

Fire Season Begins

Hot, dry summer expected

Annette McGee Rasch
IVN Senior Contributing Writer

Fire season began Friday, June 3, on lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) Southwest Oregon District. The declaration shuts down all open burning and affects all state, private, county, city and Bureau of Land Management forestlands in Jackson and Josephine counties. This includes burning of debris piles and the use of burn barrels.

The public regulated use fire danger level is currently "moderate" (blue) and the Industrial Fire Precaution Level is 1 (one).

"Open burning has been the number one cause of fire the past few weeks," said Brian Ballou, fire prevention specialist and ODF public affairs officer. "Burn piles have been getting away from people and grasses have been burning pretty aggressively, so we called the season. The closer we get to summer, the worse it looks. Unless we get some serious rainfall events, it looks like we're going to be pretty active."

A snowpack in the Cascade Range and the Siskiyou Mountains recharged most of the southwest Oregon region's reservoirs, creeks and rivers, but is not expected to have much positive effect on wildfire activity, especially low-elevation grass and brush lands and mid-elevation forests, according to ODF reports.

While spring was reasonably wet, it was also 6-8 degrees warmer than normal. That warming trend is likely to continue, Ballou said.

"Below mid-elevation, things are drying out very fast," Ballou said. He also explained that abundant grass and weed growth across the district will provide plenty of fuel for wildfires once the vegetation fully cures. The drought in previous years has left numerous dead and dying trees scattered across the landscape, which may increase the severity of forest fires in some parts of the district.

Brian Nieuwenhuis, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Medford, said the El Nino conditions of last winter are "on the wane," and that this summer is expected to be "a little warmer than normal, and dry."

"In terms of fuels, there's a drought 'carry over' resulting from fuels drying out really quick this spring, even though we had a lot of precipitation last winter," Nieuwenhuis said.

Ballou said ODF is ready for the season. Last summer ODF added more personnel to combat wildfires and a third helicopter to their air attack arsenal.

"But it will be a continuous battle, especially as we get into July and August," Ballou said. "It's all about how much lightning we get, but also, how smart people are. That's always the wild card. Generally, people who've lived here a long time are pretty cautious, but when we get more people from outside the area who aren't really dialed in about how dangerous the situations can be, we can have trouble. And there's that percentage of people who don't pay attention to our environmental reality and drive over tall grass or start burn piles."

Other restrictions on ODF-protected forestlands include no fireworks, no tracer ammunition or exploding targets and no sky lanterns. And under Industrial Fire Precaution rules, commercial operations such as timber harvesting conducted on forestlands are now required to have fire suppression equipment on the job site at all times, and a watchman must also be provided.

Last year, a total of 255 fires burned on lands protected by the ODF in the Southwest Oregon District. Over 200 of those fires were started by people, and 53 by lightning.

To keep track of fire activity in the region visit www.swofire.com.

Flipping hot day



(Photo by Laura Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

A boy cools down by doing a backflip off a rock at Diver's Hole in Selma on the Illinois River Sunday, June 5. Temperatures in the area reached record levels this week.

Community groups support CJ Patrols

Judy Hoyle & Dan Klapheke
IVN Contributing Writers

Plans are shaping up for a special evening July 21. "I.V. by Candlelight - Lighting our Way to Safety" will celebrate the Illinois Valley community's resilience and bring more public safety awareness while raising funds for the all-volunteer CJ Patrols group.

The event is being organized by the fourth and final Illinois Valley cohort of the Ford Family Institute Leadership Program (FFILP).

Cohort members surveyed the community and the need for public safety was the most important concern on everyone's mind.

"People are worried about crime. They don't feel safe," Fourth cohort member and Illinois Valley News editor Laura Mancuso said. "This walk will help raise public safety awareness. We want to show that our community is strong and united."

"We are inviting the community to gather at Jubilee Park at 6:30 p.m. that Thursday for the I.V. Chamber of Commerce's Concert in the Park. During

the concert there will be public safety groups available for information as well as food from Bobbalou's Burgers, Dogs and Sweets. At the end of the concert, we will be passing out candles and taking a candlelight walk through the park and downtown and then meeting back at the park for some Dutch Bros. and s'mores by campfire. This event will give the community an opportunity to address their fears about safety, especially at the park. CJ Patrols will be on hand for questions, safety and hopefully be able to gather more volunteers."

SEE FORD ON A-5

Moon Tree Run 2016



(Photo by Dale Sandberg, IVFD Media Dept)

Runners take off on this year's Moon Tree Run at the Illinois Valley Airport. Participants either ran a 5K or 10K, and the event featured music, food and an appearance from Smokey the Bear.

Josephine County Fair to host Battle of the Bands competition

The Josephine County Fair will host a Battle of the Bands competition Thursday, August 18 at 7 p.m. on the main Seven Feathers Midway stage.

The fair's mission is to bring local talent to the forefront. Contestants will be evaluated on vocal and instrumental performance, musical interpretation/originality and stage presence. Bands will also be evaluated on audience reaction for the final performance with the use of a

decibel meter.

The winning band will receive \$600 and a special guest interview on a radio station. Second and third place will receive \$300 and \$150, respectively. Bands will also receive fair passes and have the opportunity to set up a merchandise table in the media tent.

Bands are asked to submit an audition tape via a demo CD or YouTube video. A panel of judges will screen the auditions and select the finalists.

Applications are available at the fair office and must be turned in no later than July 15 at 5 p.m. and selected bands will be notified by July 18.

The fair office is located at 1451 Fairgrounds Road in Grants Pass. The fair has the right to reject any application for any reason. Previous winners are not eligible to apply. Official rules and guidelines are outlined on the application. Visit the Josephine County Fairgrounds Facebook page for more information.