

Rail Fire nearly doused, restrictions eased in forests

By **GEORGE PLAGEN**
East Oregonian

Management of Eastern Oregon's largest wildfire, the Rail Fire, will transition back under local control at 6 a.m. Thursday.

The blaze, which has grown to 41,716 acres since it started July 31, is now 90 percent contained. Firefighters with the Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur national forests will continue mopping up the area while also burning slash, repairing roads and restoring fire lines to minimize erosion.

Some areas around the fire will remain closed for safety. Forest Road 16 remains closed south and east of the fire, along with Forest Road 2652 between roads 2640 and 13. The roads will reopen after hazard trees are removed and fire crews leave the scene.

Some smoke will continue to rise from the interior of the fire as daytime temperatures reach 80 degrees by later this weekend. How much smoke will depend on several factors including temperature, humidity and the amount of fuels still left to burn.

Meanwhile, other forests across northeast Oregon are easing up on their public restrictions as rain and cooler weather have lowered the fire danger.

Public use restrictions have dropped back down to Phase A on the Umatilla National Forest, meaning seasonal campfire restrictions are back in place and chainsaws will be allowed during approved hours.

Campfires are once again allowed in fire pits surrounded by dirt, rock or commercial rings located in areas that have been cleared of flammable vegetation within a 3-foot radius. Anyone tending a campfire must have a shovel or similar tool on hand, along with one gallon of water, and make sure the fire is completely extinguished before leaving. Seasonal restrictions will remain in effect through Oct. 31.

Chainsaws are allowed, but only between the hours of 8 p.m. and 1 p.m. Operators will need to have an ax, shovel and minimum

8-ounce fire extinguisher, and are required to watch for fires for one hour after finishing. The restrictions do not apply to people with commercial or personal use firewood permits, since those fall under a separate set of regulations.

Phase A restrictions also limit smoking to enclosed vehicles, buildings or cleared areas, and prohibit off-road vehicle travel on roads with standing grass or anything else that could catch on fire.

Public use restrictions are phased in and out collectively as fire conditions warrant, and may differ between forests. The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest remains in Phase B restrictions, which prohibits chainsaws and limits fires to approved campgrounds and recreation sites.

In addition, the Oregon Department of Forestry has lowered its restrictions from Phase 2 to Phase 1 for private land in the Northeast Oregon District, covering Umatilla, Union, Baker and Wallowa counties. However, the fire season remains in effect and Mitch Williams, wildland fire supervisor in La Grande, cautioned that conditions can still change rapidly.

"We're just at a point where we feel easing our fire restrictions is justified. However, there's still a need for caution when out enjoying the woods," Williams said.

Phase 1 regulations prohibit open fires, except at designated locations. Debris burning is also not allowed, except in burn barrels with a valid burning permit.

The same hours also apply to chainsaw use, as well as cutting, grinding or welding metal.

So far, there have been 65 human-caused fires that have burned 29,478 acres in the region, according to the Blue Mountain Inter-agency Dispatch Center. That compares to 54 lightning-sparked fires burning just 386 acres.

To report a fire, contact the BMIDC at 541-963-7171 or call 9-1-1.

Contact George Plagen at gplagen@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

Nonprofit to study irrigation upgrades on Catherine Creek

Goal to conserve water for fish

By **GEORGE PLAGEN**
East Oregonian

A Portland-based nonprofit organization is studying whether more efficient irrigation equipment could ultimately benefit salmon on upper Catherine Creek in the Grande Ronde Valley.

The Freshwater Trust was recently awarded \$114,265 from the Oregon Water Resources Department to come up with ways farms and ranches can conserve water in order to boost flows in stream for fish.

Ideas include lining leaky irrigation canals and converting neighboring farms and ranches from flood irrigation to sprinklers. Caylin Barter, flow restoration director for The Freshwater Trust, said those steps could add up to hundreds of millions of gallons of water savings every year.

"Nobody wants to see the creek go dry," Barter said. "That goes for agricultural producers, as well as the restoration organizations."

Catherine Creek, a 32-mile tributary of the



Photo contributed by The Freshwater Trust

The Freshwater Trust of Portland is looking into more efficient irrigation equipment to conserve water and boost flows in Catherine Creek, a tributary of the Grande Ronde River.

