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Burn Season is near

Laura Mancuso
IVN editor

“Low Fire Risk” does not mean it is OK to start burning. Sometimes after the first fall rain, it may be tempting to burn your piles of debris, but you need to wait for the official notice from the Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD).

Once the official “Burn Season” announcement has been made, you can obtain a free outdoor burn permit from IVFD.

The Illinois Valley News sat down with IVFD Fire Chief John Holmes and Division Chief /Fire Marshal Kamron Ismaili to learn the do’s and don’ts of outdoor burning.

First of all, Ismaili said that the IVFD covers “the top Hayes Hill to the California border as well as Caves Highway until you run into Forest Service land.” So, if you are in IVFD and want to burn outdoors you need to get the free permit every year. The permit is easy to access by going to www.ivfire.com or you can go to the fire station at 681 Caves Hwy. in Cave Junction on designated days to fill out the permit.

The permit is simple to fill out with providing your name, address and phone and then signing after reading the outdoor burn regulations. Holmes said that IVFD had an increase in compliance last year due to the addition of online access for permits. “We want the permit accessible so people will read it and practice fire safety,” said Ismaili.

Holmes recommended taking a photo of the permit with your cell phone so you have it readily available for fire officers if necessary.

The permit lists all the rules associated with outdoor burning. Some of the big “don’ts” mentioned by Ismaili included: “No burning illegal materials and no burning at night.”

Both Holmes and Ismaili said that black smoke from tires or green wood will attract fire officers to illegal burns. And burning illegally can cost you big bucks. “You may be fined \$250 or as high as \$3,000 depending on the amount of piles you are burning,” said Holmes.

But it is not just the fines you should worry about. Ismaili said that there was recently a fire in the Illinois Valley that firefighters had to put out that was caused from a burn pile where the fire “escaped.”

SEE BURN ON A-6

Winning - it’s a family thing



(Photos by Laura Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

June Palacios (left) won first place for her dragonfly in the youth category Friday, Oct. 8 in the 2021 Upcycle Contest at the last farmers’ market of the year. Then two days later, her brother Fuego Palacios, 10, won first place in the 11-mile race in the under-18 division winning \$150 at the Holland Roundup Revival Sunday, Oct. 10.

More funding to combat illegal grows

Daniel J. Mancuso
IVN staff

The Josephine County Sheriff’s Department was awarded a \$1.88 million grant to help local law enforcement agencies cope with the county’s illegal marijuana industry. The grant, awarded last week, is from Oregon’s Community Justice Commission, and essentially doubles available funding for the next two years.

The ‘Illegal Marijuana Market Enforcement Grant’ supports investigation and prosecution actions that target large-scale illegal cultivation or distribution operations in rural Oregon; organized crime in the illegal marijuana market; and operations that export marijuana out of the state. The grant prioritizes enforcement against felony-level marijuana-related criminal operations.

“We’ll be able to increase current staffing to better address illegal marijuana market issues,” said JoCo Sheriff Dave Daniel. “Though it’s still not enough. Current staff dedicated to the illegal grows includes three detectives, one financial analyst and a part-time deputy district attorney to prosecute the cases. This grant will enable me to hire three more detectives, one part-time detective sergeant, and a part time evidence

technician.”

Violent crime, organized crime, trafficking/diversion, financial crimes, property crime, civil/code violations and environmental degradation are all rated as “Extreme” issues for JoCo on the grant application.

“Josephine County has seen a significant increase in homicides and violent crimes over the last few years,” Daniel said. “From 2017 to 2021 homicides have increased by 250 percent and other violent crimes have increased by 71 percent.”

With all this crime occurring, when asked why there are not more prosecutions of criminals at this point Daniel responded:

“Some of the crime, including reports of murder, home invasions, theft and burglary, can be hard to quantify,” he said. “It can be hard to directly tie some of this crime to the grows. But we’re definitely seeing more ‘MJRI’ crime - that’s the code in our system for ‘Marijuana Related Incidents.’ We code the crimes in our system that way when we can, but we need proof - and that’s often elusive. Things need to be verifiable and quantifiable to stand up in court.”

Regarding prosecution of those associated with the grow sites, he said, “We cannot hold all these workers accountable. They would overwhelm our system. Plus,

how do we prove that these workers (many of whom do not speak English) even know that this is illegal marijuana and not hemp?”

An increasing humanitarian crisis is spreading throughout the region, Daniel said. “The situation is disgusting. These people are not being treated properly. Many are not allowed to leave the grow at all and they are housed in deplorable standards. That has caught the ear of Salem, which I think helped push the increase in this grant.”

Daniel explained, “We go after the professional people, the money people, the organizers of these operations. Those are the people that we are looking at and often times those people are not there, they’re not on the scene, they may not even be in the state or even in the country. But absolutely, when we identify them and prove that they have knowledge, then we go after them.”

Daniel also said that while he was “pleased with the progress,” referring to large raids on illegal marijuana grows in the Illinois Valley this past year, he’s still “far from satisfied. It continues to be a growing problem county-wide. I just don’t see an end in sight right now. So, we’ll keep conducting operations consistently, routinely, and as safely as we can.”

SEE GRANT ON A-8

Holland Roundup Revival was a stompin’ good time

By Laura Mancuso
IVN Editor

The harvest celebration at the Holland Store in rural Cave Junction brought to you by the Sasquatch Woods People was deemed a success. Twenty-five runners from Southern Oregon entered the 11-mile race that made a loop starting and ending at the Holland Store that covered some difficult and often steep terrain through the Holland Hills.

It ended up being a beautiful autumn day, going from cloudy to sunny throughout the event. The event attracted a large crowd to listen to the knee-slapping music from John Nolan and White Oak Wood, Jason Dea West and The Brothers Reed. The crowd also got a special treat, getting to watch Aurelia Cohen demonstrate her horseback riding and aerial skills

while eating some special food available from choice vendors. One resident could be heard saying, “It is days like this that remind me why I love this area.”

Event organizer Cindy Palacios summarized the day by saying, “It was an absolutely amazing turnout! Old timers, young families, everybody in-between, celebrating music, neighbors, and community, in the sunshine.

“It was unanimously agreed that it was an excellent event and needs to be repeated next year. The run and the music will be back again at the Holland Store next October.”

Holland Store owner Sandy Jackson agreed. She was very pleased with the event turnout and said she hopes to have the event next year as well.

Palacios said that an abundance of raffle prizes for participating runners were also given out - all donated by local businesses that included Cabin Chemistry, Coffee Heaven, PAPA’s, Diggin’ Livin’, True Value Hardware, Bear Images, I saw Bigfoot on Etsy, Talking Woods and Foris Vineyard. “And of course, the event wouldn’t have been possible without the support and help of the Jackson family at the Holland Store.”

The first-place winners of the long-distance run:

First overall winner - Phil Reed of Medford, 1:09:56; first place adults ages 19-39 - Kyle Carson of Ashland, 1:12:16; first place adults 40 and up - Robert Julian of Phoenix, 1:18:50; and first place 18 and under - Fuego Palacios, 10, of Holland/Cave

Junction, 1:53:00.

The proceeds from the event will go to the Sasquatch Woods People, a grassroots community group for the stewardship of the

public woods in the Holland area. You can read more about it at: <http://www.sasquatchwoodspeople.org>.



(Photo by Renea CooperSmith for the Illinois Valley News)

White Oak Wood: John Nolan (left), Dave Smith and Jay Barley.