



Ted S. Warren/AP Photo

Colby Lyon, of the Central Region Strike Force Team II, calls out instructions to other firefighters as they back-burn forest fuel to protect structures while fighting the First Creek Fire, Tuesday near Chelan, Wash. Wildfires are putting such a strain on the nation's firefighting resources that authorities have activated the military and sought international help to beat back scores of blazes burning uncontrolled throughout the dry West.

Military, National Guard join Western firefighters

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS and TED S. WARREN
Associated Press

CHELAN, Wash. — Fire managers overwhelmed by massive wildfires blazing across the West are looking for help wherever they can find it and have called in 200 active-duty military troops to fight the flames.

It's the first time since 2006 that the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise has mobilized soldiers for fire-suppression.

National Guard troops set controlled burns outside Chelan to use up fuel as helicopters dropped water. More than 1,000 people worked to protect homes from the lightning-sparked blazes that began there last week, have burned more than 170 square miles and destroyed an estimated 75 buildings.

"Nationally, the system is pretty tapped," said Rob Allen, the deputy incident commander for the fires around the Cascade Mountain resort town of Chelan. "Everything is being used right now, so competition for resources is fierce."

The active-duty troops are all coming from the 17th Field Artillery Brigade at Joint Base

Lewis-McChord near Tacoma and will be sent to a fire north of Republic, a town in central Washington, about 30 miles south of the Canadian border.

Fire managers at the center are able to enlist military help when there are not enough civilian firefighting teams, thanks to a 1975 agreement between the Defense, Interior and Agriculture departments.

The help can be crucial in particularly active years like this one. In the last two weeks alone, more than 1,500 square miles have burned in the Lower 48 states, center spokesman Ken Frederick said.

"It's like the fire season gas pedal has been pushed to the floor in a really short period of time, and that's stressed our resources," Frederick said. "And that's got us relying on help from resources we don't normally use."

The fires in the Pacific Northwest get top priority when it comes to allocating pinched resources.

A lightning-sparked fire in Oregon's Malheur National Forest has grown to 67 square miles and destroyed 36 houses. An additional 500 structures are threatened by the flames near the community of John Day.

More homes destroyed in Oregon wildfire

The Associated Press

PORTLAND — The Grant County Sheriff's Office says 36 homes have been destroyed by an Eastern Oregon wildfire — 10 more than previously reported.

Gov. Kate Brown plans to meet Wednesday with victims of the fire near John Day and visit the command post where crews are overseeing the effort to contain the blaze that

has charred 67 square miles, mostly on the Malheur National Forest in Eastern Oregon.

The Oregonian reports that fire commanders told a community meeting at Grant Union High School that crews have concentrated on protecting a string of homes tucked in a small river canyon south of John Day. Shifting winds pushed the fire toward homes earlier thought safe.

Ilwaco dredging resumes

By KATIE WILSON
EO Media Group

ILWACO, Wash. — Critical dredging work on the federally managed Baker Bay channel at the Port of Ilwaco began Aug. 11 and continues through the rest of the month if the good weather holds.

But Port Manager Guy Glenn Jr., says more work will need to be done to ensure the channel functions effectively into the future. The channel leads from the Columbia River into the busy Ilwaco marina which houses the commercial and recreational fleets and two commercial fish processing plants. Keeping it clear and deep is crucial to Ilwaco's fishing community and the port's continued survival, say port leaders.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which maintains federal channels such as Baker Bay, dredged the channel for the first time in years last year as Coast Guard boats and larger fishing boats reported that they were scraping bottom in places along the channel. This year, once again, the ports of Ilwaco and Chinook were on the Corps' final project list, landing about \$2.4 million between the two of them for dredge work.

This spring, despite the recent dredging, Glenn said Baker Bay was already beginning to silt in again. The port hopes to land a commitment from the Corps to carry out a detailed sediment study of Baker Bay to figure out why it is filling in so quickly. In past decades, the

port had not needed dredging so regularly.

Such a study is likely several years out, Guy said, as investigations into alternatives for what the port does with the material it dredges from its marina each year. Though the channel is the Corps' responsibility (and far beyond what the port's own small dredge could handle), the marina is manageable. But, as the nearby on-land disposal site continues to fill up, Glenn said the port will be looking at other disposal options.

