

White River fire grows to 1,100 acres

Wasco Sheriff posts evacuation notices

The White River Fire southeast of Mt. Hood is currently 1,102 acres, at about five percent containment, with 304 personnel working the fire. Fire managers said that securing lines and bringing fire to the lines will take several days. They are coordinating with local agencies to protect forest, cultural and scenic resources. Much of the smoke that is visible in nearby communities could be from the White River Fire or

from other fires in the Pacific Northwest. Firefighters are watching for spot fires outside control lines. The fire is at 3,700 feet, 13 miles southeast of Government Camp in the White River drainage near Forest Road 48. The closest community is Sportsman's Park which is 8 miles to the east. The fire lies on the southern aspect of the drainage with White River at the bottom of the fire and Forest Road 48 at the top of the fire. Crews continue to prepare for low intensity firing operations along the east and west ends of the fire toward the White River. Along the north side, they continue to remove unburned fuels between

Highway 48 and the main fire. Firing operations will continue in these areas as conditions allow, fire officials said in an email. The river is in a steep canyon and difficult to reach. Crews are putting in hand line on the west side of the fire between the 48 road and the river. Temperatures are predicted to be in the 80s, relative humidity 17-22 percent, and winds from the south during the day, changing to the northwest in the late afternoon and evening. Wind speeds forecasted at 5-6 mph in the valley and 5-10 mph on the ridge tops. Low intensity firing operations are often used in fire

management. If planned and executed correctly they can control the fire, reduce suppression costs, and protect cultural and natural resources. Fire managers are using low intensity fire to secure lines on the White River Fire, a strategy that will take several days. Monday, the fire was likely to be active with temperatures of 77-82 degrees and west winds of 7 to 15 mph. Ridge top wind gusts are likely to increase this afternoon. Firefighters will watch for possible short runs up steep slopes where slope and wind align. They will also watch for and secure spot fires. On the south side of the fire along the White River,

firefighters will monitor the perimeter using aircraft and lookouts to detect any spot fires that may occur south of the river. Closures are in effect in these areas: Crane Creek, Crane Prairie, Boulder Lake, Forest Creek, Hidden Meadows, Bonney Meadows, Threemile, and all of the Rock Creek OHV Area. Recreation site closures: White River Station, Forest Creek, Keeps Mill, Boulder Lake, Little Boulder Lake, Post Camp, Camp Windy Bonney Meadows, Post Point OHV Staging Area, Gate Creek OHV Staging Area, Barlow Crossing, Rock Creek Campground and day use area.

Road closures: 4410/3550 jctn; Bennet Pass snopark (3550); 48/4890 junction; 43/3530 junction; 43/3530-230; 35/48 junction; 4890/4891 junction; 48/4880 junction; 3530/3530-230; 2710/2710/160; 4810 just northwest of Camp Cody; 48 just south of Rock Creek Reservoir CG; 4820 just west of Rock Creek Reservoir CG; all class 3 road barricades unless otherwise noted. The Wasco County Sheriff has posted a Level 1 Evacuation notice for Sportsman Park and the Rock Creek area; visit www.facebook.com/WascoCountySheriff/posts/1837027263105452.

FIRE Cause under investigation

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flame in the middle of the fire zone. A helicopter was hovering nearby as if expecting the outburst, and doused the 50-foot column of flame. A second helicopter was circling nearby, looking for the best target, and doused the trees with its load. The "saving grace," according to Borton, was that helicopters were already stationed nearby, at the Mosier Creek Fire response. In addition, ODF immediately dispatched an engine and ground crew along with fire managers.

"We were at the house and lost power. I started texting other friends in the neighborhood and looked out the window and there were the flames," said Bonnie Taylor, whose home is near the top of the ridge. She said the recent fires just to the south — Fir Mountain — and east — Mosier Creek — earlier this month helped her and her husband, Sam, remember what to do in case of fire and the possibility of evacuation. "We just started thinking, we gotta have a list and know what we're grabbing," she said. "It was just, 'Let's be prepared.'"

All Hood River County fire agencies responded, along with Mosier Fire Department, Gorge Scenic Area and Oregon Department Forest crews. Hood River County

Sheriff was on scene along with Oregon State Police, Pacific Power and private forestry crews.

"We had a really good turnout," Borton said. The blaze burned in deciduous and coniferous stands of trees and some open scrub-land, but crews were able to get fire lines around it before it could spread to nearby structures.

"We heard a 'pow' that sounded like a transformer blowing. The power went off momentarily and then it came back on," said Doug Massengill, whose home lay 200 yards down the hill from where helicopters were dumping water.

The fire is under investigation, according to Borton. A State Fire Marshal's office investigator was expected as early as the weekend to visit the scene, he said. Officials noted that while power lines were down in the fire area, it is too soon to know if the electrical issue was the cause of, or caused by, the fire.

