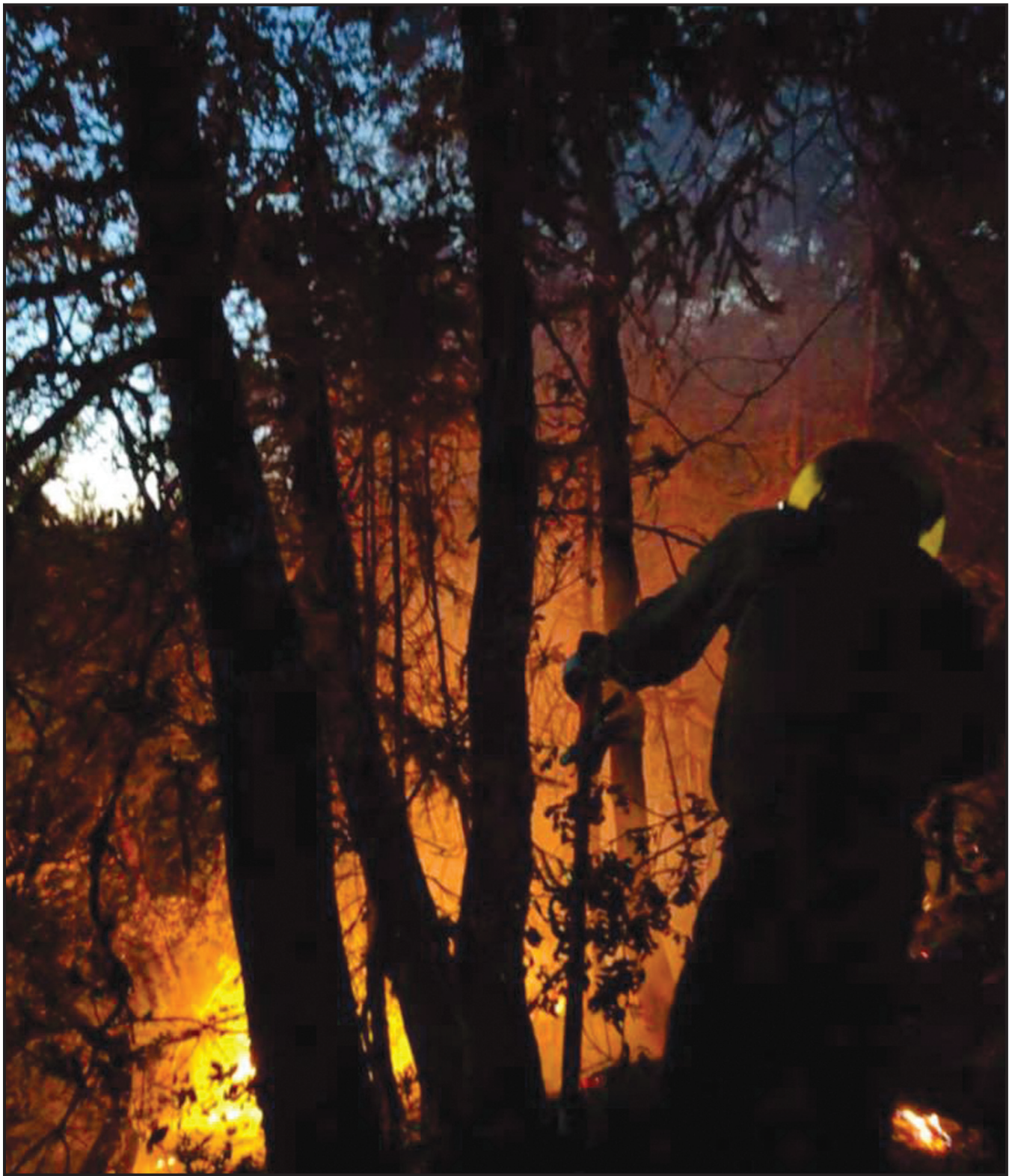


Here a fire, there a fire



(Photo courtesy of Faith Paul for the Illinois Valley News)

Local wildland firefighter Brandon Loyd works a fire in the Valley Sunday, July 15. Thunderstorms across the region caused more than 30 fires in the area. Fire crews were on standby and hit the fires fast and with plenty of resources.

Fire information at press time

Garner Complex in Josephine County

Swamp Creek: 16 miles north of Rogue River. Estimated at 5 acres. While the fire does have a control line around the perimeter, interior mop-up will remain a challenge today. The fire is 30 percent contained. No structures threatened. ***
Little Grayback: 8 miles east of Cave Junction. Holding at 2 acres. The fire has a control line around the perimeter. Smoke will continue to be present as crews work on additional suppression efforts. No structures are threatened.
Spencer Creek Fires: No.1-3 - Highly visible from Grants Pass, Applegate, Williams, Illinois Valley, and I-5. 12 miles south of Grants Pass. Approximately 3 fires in the area. Total fires estimated at 105 acres. Spencer Creek No.1 and No. 2 were lined overnight. However, Spencer Creek No. 3 continues to push firefighters to their limits. No structures threatened.
Grave Creek Fires: No. 1-4 - Series of fires off Upper Grave Creek Road, visible from Wimer. Approximately 17 miles north of Rogue River. Six to seven fires in the area. Total of all fires estimated at 115 acres. Grave Creek No. 3 is the fire within the series that has the most potential to make runs today; therefore, it is the current priority for the district. Winds along ridgelines will also test current control lines in place. Today, aerial and ground resources will continue to aggressively attack these fires striving to lengthen the current control lines along the flanks. No structures threatened.
Pleasant Creek Fire: 15 miles north of Rogue River. Estimated at 60 acres. Ground resources are working on line construction today, while aerial resources will work on cooling off the head of the fire in order to stop the further rate of spread. No structures threatened.
Tennessee Mountain: 3 miles northwest of Cave Junction. Approximately 7 acres. Last night, firefighters wrapped a control line around the fire. Firefighters will continue mopping up today. No structures threatened.
Felder: North of MP 53 on I-5. Approximately 7 acres. Firefighters strengthened and secured the perimeter