The Port of Willapa Harbor in Raymond has successfully implemented an in-water disposal method that redistributes dredged sediment back into the river systems. The Port of Ilwaco has discussed the possibility of using such a method in the marina in Ilwaco, too. In April, a coastal engineer with a private company, Coast and Harbor Engineering, said he had identified several areas where this method could be used, though a closer study of the area would be necessary before the port could proceed.

In the long term, the port also hopes to look into repairing or replacing deteriorating pile dikes along the Baker Bay channel. The poor state of the dikes could be factor in the port's ongoing issues with the channel.

Also, the port is looking at realigning the channel overall in coming years and is talking with the Corps, fishermen and others. This project is only a discussion right now and there are no timelines or immediate plans attached to it, yet, Glenn said.

School: Public hearing will continue Sept. 15

Continued from Page 1A

Having the charter would give parents the option of smaller classes and allow them to be more involved with their children's education, she noted.

But fifth-grade teacher John Meyer, representative of the district's teacher union, said the plan could create inequities among students and cost teachers jobs.

Questions answered

Cannon Beach Elementary was once the city's school, a source of pride and community connection, residents say. It was closed in 2013 for financial reasons and fears for student safety. The building, now shuttered, lies in the tsunami inundation zone.

In Hull's presentation to the board Tuesday, the academy addressed many of the concerns that led to previous denials.

He said the school now has a conditional use permit from the Cannon Beach Planning Commission allowing it to modify and occupy a ground-floor portion of the former Athletic Club at 171 Sunset Blvd.

In addition, the academy has since collected donations and created a balanced three-year budget.

Operational costs would

be covered by average daily membership funds, the amount a school receives per student from the state, and nonoperational money would be provided through donations, fundraisers and grant money, Hull said.

Teacher concerns

The academy would employ four classroom teachers, two instructional assistants and two full-time enrichment faculty, Hull said.

But teacher's union representative Meyer said the charter school could get the "cream of the crop" of students, with a prospect of smaller classes and more favorable student-teacher ratio because of its 85-student capacity.

"So the haves get more, and the have-nots walk into my classroom of 32 to 33 kids," he said. "Man, that's not a level playing field."

Meyer said he also wasn't happy about the school district potentially losing four teachers due to a decrease in students so the charter can exist.

The charter's teachers would be under a different contract and accountability system, Meyer said, and not part of a team.

Residents disputed Meyer's charge of elitism.

"We don't want a school there because we think we're better than anyone else,"

Cannon Beach resident Susan Neuwirth said. "We want a school because we live there."

Kevin Widener of Seaside said the discussion should be about "what is best for the kids."

The challenges

The obstacles for most charter schools in Oregon are finances and safety, said Jim Green, an attorney for the Seaside School District from the Oregon School Board Association.

Cannon Beach Academy is asking the district to trust it with kids and taxpayer money, Green added. "Your real interest in this is to ensure they are going to do good things for boys and girls in your community," he said.

Cannon Beach resident Mary Peterson expressed concern for children's safety with area traffic in the proposed location. The charter's temporary location sits near a U.S. Highway 101 exit. She said she grew up in a rural school and was happy to move to a larger one in high school where there were more opportunities.

Getting its schools out of the tsunami inundation zone has been a focus of the Seaside School District.

Hull noted the charter school's short-term facility is out of that zone, less than 200

yards away from an assembly area.

Hull, who helped open three charter schools in the state, addressed another "hot button topic" by stating the district could receive a net gain of about \$362,000 if it approves the academy. It would do so through methods including the collection of 20 percent of the charter's state ADM money and reducing its staff.

And Green said he would go over the budget with the academy's board before Seaside's next meeting.

If the school district says no for a third time, Cannon Beach Academy could again appeal to the State Board of Education.

The charter school aims to open in the fall 2016 and be in its temporary location for about three years before settling into a permanent building on the South Wind site, south of town and east of Highway 101.

Hull said they'd like to start hiring early next year if the district accepts the academy's proposal. It's already received inquiries from potential teachers.

Tuesday's meeting did run out of time for testimony with several still waiting to speak.

The public hearing will continue Sept. 15. The school board will then have 30 days to issue a decision.

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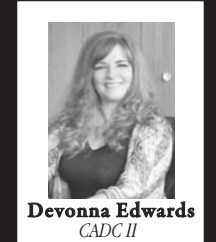


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