

# BEYOND THE GROVE

Impactful news from Lane County and surrounding communities

## FIRE DOWN SOUTH

Crews in Douglas County battle vicious blazes in stifling heat

Smoke and haze in the Cottage Grove area in recent days are evidence of a battle raging in nearby Douglas County, as crews have fought blazes and hot, dry weather simultaneously in two separate fires.

Sunday's cooler weather with a smattering of rain helped firefighters progress in battling the Cable Crossing Fire, which started on Tuesday afternoon, July 28, along Highway 38 six miles east of Glide. On Saturday, fire crews met with concerned Glide area citizens to answer questions about the fire and their efforts.

On Monday morning, an update from the Oregon Department of Forestry stated that "firefighters on the Cable Crossing Fire took advantage of" Sunday's "break in hot, dry weather to gain ground on the fire." They say the fire is now completely trailed and estimated at 1,674 acres and 20 percent contained. As a precautionary measure, the level one evacuation notice remains in effect on Little River Road from the Peel Store to the Wolf Creek Trail Head and along Highway 138 in the vicinity of Evergreen Lane to Honeycut Road. Those seeking more information on evacuation notification levels and Ready, Set, Go can visit [www.wildlandfire.org](http://www.wildlandfire.org).

"Crew bosses are hopeful they took the fight out of the fire," said Incident Commander Link Smith. "We're confident we'll continue to make great strides toward containing the fire."

Smith said the optimism is not without its precaution, however. Crews plan to be flexible today as the weather shifts to warmer tem-

peratures and dryer conditions. Temperatures may reach the 90s and there is a chance of thunderstorms.

Mindful of this cautionary note, firefighters paused during the morning briefing to honor fallen comrade David Ruhl, who was recently killed in a wildfire in Northern California.

The fire area and forest roads remain closed to the public. Highway 138 remains open with the aid of a pilot car.

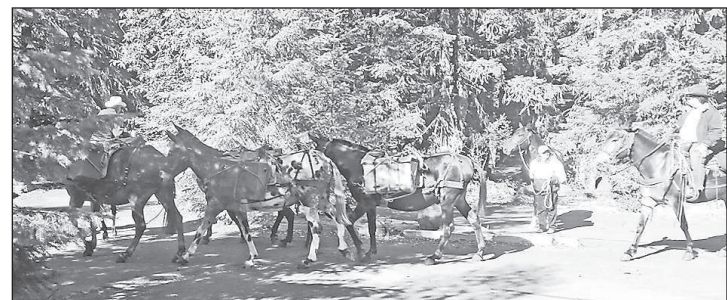
Meanwhile, the 15,000-acre Stouts Fire continues to burn east of Canyonville, though more favorable weather has again aided the firefighters' cause, according to recent updates. Residents along Upper Cow Creek Road were allowed back into their homes on Sunday, though many residents are being cautioned to remain ready to evacuate.

On Monday, an ODF update stated that build additional fire line, prepare contingency lines, and assess the areas around structures that need clearing and starting work to help protect them if the fire moves that way. The fire grew slightly but remains just over 15,000 acres, and is estimated at 5% containment. About 1400 firefighters continue fighting the Stouts Fire around the clock. Over 160 community members turned out to Sunday night's meeting at the Milo fire hall. The fire is burning approximately 1/3 on private land, 1/3 on Bureau of Land Management land, and 1/3 on National Forest land.

The causes of both fires remain under investigation.



Helicopters have been enlisted in efforts to fight the Cable Crossing Fire, which started July 28 about six miles east of Glide along Highway 138.



Members of the Territorial Riders chapter of Backcountry Horsemen of Oregon head up the trail on Mt. Hood with a load of trout that were released in Shellrock Lake.

## Horsemen help ODFW release high lakes trout

Every two years the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife goes to the air to release more than 350,000 fingerling trout into more than 500 lakes throughout the Oregon Cascades mountain range.

This summer, ODFW added a low-tech twist to its high lakes trout stocking program: horses and mules.

Every two years, ODFW stocks the high lakes with fish, mostly from helicopters because they are fast, cover a lot of ground and can carry a big payload.

This year, in addition to helicopter stocking, two Northwest Oregon high lakes were stocked with fish carried in on horses and mules provided by the Territorial Riders Chapter of Backcountry Horsemen of Oregon.

