. They watched helplessly as months of hard

work went up in flames in just minutes.

“It would have been one of the better years we ever cut on that property,” Marty Belshe said. “Now, it’s just the cleanup process.”

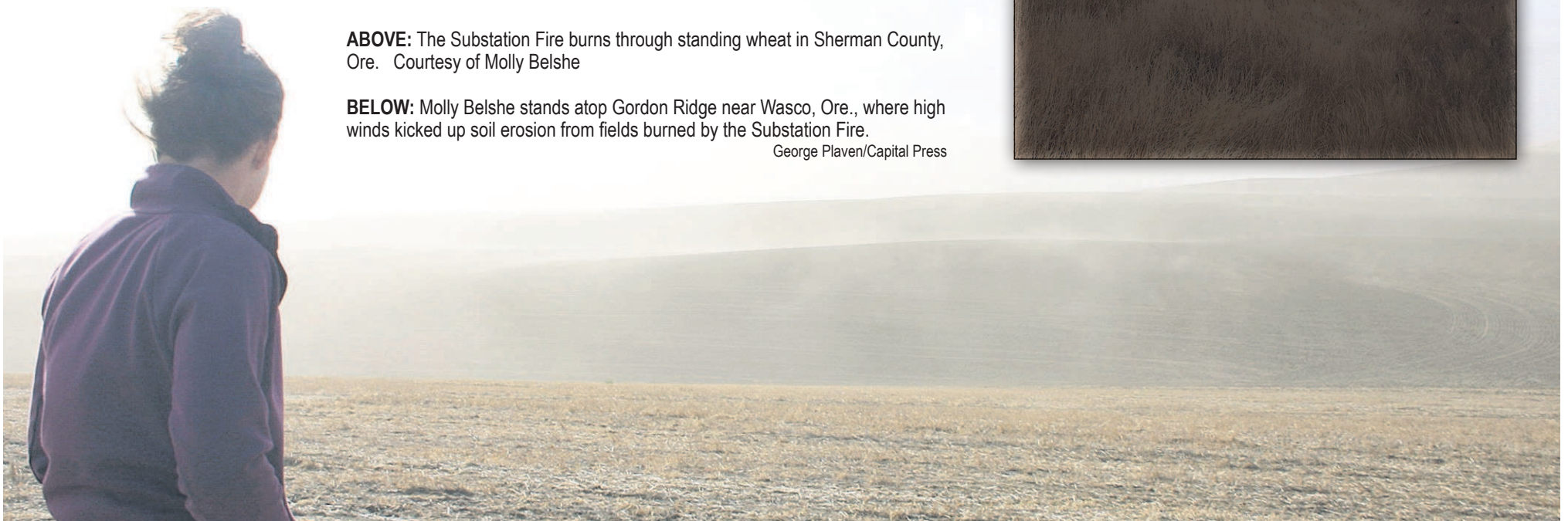
The Substation fire was one of several large blazes that scorched Central Oregon in 2018. Statewide, wildfires had burned more than 811,357 acres as of Oct. 12, as well as 392,652 acres in Washington, 588,980 acres in Idaho and a staggering 1.5 million acres in California.



ABOVE: The Substation Fire burns through standing wheat in Sherman County, Ore. Courtesy of Molly Belshe

BELOW: Molly Belshe stands atop Gordon Ridge near Wasco, Ore., where high winds kicked up soil erosion from fields burned by the Substation Fire.

George Plaven/Capital Press



Report: Pr

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Precision agriculture systems are vulnerable to numerous threats

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