

Fire hazard extreme in Mt. Hood Forest

Strong east winds and extremely high temperatures have combined to turn much of Mt. Hood National forest into a potential powder keg.

The fire hazard rating for the last few days has been extreme, although no fires have been reported in the last four days.

However, the forest is living on borrowed time, according to assistant fire management officer at the Zigzag Ranger Station Joe Rodrigues.

"At the present time it's tinder dry," he said. "We're not getting any recovery of moisture at night."

"All I can say is be darn careful with fire," Rodrigues added.

Despite 30-35 mile-an-hour winds from the Columbia Gorge and temperatures over 100 degrees, there have

been no closures of any parts of the forest, nor have there been any restriction on campfire building. Those decisions must come from the district supervisor's office in Portland.

The most hazardous area in the forest is the section along U.S. Highway 26 where the timber comes right down to the road, Rodrigues said. The Mud Creek area near Summit and the Wildcat area outside of Sandy are examples "of D-Day," or most extreme conditions.

Should a major fire break out, the U.S. Forest Service will be ready to pull out all stops to suppress the blaze, said fire management officer at Zigzag Ranger Station Roger Van Buskirk, in an interview earlier this month.

"The U.S. Government has an awesome amount of power they can put to work in

the fire suppression game," he said. "It is second only to the military."

"For instance, we could put 3,000 people in full operation on any given spot in the state of Oregon in 10 hours," Van Buskirk added. "By full operation I mean food, camp facilities, fire fighting equipment, the whole works."

To compound the problem, the Zigzag Ranger District has the highest number of public use-days in the Pacific Northwest, and it only takes one match to start a forest fire.

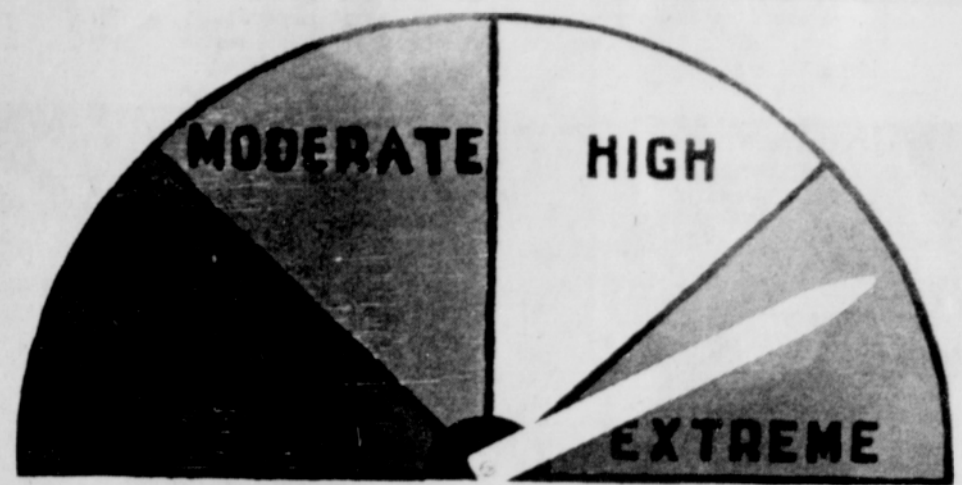
Forest officials and area residents have been lucky that no fires have broken out recently. Meanwhile, all that the Zigzag Ranger Station employees can do is hope that visitors use a little common sense; and pray for rain.



CAMPING NEAR bodies of water, including streams and rivers is prohibited in the Mt. Hood Wilderness Area. Damage to vegetation and water quality are proportionate to the number of campers near the streams,

according to U.S. Forest Service employee Terry Clark. Camping is also prohibited in wilderness area meadows.

Staff photo



KEEP OREGON GREEN Lower taxes face industry

Reynolds Metals Co., like most other industrial or commercial property, would realize a substantial property tax savings if a tax limitation measure is adopted.

Bruce Lawson, director of county assessment and taxation, released the figures Tuesday at a media briefing. He said his department is compiling information about 15-20 industrial properties to see how they would be affected by any tax lid.

Reynolds paid \$525,000 in property taxes in 1977, according to county figures. Under the proposed limitation — which roll the assessment back to the 1975 level and increase 2 percent every year after — the 1979 tax bill is estimated at \$375,000.

Pacific Northwest Bell, which paid \$7.4 million in property tax in 1977 on its utility properties (not including office buildings), would have tax amounting to \$3.8 million under the new system.