On July 11, the volunteer riders delivered 200 "legal-sized" eight-inch trout to in Shellrock Lake, located in the in the High Rock Lakes area 38 miles southeast of Portland. A month earlier, the horsemen helped Walczak deliver 1,200 trout fingerlings to Cast Lake near Government Camp on Mt. Hood.

"Having dedicated volunteers who generously donate their time and resources made this project a success," said Ben Walczak, ODFW fish biologist.

ODFW has used horses to stock high lakes for decades but gradually turned away from that practice in favor of helicopters because of their ability to cover so much more ground.

Still, horses have advantages over helicopters, including on-the-ground reports of lake conditions, high survival rates of fish stocked, and the ability to stock larger fish, according to Walczak.

"We can't stock legal fish from a helicopter," he said.

Helicopter time is also extremely expensive, which is

why ODFW uses them to stock high lakes only during odd-numbered years.

The horsemen helped ODFW staff load 40 trout into plastic bags filled with oxygen-enriched water and ice into paniers onto five mules for the 30-minute walk from the loading area into Shellrock Lake. Walczak said fish loaded this way in cool, oxygenated water will probably survive for up to two hours. Only three fish died on the ride into Shellrock Lake.

Walczak said that based on this year's successful release, he is looking to expand the horse-stocking operation to as many as six or eight release sites next year. Not every location is a good candidate. Horse-stocking release sites need to be within two hours ride over a horse-compatible trail.

"This gives us some more options as far as releasing trout and creating additional fishing opportunity in the high lakes during those years when we can't afford to use helicopters," Walczak said, noting that ultimately the success of the project depends on the participation of volunteer horsemen.

There is a lot of interest in fishing Oregon's high mountain lakes, especially this year when many other locations have been impacted by drought conditions. Oregon's high lakes consistently get top ratings in ODFW angler surveys. ODFW encourages anglers to consider the high lakes in their summer fishing plans.

"Fishing Oregon's high lakes can be a really good experience," said Mike Gauvin, manager of ODFW's Recreational Fisheries Management Program. "The crowds are usually smaller, you don't have competing activities, and it's generally more relaxing, not to mention some exceptional scenery."

## Grant funds solar install for Creswell food pantry

### Concerning Creswell

News and notes from our neighbor to the north

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The efforts of a food pantry in Creswell were supercharged last week with the flip of a switch.

Community Food for Creswell, which operates in that city's Cobalt Building on the north end of town, recently utilized funding from a 2014 Green Power Grant from the Emerald Peoples Utilities District (EPUD) to install a 13.2 kilowatt solar power system on its roof. The organization's Susan Blachnik said the new system, which Blachnik started herself by flipping a switch outside the Cobalt Building on Thursday, should reduce the energy costs the pantry pays by 50 percent, saving the pantry about \$1200 per year, an amount equal to 10 percent of its annual budget.

Blachnik said the savings will come at a crucial time for the pantry.

"We've been using up our savings for about a year," she said. "It's important that we decrease our expenses, and there aren't many grants available to reduce operating expenses."

Blachnik said the process of applying for and utilizing the grant funding has been quite complicated, as the City of Creswell



photo by Jon Stinnett

Flanked by EPUD representatives, Community Food for Creswell's Susan Blachnik flips the switch to engage the solar energy system at the Cobalt Building.

owns the Cobalt Building and its name appears on its utility bill. The changes are part of a broader restructuring there, however, as the lease has just been renewed from a five-year lease with a five-year extension option to a 10-year lease with a five-year option.

"It's got us covered until at least 2030, and that's a very big deal for us," she said. "It makes us a lot more stable."

Community Food for Creswell serves an average of 169 households with a food box, Blachnik said, while numbers have been increasing in the last three months. July was especially hard on the pantry's clients in July, she said, because the month had five

weeks as opposed to four and clients' SNAP benefits typically run out about three weeks into any given month.

Top brass from EPUD were on hand for the ceremony, including General Manager Scott Coe, Energy Services Coordinator Rob Currier and many others.

"We're tickled pink that the food bank was awarded the grant," Coe said. "A lower bill lets them spend more money to serve clients."

Coe pointed out that participants in EPUD's Green Power program support the grant program entirely by paying an extra fee on their monthly utility bills.



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