

Three fires near Rowena quickly contained

Firefighters responded to three fires Friday morning, June 25, burning adjacent to Interstate 84 near Rowena, and while working to put these fires out two additional starts were discovered along the freeway. These fires, named the Milepost 78 Fire, burned grass, brush and timber primarily within Mayer State Park protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF).

The three larger fires burned approximately seven acres between I-84 and the railroad tracks, the other two fires were limited to a "spot." When resources arrived the fire was running, spotting and torching with 8-10 foot flame lengths at the head of the fire. This fire behavior was mitigated by numerous water drops from Fire Boss aircraft. Moderating fire behavior with the water drops allowed firefighters on the ground to engage the fire and begin fire line construction.

In addition to the two Oregon Department of Forestry Fire Boss aircraft, a Type 1 helicopter on loan from the S-503 Fire, and an air attack platform from Central Oregon Fire Management Services engaged in the fire suppression effort. The fire was managed in Unified Command between Oregon Department of Forestry and Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue.

"The Fire Bosses were critical for keeping the fires north of the highway and protecting numerous structures in Rowena," said Rick Fletcher, incident commander for ODF.

Friday night, the fire was 20% contained with fire line

nearly complete around the perimeter. Overnight, Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue provided patrols to ensure the fire did not move outside the fire line. On Saturday, two engines, one crew, one faller, and overhead were anticipated to be working to secure the fire.

Evacuation information is available from the Wasco County Sheriff on their facebook page, www.facebook.com/WascoCountySheriff.

Two contract hand crews, an ODF crew, engines and overhead from Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, BLM Prineville, Wasco County Sheriff's Office, Oregon State Police, and Oregon Department of Transportation were involved in suppression of the fire and ensuring public safety. Fire departments across the Columbia Gorge also provided resources to the fire fighting effort, working to protect their community. These departments include Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue, Dufur, Mosier, Dallesport, Hood River, Cascade Locks, Westside, Wy'East and Parkdale.

The cause of the fire is under investigation at this time.

Regulated-Use Closure is in effect for the Oregon Department of Forestry. Mowing of dried grass and chainsaw use is restricted between the hours of 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. Additional restrictions can be found at www.odfcentraloregon.com.



A Fire Boss fixed wing aircraft, above, drops water on the "Milepost 78 fire" near Mayer State Park and Rowena. A helicopter, loaned from the S-503 Fire on the Warm Springs Reservation, at left, also responded to the fire, which was contained to only seven acres, despite 10-foot flames torching at the fires leading edge when crews first arrived. Top photo courtesy Oregon Department of Forestry Photo. Photo at left by Chelsea Marr.

Animal shelter thanks community following fire evacuation

By Alana Lackner
Columbia Gorge News

THE DALLES — The Home At Last Humane Society released a statement June 17 thanking everyone who helped them evacuate the shelter in The Dalles following a June 1 fire threat.

Stephen Drynan, executive director of Home At Last's parent organization Central Oregon Animal Friends, said Shelter Manager Brittany Hopkins did a great job getting everything in place and planning the evacuation despite the high-pressure situation.

Drynan said most of the evacuation was spur of the



The Home at Last animal shelter, in background, was recently evacuated as grass and brush burned just to the west.

Mark B. Gibson photo

moment because though Home At Last has dealt with fires before, they have never reached the shelter before.

"This time it actually reached the edge of the property," he said.

Drynan said there was a police officer on site who was

spraying down the shelter and the trailer Drynan stays in when he visits. There were also many firefighters keeping the fire at bay, and Drynan said he believes that if it were not for them, things could've been a lot worse.

The officer and firefighters

were just some of many community members to help ensure the shelter, and all of its occupants, were safe.

Drynan said the outpour of support from the community was incredible.

"We had people coming from both directions," he said. "The people doing the roadblocks were stopping after awhile because there was too many people coming in ... Our parking lot was full."

Drynan said it did end up being a challenge to evacuate the animals. A community member had arranged for Cascade Pet Camp in Hood River to house the animals, but then the freeway was shut down.

Luckily, he said, community member Lana Atkins runs a business called Lana's Kennels and was able to take in all of the dogs and cats. There were about 30 animals, he said, around 20 dogs and 10 cats.

Central Oregon Animal Friends is also the parent organization to the Three Rivers Humane Society in Madras. Three Rivers is significantly larger than Home At Last, which would cause additional complications if they needed to evacuate.

"That'd have been another story if it had happened [in Madras]," Drynan said. "On average, we have about 75 pets down here."

Fire season remains a potential problem for both shelters, especially with the summer being as hot and dry as it is predicted to be, which is why it's important to have evacuation plans for both humans and animals, Drynan said.

There is an evacuation plan for Three Rivers, despite the large number of animals, he said. They have some local fosters who will be able to help, and he also suspects there would be more support from the community.

"Once the word comes out I guarantee (people wanting to help) will come out of the woodwork," he said. "They always do."

RECYCLING Realities discussed

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rethink recycling.

"My first reflex was, it's like we've been lied to for so long about this amazing thing called recycling, (and then) to find out that we're polluting the backyards of our neighbors, polluting the backyards of other countries — we were just being completely irresponsible with the residuals of our lives ...

"One of the biggest messages that I'm trying to get out there at this point is that if you walk into a store and you are shopping but you're not looking at the packaging to make sure that it's made out of recycled content, then you are part of the problem," she said. "... We're a wasteful society and we like things easy

and we like things fast ... And then with COVID, there was a major problem with that because ow we need single use plastics because they're sterile and it's compounded the problem."

Irving has a biology background and was previously in wastewater compliance. She also knows what it's like to have to choose a product based on financial constraints.

"I know what it's like to choose between Styrofoam or a paper plate," she said. "Styrofoam is a lot cheaper so those of us who want to make a bigger environmental impact are not able to due to the social model that we're at, the pay scale that we're at."

Tucker described her business, which she started in 2017 to support Skamania, Klickitat, Sherman, Wasco and Hood River counties in waste reduction efforts.

"Our mission is to change the way you think about

waste to create efficient, sustainable systems to as a pathway to zero waste — reducing, reusing and lastly, recycling," she said.

Her goal is to educate people regarding the "triple bottom line": People, profit and planet.

"Instead of one bottom line, there should be three," she said. "... This is the big one for me. You cannot make a healthy product without healthy people, and you can't have healthy people without a healthy planet. You have to have a healthy planet and house healthy people and then have happy people to make a profit. That's kind of the big eye opener for me when I started this company."

Until the United States runs out of places to put its garbage, then there will be a push to fill landfills, she said. "I've noticed one reason why you see a lot of zero waste innovations (in Europe) is they don't have land to put

garbage in, so they have to find a solution," she said.

She believes a school curriculum to educate children would be a start to creating more mindful consumers. "One of my dreams is to go into a school district and help them become a zero waste facility," she said.

All three said they believe legislation is necessary to make any headway with the problem of recycling.

"I'm more focused on the larger upstream issues, trying

to influence the designers of packaging," Skakel said. "And legislation is the thing I've really been focused on for nearly a decade."

Irving said she believes recycling needs to be brought to a local level "so we're not driving (our waste) halfway across the world to try to recycle something. I feel locally, we have a much better chance of being environmentally friendly ... I see a ton of opportunity in all of this chaos."

Tucker said she sees five things needing to happen in order for the U.S. to move away from landfills: Education; legislation; producer responsibility; corporations changing corporate culture; and technology.

"Focus on those five things together is going to make a sustainable, lasting change," she said.



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