

# Gains:

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crews were up to 28% containment and had conducted a successful burnout operation in the Elbow Creek area.

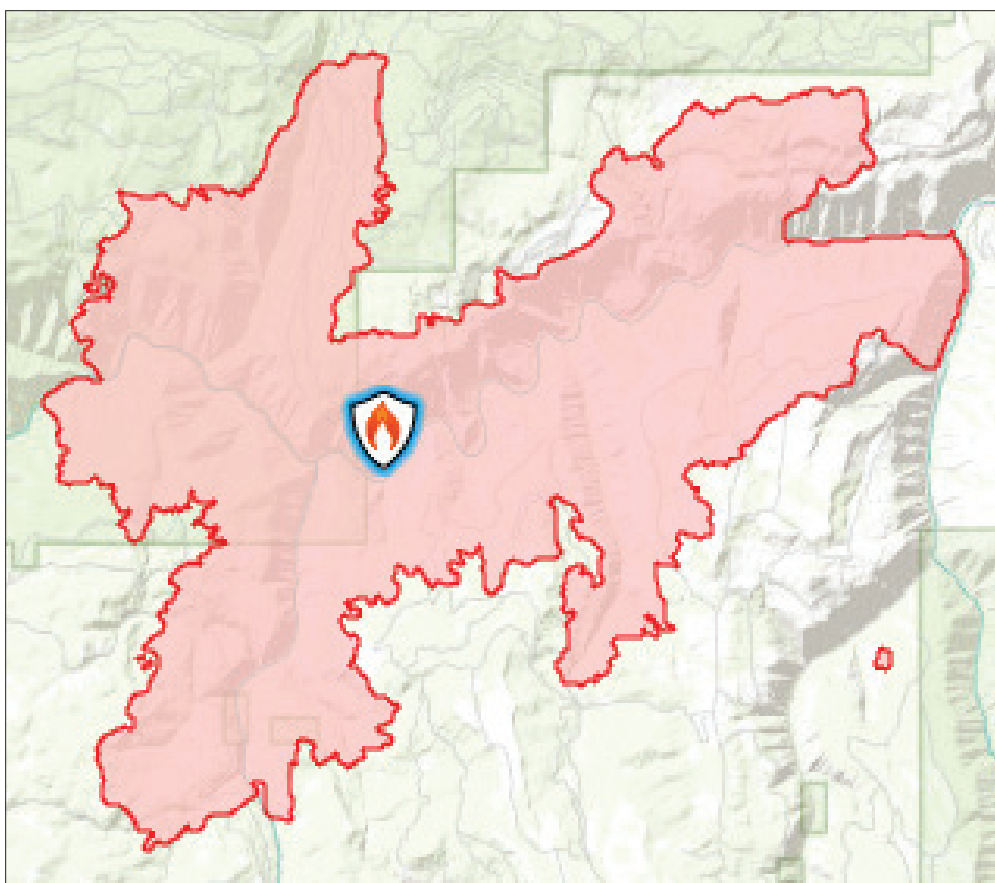
## Friday and Saturday

The fire saw decent growth of roughly 1,000 to 1,500 acres a day on both Friday and Saturday, and it reached 21,928 acres as of Saturday's report. Friday, it had been at 20,810. Containment of the fire was up to 25%.

"Night operations were successful," the team stated Saturday. "No substantial growth of the fire was observed. Overall, things are going well with no major concerns for (Saturday's) operations."

Crews worked to strengthen "Plan B" contingency lines, and performed small burnout operations to increase containment line security.

On Friday, Wallowa County Emergency Management lowered evacuation notices. Troy, which Thursday was lowered from Level 3 to Level 2, was dropped to Level 1 "Get Ready." Promise and Eden Bench, which were at Level 3, dropped to Level 2 "Get Set." And Flora, which Thursday had been dropped to Level 1,



Inciweb.com/Screenshot

The latest mapping of the Elbow Creek Fire has it at 22,790 acres and 38% contained as of Tuesday, July 27, 2021.

had that notice lifted.

## Thursday

Crews worked to contain the fire in drainages at Sickfoot and Grossman creeks and as it started to spread into Elbow Creek as the approached 20,000 acres, but by Thursday night, during a virtual community update Operations Section Chief Eric Perkins said

"things are looking good right now" in those areas that had given firefighters a challenge.

Perkins said that fire progression had been "pretty much stopped" in the area of Sickfoot Creek at the southern edge of the blaze.

Fire progression had also been slowed in the Grossman Creek area, and along the Grande Ronde River,

spread has been slowed, he said.

Incident Commander Link Smith said Thursday he was impressed with the size the fire has been held to.

"Most of this fire is in really good shape," he said, though at the time he cautioned that "we're not out of the woods yet. We're in a really tough spot here in Elbow Creek."



Pennie Rials/Contributed Photo

A hay barn owned by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife from which elk are fed.

# Spared:

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unbelievable," she said, adding the aerial attack was key. "Without them, I think everybody would have burned."

Farther upriver, Gary and Pennie Rials were ready to evacuate — and were in the Level 3 parameters — but elected to wait it out.

The couple's home along the Grande Ronde River is about 3 miles southwest of Troy and a few miles away from Wildcat Creek, the easternmost point of the fire.