Grande Ronde River, is home to three species of threatened or endangered fish, including chinook salmon, steelhead and bull trout. It is one of the highest priorities for salmon and steelhead recovery in the Columbia Basin, in particular the nine-mile stretch from Catherine Creek State Park to the town of Union.

Farmers and ranchers also rely on the creek to grow crops and water their pastures, which has placed a strain on the resource. Barter said it wasn't long ago that fresh flowing water practically disappeared every summer out of the creek during irriga-

tion season.

The goal, Barter said, is to maintain at least 10 cubic feet per second of live flows in Catherine Creek through summer to aid fish. The Freshwater Trust has worked with some landowners to lease senior water rights and leave about 3 cfs of additional water in stream. Barter said irrigation upgrades could potentially add another 5 cfs or more, depending on how much they can accomplish.

"If (the upgrades) are cost-effective, it's a great way to increase flows while also increasing productivity for farmers," she said.

Funding for the study comes from the OWRD's Water Conservation, Reuse and Storage Grant Program. The Freshwater Trust will spend the next 18 months identifying current irrigation infrastructure in the area, and piecing together the greatest opportunity for upgrades, Barter said.

The Freshwater Trust isn't the only group involved in rehabilitating Catherine Creek. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation recently completed the fourth and final phase of a project to reconnect four miles of creek to its natural floodplain upstream of Union.

Improved habitat, along with more water in stream, should ensure the creek is suitable for future generations of fish, Barter said — especially as low snowpack and hotter summers create another layer of challenge and urgency.

"You've got a lot of different strains on the stream right now," she said. "We're looking forward to expanding our approach and discovering how modernizing some of the infrastructure here can further increase flows while improving agricultural productivity."

BOARDMAN

Hyder featured at annual quilt show

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
East Oregonian

Kathy Hyder laughs when she thinks back to the first time she made a quilt.

The Boardman woman knew a couple in Longview, Washington, who both had cancer and she wanted to give them something special. Hyder went to Millie Baker, a charter member of the Boardman Quilt Group. When Baker asked when she needed the quilt, Hyder responded, "A week or two."

"I didn't realize what all it involved," Hyder said with a laugh.

The seamstress now knows that spending months, if not years, on projects is the norm. Hyder often enjoys giving quilts to family members or friends for special occasions. She recently completed her first commissioned quilt.

After being asked several times to be the featured quilter during the Boardman Quilt Show, Hyder finally agreed. She is honored to step into the role a year removed from when the late Marge Shankle was featured.

Hyder said it was special to work with others in the group to complete a number of quilts that Shankle had



Photo contributed by Sandy Moroney

Kathy Hyder poses by her quilt that won the people's choice award during the 2015 Boardman Quilt Show. The Boardman woman is the featured quilter for this year's show, which is Oct. 7-8 at the Boardman Senior Center.

started. Also a charter member of the group, Shankle died unexpectedly in April.

"I've said no all the other years," Hyder said. "This year was different, it's special and an honor."

Hyder will share tips and examples of her creations during the Boardman Quilt Show. In its 12th year, the event is Friday, Oct. 7 and Saturday, Oct. 8 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Boardman

Senior Center, 100 Tatone St. Admission is \$3. In addition to the quilt displays, the event includes fabric and quilting supply vendors, hourly door prizes, raffle quilts and show awards. Lunch will be available for purchase.

Boardman Quilt Show welcomes all entries, including keepsake heirloom quilts, contemporary quilts, wall hangings and other quilted items. There is no fee to display quilts.

Entry forms must be pre-registered by Wednesday, Oct. 5. The quilts will be accepted Thursday, Oct. 6 from 3-5 p.m. at the Boardman Senior Center or up until 4:30 p.m. at Auntie Ida's Quilt Shop, 435 W. Hermiston Ave., Hermiston.

For more information or for a registration form, contact 541-481-9426 or tlkranch@centurytel.net. Forms can also be picked up at Auntie Ida's.

BRIEFLY

Pendleton runaways returned

PENDLETON — Two Pendleton middle-schoolers were back with their families Tuesday evening after running away the night before.

