

Labrador Fire smolders on

By
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IVN Contributing Writer

“The Labrador Fire is a sleeping dog,” said Public Information Officer Bob Gale. “But it’s like a puppy that could wake up and move fast.”

Recent weather has cooperated, keeping the smoldering blaze that started from lightening strikes July 27 at 2,020 acres, though it remains zero percent contained.

“The heat is building and fuels are drying out again,” Gale said. “While the near forecast is fairly benign, it’s a fluid situation. It could still go either way.”

While the region experienced wet thunderstorms last weekend, fire danger throughout southwest Oregon remains extreme. As weather returns to more seasonal patterns, experts say there is increased fire spread and intensity potential.

“The Labrador Fire has not yet been weather tested,” said John Bonk, the National Weather Service meteorologist assigned to the fire. “Hot, dry and windy weather could result in large fire fans in a single day.”

The Labrador Fire, located 13 miles northwest of Cave Junction, has been downgraded from Type II to Type III status. Officials say there’s a good plan and a good team in place that

will continue to stay ahead of the fire’s progress in the days and weeks to come. Seventy-five firefighters remain assigned to the fire.

“It’s never going to be a Biscuit Fire,” said outgoing Incident Commander Brett Fillis. “Overall, the fire is now less complex. Much work has been done. Contingency lines are in place and structure protection has been completed. The new team will be in suppression mode, where it’s safe.”

Last week, the Evacuation Level 2 status for the Oak Flat community was reduced to Level 1 alert status, and the former Level 1 order for the area between Kerby Flat to McCaleb Ranch was lifted. A tanker to provide structure support remains stationed at Oak Flat. The Illinois River Road remains closed for vehicle safety reasons, as fire and national guard vehicles are still working up there and there’s places where road is single-lane.

“Since the fire’s been behaving itself, and we have good resources on air coverage, we can really keep an eye on things. So we feel comfortable dropping the evacuation status at this time,” Gale said.

Both Labrador and Forest Service Ranger District forces attacked more than a dozen new lightning fires resulting from recent storms and most were fully extinguished by these initial efforts. Five fires thought to be dead are in patrol status, to make sure any smoldering embers are put out.

Two of the new fires, the four-acre Grizzly Fire located fif-

teen miles southeast of Cave Junction; and the two-acre Border Fire, about fifteen miles southwest of Cave Junction, will require continued suppression activities. Hot Shot crews and helicopters are working to extinguish these fires, both located in steep and difficult terrain, according to Gale.

“Overall, the helicopters have been a critically important resource, especially with the new fires,” Gale said. “We’ll always need people on the ground but helicopters are able to keep some of these fires in check until the ground crews can get there.” In some cases, ground crews must hike for miles to reach the fires, other times firefighters are able to rappel in.

Takilma residents also had some excitement last weekend from a fire above Page Creek Road that is now extinguished.

Firefighters remain camped out at the Forest Service lower compound, just outside of Cave Junction. Showers have been brought in for these firefighters, as they are dealing with poison oak on a daily basis.

“We really appreciate the receptivity in the community,” Gale said. “People are coming over and shaking our hands, offering to buy us coffee or a beer. Even though we cannot accept it, the sentiment is truly appreciated.”

For detailed information on the fire including maps and photos, go to <http://www.inciweb.org/incident/3563/> People can also contact Public Information Officer Tim Johnson at 541-864-9282.

42 fire starts from storms are contained

Medford, OR – Firefighters have been busy since August 7 chasing smokes and putting out fires started by the series of lightning storms that have passed over the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest. To date, all 42 new fire starts associated with the storms have been contained. Aircraft, engines and crews remain available to attack any additional starts should sleeper fires come to life over the next few days.

A summary of the activity on the Forest: High Cascades Ranger District – 23 fires; Wild Rivers Ranger District – 14 fires; Gold Beach Ranger District – 5 fires. The largest fire, the Grizzly Fire on the Wild Rivers Ranger District, grew to 4 acres. All fires combined burned just over 15 acres.

Cooperation between all fire suppression organizations, land management agencies and large fire management teams, in southwest Oregon remains a hallmark of the 2013 fire season. With thousands of lightning strikes from the latest series of storms, initial attack resources were initially beefed up in anticipation of the lightning, and then supplemented by aircraft, engines and crews from the large fires in the area to successfully keep all new starts small in size.

While the latest fires on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest were lightning-caused, many wildfires in southwest Oregon are caused by people. The Forest has issued new public use restrictions to

decrease the possibility of human caused fires. To view the latest restrictions, as well as road and trail closures on the Forest associated with large fire activity go to: www.fs.usda.gov/rogue-siskiyou. To view the current restrictions on lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Coos and Douglas Forest Protective Association’s, including the Bureau of Land Management, go to: www.swofire.com/p/fire-season-regulations.

The public is urged to use caution with any activity that could spark a blaze. Every preventable wildfire puts firefighters and the public at risk and reduces the ability of fire suppression agencies to respond to the next fire.



Mathilde Fievre of Tours-St. Cyr Sur Loire, France was given an Honorary Citizen award by Mayor Jacobson July 30.



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☐ Truck	☐ Commercial Truck	☐ Tractor
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