"We're 5 miles from Wildcat Creek. It was coming down our way," Pennie Rials said. "It was getting kind of close. It turned and went the other way."

She said the couple would have evacuated if they had seen the fire getting closer.

"If it would have come over the hill here called Peacock ... if we would have seen flames, we were leaving," she said.

Rials said Gary was keeping their property wet throughout the duration in

case the fire did close in. "We have a ranch, so my husband has been keeping the water going the whole time," she said. "That is the only way we could have saved this place is keeping it wet."

With the fire now largely burning in the opposite direction of the Rials' home, the couple drove up Eden Bench to see the aftermath, and to inform residents who were not present that their homes — or, in some instances, vacation homes — had made it.

"I've been trying to keep people kind of alerted about what's going on," Rials said.

She, too, had high praise for the crews who fought the blaze.

"I couldn't believe up on Eden Bench the job those guys have done. It's unbelievable," she said Wednesday. "The firemen, they are still up there, and they have done a great job."

Both also credited Ron Kellermann, a Joseph resident who had been working in the area and who ran a dozer along Eden Bench, with helping spare homes.

"He was right on it," Shirley Hone said.

# Weer:

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are about 1,000 firefighters on the entire fire.

"And that's continuing to grow by the hour," he said.

Deedon said that with resources in Oregon becoming more scarce, aid is coming from other states. While in the Promise area Thursday, several trucks from Idaho passed by. He said there also are resources from Arizona and even a PIO from Louisiana.

## Contract firefighter

Another firefighter told how difficult the work is. Juan Mora, of Salem, has been battling blazes since 2000 and is now a contract firefighter. He arrived on the fire early Thursday and began checking out the situation.

"It's hard work. ... I like to check the whole ground I'm going to be working on first," Mora said from Sloan Point, a staging area for Division Whiskey. He said highly trained hotshot firefighters were down Grossman Creek.

"It looks like it's holding, but you never know with the winds you've had. It could pick up," he said. "You do put in work. It's not just a hike in the woods. We take it seriously. We work all year long on the forests. We plant, we thin, it's not just a hike in the woods. It's a lot of stuff like dry-mopping and harder stuff."

Dry-mopping, he said, is to use a pulaski to dig 2 feet of dirt to cover any burning

or flammable material.

"What you're doing is taking out the oxygen from the fire," he said.

## Bringing it home

But knowing the people here brings it home all the more.

"When the fire's in your own back yard, per se, I don't want to say it's more important — all fires are important — but I have a lot more ownership in it locally," Jeff Weer said. "There are people out here who have lost a family cabin and I'm friends with those folks, so that hits harder."

While proud of the efforts of her husband and other firefighters, wife Maria is still concerned for their safety.

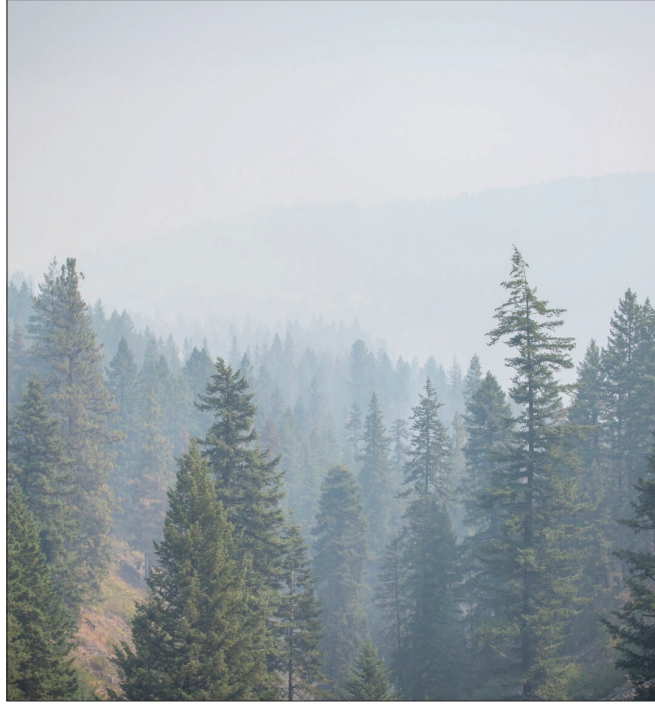
"I do worry about their safety, but I know that they train to be as safe as possible," she said.

She also emphasized the support offered by the community.

"We're thankful for the community support. People always reaching out to see if I need help with car-pools and the like," she said. "People are supportive of the firefighters, but they're also supportive of those of us at home."

Jeff Weer emphasized that firefighters in Wallowa County have a good relationship with their colleagues from elsewhere.

"We have a really good working relationship with our ODF (Oregon Department of Forestry) partners in Wallowa County," Jeff said. "We're kind of land-locked up here so we rely heavily on each other for mutual aid."



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Smoke clouds trees near the Bar B Ranch on Thursday, July 22, 2021 at the Elbow Creek Fire.

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Ann Bloom has brought her Food & Nutrition Programs to Alt Ed, After-School Programs and Summer Exploration. She also participates in community events such as Kidfest and Farmer's Market. Ann has volunteered to be a mentor and support BHF in a number of ways.

Thank you Ann, we are so lucky to have you!

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