Zacchaeus Otto-Allen, 14, and Destiny Fletcher, 11, went missing sometime after 9:30 p.m. Monday.

Zacchaeus's mother, Cynthia Rickett, said one of her adopted sons found the boy at a trailer home on Southeast 10th Street, Pendleton, near the Umatilla River levee. She and her husband, Jerry Rickett, the boy's father, went there at about 5:30 p.m. and brought the boy home.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts reported a citizen found Destiny at 6:01 p.m. near the intersection of Southeast First Street and Isaac Avenue, and officers brought her home.

He also stated Pendleton police notified the Oregon Department of Human Services about the situation.

Class of 1966 to hold reunion

HERMISTON — The Hermiston High School Class of 1966 will hold its 50-year class reunion September 23 and 24. The fun begins both nights at 6 p.m. at Stet's Steakhouse (formerly Stetson's), 1619 N. First St.

Saturday's activities include a prime rib or

salmon dinner and live music by Brass Fire. Both nights feature an open bar.

Cost to attend is \$50 per person, and RSVPs are due by Friday, Sept. 16. Checks may be mailed to Danice McBee, 28420 Highway 730, Umatilla, OR 97882.

For more information, call Terry Williams at 253-381-2198.

Kiwanis hold harvest fundraiser

BOARDMAN — The Kiwanis Club of Boardman is hosting its annual harvest fundraiser. Funds raised help support the Kiwanis Club's services to children and families in the Boardman community, including high school scholarships, dictionaries for third graders, Key Club support, and annual functions such as the Easter egg hunt, Harvest Festival, Halloween party and Breakfast With Santa.

Local producers have donated Russet and red potatoes, yellow and dehydrated onions and raw fresh garlic for the fundraiser. Order forms are available from any Kiwanis member or by contacting Debbie Radie at 541-945-7001 or debbieradie@boardmanfoods.com

Deadline to order is Sept. 20 to ensure processing. Orders may be picked up Saturday, Oct. 1 from 9-11 a.m. at the SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman, during the Morrow County Harvest Festival.

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Stanfield's city council voted not to raise its fees for new development on Tuesday despite a report justifying charges more than twice as high.

The city commissioned a report by Anderson Perry & Associates to examine its methodology for setting system development charges. Cities commonly impose system development charges on new homes or businesses to help cover the cost of expanding infrastructure such as water lines to accommodate new development.

In Stanfield, developers have been paying \$5,399 per "equivalent residential unit." The report by Anderson Perry & Associates calculates a need of \$13,190 per unit. The city council, however, took the public works committee's recommendation to impose a rate of \$5,400.

"We didn't want to be the most expensive city in Eastern Oregon," City Manager Blair Larsen said. "Around here it would really stifle things."

He said in places where housing is in high demand and developers are making good profits, high system

development charges are a good thing that helps the city keep up with the demand for new water lines, wastewater treatment plants, roads and more. But councilors felt that in Stanfield it would only serve to discourage potential developers.

Despite keeping the cost the same, the city is changing how the money is used. Before, system development charges went only to water and wastewater upgrades. Now a percentage of the revenue is also earmarked for transportation improvements, and for residential development some money will also go toward park improvements.

When someone in Stanfield builds a new house and pays the \$5,400 system development charge, 12 percent of the fee will go toward paying off the city's debt service on its recent upgrades to its water system. Thirty-three percent of the fee will go toward reimbursing the city for recent upgrading its wastewater treatment system. Ten percent will go toward construction of new parks projects including sports fields, walking paths and playgrounds.

The remaining 45 percent will go toward projects

STANFIELD

Development fees untouched to promote growth

listed in the Transportation System Plan, including street upgrades, new multi-use trails, traffic signals, new roads and increased access to Highway 395.

Larsen said growth costs cities, and those that don't implement system development charges end up finding the money for infrastructure improvements through other

methods, such as higher taxes. He described the charges as "latecomer fees," which attempt to make sure that people who have been in the community a long time don't get stuck with a disproportionate part of the bill for upgrades caused by new development.

"We're not trying to stick it to anybody," he said.

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