Crews from area agencies, with help from four helicopters pouring water on the fire, got a fire line around the blaze by around 7:30 p.m., according to Oregon Department of Forestry's Kyle Nairns. The helicopters were already in the area fighting the Mosier Creek Fire, according to Nairns.

Pacific Power dispatched several vehicles to the area, and private firefighting crews were also called in. Hood River County Sheriff's Office were stationed at Old Dalles and Hidden Oaks to limit non-essential vehicle access.

usace.army.mil/CRSO/#top. More information is also available at www.pnwa.net/rivervalues.

By Jacob Bertram
Columbia Gorge News

Dawn Rasmussen has always considered herself a prepared person. Since she and her husband decided to move into their house near The Dalles four years ago, she knew she would have the threat of wildfire looming in her backyard.

The first week they moved in, the Rasmussens had the fire marshal come out to inspect the property. They had rooftop sprinklers installed and made a point to trim down the fuel on the property.

At the onset of the Eagle Creek fire a couple years back, she and a few other helpers saw the need for streamlined information about wildfires in the Columbia River Gorge and became an admin for a Facebook page updating information in the Columbia River Gorge. So when the Mosier Creek Fire raged in her area, causing them and their surrounding neighbors to evacuate, she felt well prepared. The blaze was far enough away by the time she received the reports, giving them time enough to run through the evacuation checklist, load up the previously abandoned fawn, Thor, who they take care of, in the car and drive away.

"Thor was calm ... I think he was getting a little freaked because of the activity, but I think he knew I was trying to protect him," Dawn said.

Five days later, Dawn had been scanning through her list of resources on wildfires in the area when she read an unconfirmed report on a fire near Sevenmile Hill. She had

Resident escapes two fires

to take a look outside. "There I was ... all of a sudden you couldn't see anything, the smoke was so bad," Dawn recalled.

At that point she knew it would be her second time evacuating a wildfire in just a week.

Dawn said she probably only had about 10 minutes to water the deck, turn on the sprinklers, load up Thor and drive off.

"It was like, run as fast as we could."

Dawn recalled that she and her husband would split up later on; Dawn had a friend who could keep Thor overnight.

"I love helping people. It's quite a role reversal to accept help," Dawn said.

Dawn said after the recent fires, she has noticed an uptick in fuel-reduction activity in the neighborhood.

"It's had an immediate impact ... I think the lesson learned here is to prepare ahead of time." Dawn cited the 10-30-100 rule and the



A Wasco County Sheriff deputy mans a roadblock at the corner of Chenoweth Loop and Browns Creek road in The Dalles as residents are evacuated for the Sevenmile Hill fire. Mark B. Gibson photo

Firewise program as specific resources for people in high-risk areas to review.

Everything turned out okay in the Rasmussen family, animals included. The structure was threatened but the fire did not reach the property. In a Facebook post on The Unedited Dalles Happenings, Dawn gave credit to the first responders, who took quick action to notify residents in such a quick amount of time.

"This neighbor-helping-neighbor is the good stuff that makes this a wonderful community. We have amazing people in this community, from people volunteering to help with moving people, animals, and belongings to offering their home for sanctuary, or the brave people rushing to the scene of the fire with what equipment or tools they have."

Environmental review released

PORTLAND — The Columbia River System Operations final environmental impact statement (EIS) has been released, signaling the completion of a new plan to meet the needs of both the Northwest economy and environment.

The final EIS is the culmination of a multi-year process carried by career staff in collaboration with leading experts in fish biology, energy management and socio-economics. The EIS covers 14 Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation dams in the region. To review the final EIS, visit the Columbia River System Operations Web page at www.nwd.

Thank you
to all who helped protect
the homes & farms of 7-Mile Hill
in The Dalles.
Thank you to:
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GUIDE

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Columbia Gorge News

LABOR DAY HOLIDAY CHANGES

Due to the Labor Day Holiday, The Columbia Gorge News will need to adjust delivery that week. The delivery for subscribers will move to Thursday, September 10.

DELIVERY ON THURSDAY LABOR DAY WEEK.

All other deadlines will remain the same:

Display Advertising Reservation Due 5p.m. Wednesday, Sept., 2
Legal Public Notices, Classified Advertising and Obituaries 4p.m. Friday, Sept., 4

Our new offices and locations coming soon!

- Currently: 1800 W. 10th Street., The Dalles, 541-296-2141
- 600 E. Port Marina Way Suite B (DMV building) Hood River, 541 386-1234
- Elba Offices, 288 E. Jewett St., Suite 650, White Salmon, 541-493-2112

We still are not working with open offices due to COVID 19. We have the Hood River office open Mon-Fri 9-Noon.

All offices are open by appointment, just call or email us!

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