Opponents of the measure cite the fact that the burden of property tax would be

shifted from businesses to homeowners since houses are sold more frequently than commercial property. More frequent sales mean higher appraised values which mean higher property

taxes. The tax measure would limit any increase in assessed value to 2 percent a year unless the property is sold, changes ownership or is newly constructed.

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In wilderness area

Visitors disregard regulations

by MARK FLOYD
The Mt. Hood Wilderness Area was expanded threefold by Congress this May, and though U.S. Forest Service officials at the Zigzag Ranger Station are pleased with the enlargement, they have expressed concern over the public's disregard for wilderness area regulations.

"One of the biggest problems that we have is campers," trail maintenance supervisor Terry Clark said. "There is no camping in meadows or within 100 feet or any body of water in a wilderness area."

In some areas, such as Ramona Falls, overnights are asked to make camp 500 feet away from the water.

"The vegetation can't take it and the water quality can't take it," visitor information officer Jerry Paige said.

The problem caused by campers is not so much from litter, as from ordinary activities which many people may not realize is detrimental to the environment. Washing dishes and cleaning fish in a lake or stream are examples of activities which might harm water quality.

Campers also have been lining their fire pits with tin foil and leaving it

behind. Wild animals that chew on the foil sometimes cannot digest it and become ill or die.

Human waste is another problem. Forest Service employees are asking that campers dispose of human waste by digging a hole about five inches deep. "We're having lots of people leaving toilet paper around," Clark said.

The wilderness area is no place for man's best friend according to Clark.

"People should leave their dogs at home," he said. "According to Kirk Horn, (regional wildlife biologist) dogs are the number one predator of wild animals."

"There have also been times when I've had dogs literally not let me pass by on the trail until their owner came," Clark added.

Wilderness areas differ from the rest of the Mt. Hood National Forest in that man is viewed as a visitor and his mark is not to be seen. As a result, all motors and motorized equipment are prohibited as is the landing of aircraft or the dropping of any material from an aircraft, and the use of hang gliders.

The only access to the areas is on foot, by trails maintained by cross-cut saws.

"Using the cross-cut saws is king of a revival of the pioneer skills," Clark said, "but the primary idea is to preserve the wilderness."

Prohibiting motors is a good idea in theory, but it can cause problems when hikers incur injuries within the boundaries of the wilderness area.

"If you break a leg in a wilderness area, you'll have to be carried out to the boundary," Paige said. "There a vehicle can pick you up."

"If someone is about to die without help, then we might go in there, but the decision on how serious the situation is has to be made through the regional office," he added.

The current wilderness area was expanded to 47,100 acres under the Endangered American Wilderness Act. The original wilderness area was 14,800 acres known as the Mt. Hood Primitive Area, designated in 1931 by the chief of the U.S. Forest Service.

In 1940, the land was reduced by 640 acres and renamed the "wild area." Finally, in the early 1960s, the name was changed to the Mt. Hood Wilderness area and incorporated into the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Maps of the wilderness area are available at the Zigzag Ranger Station.

OBITUARY

Gordon Clausing

Gordon Earl Clausing, 47, SE 442 St., Sandy, died Friday. Clausing was born in Grant View, Wis. He moved to Portland when he was 8.

Clausing was a graduate of Benson High School. He was honorably discharged from the Navy in 1950. Clausing enlisted in the Army in 1954 and served until 1957.

On May 13, 1965, he married Gene Murphy in Portland. They moved to Sandy in 1977. Clausing was a member of the American Rifle Association and the Rose City Yacht Club. He was a licensed gunsmith.

Survivors include his widow; his mother, Violet Clausing of Portland; his brothers, Oliver of Boring, and Neal of Redlands; and his sisters, Grace Hurl, Ruby McCormick, Janet Hilderbrand, and Karen Pugh, all of Portland.

Private family funeral was 11 a.m. Wednesday at Carroll Funeral Home.

Contributions may be made in Clausing's name to the Heart Fund.

A week of thefts in Sandy

Reports from the Sandy Police Department:

A parked vehicle owned by Ralph Gowins was hit on July 31 by a 1965 Ford pickup, according to police. The pickup was driven by 16-year-old Brent Fullbright.

A 1976 Kawasaki motorcycle was stolen from a garage at the Gagner residence on Scenic Street. The theft occurred on Aug. 1 and police say the cycle has not been recovered.

A tenant at the University Square Apartments reported some gasoline stolen on Aug. 6. The police are still investigating the incident

although they have a juvenile suspect.

Sandy residents also registered three noise complaints and two dog complaints with city police. Three business alarms were sounded but none of them involved burglaries.

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