last night, and will be mopping up today. Smoke will be present. No structures threatened.
The Oregon Department of Forestry Incident Management Team 2, led by Incident Commander Chris Cline, will be taking command of a series of fires within the Garner Complex, including Spencer Creek Fires, Grave Creek Fires, and the Pleasant Creek Fire. The local district, ODF Southwest, will retain command of the Wagner Creek Complex, as well as all other fires throughout Jackson and Josephine Counties.
Wagner Creek Complex in Jackson County
Green Top Mountain: 5 miles northeast of Eagle Point. Holding at 125 acres. Firefighters completed the control line around the perimeter of the fire last night. Containment is now at 45 percent. Today, multiple ground and aerial resources will continue to knock down the interior heat of the fire. No structures are threatened.
Sterling Creek: 7 miles south of Jacksonville. Holding at approximately 100 acres. The fire is 30 percent contained. Ground and aerial resources will continue to knock down the interior perimeter of this fire today.
Trail Creek & Elk Creek Drainage: Multiple fires are burning in the area surrounding Cleveland Ridge, Elk Creek, and the Trail Creek area which is roughly 5.5 miles north to northwest of Shady Cove. There are approximately 10 confirmed fires on ODF-protected land within the drainage. The largest fire in this area is estimated at 20 acres. Several fires within this drainage were lined yesterday, including an 18-acre fire, and several others sized at one acre or less. This series is 50 percent contained. Crews will continue to prioritize the initial attack of the remaining active fires today. No structures are threatened.
There are several other fires in Jackson and Josephine Counties that we are working diligently to knock down and contain. Our air attack platform will be performing reconnaissance flights the entire day. As always, keeping our community safe is our priority.

OMMP admits lack of oversight of program

Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — How much medical marijuana is in the pipeline in Oregon? The managers of the state’s program concede that they simply don’t know because of lax reporting by producers and a lack of site inspectors.
That, they say, creates opportunities for marijuana to be diverted into the lucrative black market, something that federal authorities have long complained about.
Oregon was one of the first states to legalize medical marijuana in 1998, and in 2014 voters approved allowing recreational use. The state’s struggle to transform a business that for decades had operated illegally in the shadows into a regulated industry sets an example for other states moving toward legalization.
In an internal review released late Thursday, the state’s Health Authority, which oversees the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program, admitted it has not provided effective oversight of growers and others in the industry.
“Potentially erroneous reporting coupled with low reporting compliance makes it difficult to accurately track how much product is in the medical system. This limits OMMP’s ability to successfully identify and address potential diversion,” the report said.
The report showed there were more than 20,000 medical pot grow sites, but only 58 inspections were carried out in 2017.
Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen ordered the internal review amid complaints from law enforcement authorities who say they often have trouble identifying which marijuana growers are legal. Seen from a helicopter just before harvest season, marijuana grows are like a green patchwork across one southwestern county, one drug enforcement officer said.

SEE MARIJUANA ON A-9

Increased water rates buy needed equipment

Iris Chinook
IVN Contributing Writer

Nobody likes to see an increase in their monthly bills. So when the city of Cave Junction raised water rates recently there were unhappy customers.
What do those rate increases do for the city and its customers? Plenty. Like any department of any municipality, the Public Works Department, which is in charge of waste water treatment, has a wish list of equipment that needs to be replaced or upgraded if they are to continue releasing safe, treated sewage water into the Illinois River or diverting it to irrigate the Illinois Valley Golf Course in the summer months.
Currently, the plant produces treated water that has lower levels of E. coli and other coli form bacteria than the water that flows past the plant in the Illinois River.
According to Travis Robbins, Public Works Director for the city of Cave Junction, a new aerator for the digester at the sewage treatment plant is at the top of the list. Each digester has two aerators but the plant is down to just one right now. Digesters are a critical tool in handling sewage sludge whereby air is continually incorporated into the sludge.“Adding oxygen helps to encourage the ‘good’ bacteria and other microbes, like the free-swimming, crawling and stalked ciliates and rotifers,” said Eric Larson, lead operator for the plant. “We handle around 200,000 gallons per 24 hours in the summer and over 500,000 gallons per 24 hours in the winter.”
But equipment upgrades and replacements take money and anyone can get an idea of how much money the city of Cave Junction has by virtue of the fact that it has an all-volunteer city council and mayor. One of the ideas to raise money involved taking out a 40-year governmental loan to pay for upgrading the plant in one fell swoop. While this was an attractive plan, the price tag was too high and the city opted to improve the waste water treatment facility over a decade instead, saving its customers \$21 per month. “The new rate will bring the basic water charge up to \$85 but it would have been \$106 if we would have gone with the loan. The city will be saving approximately \$80,000 over the next decade by not borrowing the money, said Robbins, adding, “We’ll fix the digester this year and next year we’re aiming for a new UV (ultraviolet) system. We’re anticipating that the newer, more efficient UV lights will help lower the \$10,000 per month electricity bill that the plant pays.” The Public Works Department is hoping the new water rate will bring in around \$150,000 per year which will enable the waste water treatment plant to stop “stealing” money from the general fund as it has for the last six years running. Whenever a critical department has to dip into the city’s general fund it means that other services go wanting.