Grass fire burns 182 acres near Halfway

By Jayson Jacoby
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A BLM official is investigating the cause of a fire that burned about 182 acres of grassland Tuesday afternoon in eastern Baker County.

Al Crouch of the Vale District said the fire was reported late Tuesday morning about a quarter-mile east of the Sag Road.

That road leads south from Highway 86 near Halfway and ends at the Powder River arm of the Brownlee Reservoir.

Crouch said an engine crew from the Forest Service office at Pine, near Halfway, was the first to arrive at the fire.

Other engines, along with a BLM helicopter, stopped the fire's spread relatively quickly, Crouch said.

"Fortunately for us the wind wasn't that strong yesterday," he said. "The fire did make a pretty good run to the northeast when a breeze from the southwest came up. It showed how fast a fire can spread in the wind."

The blaze didn't threaten any structures, Crouch said.

ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE STATE CAPITOL

Legislature resists subpoenas in harassment investigation

By Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature is fighting attempts by the state's labor commissioner to subpoena documents as he pursues senior lawmakers for allegedly permitting a sexually hostile environment in the Capitol.

The Legislature is committed to transparency, but the documents contain confidential information about people who came forward in harassment complaints and asked to remain anonymous, a lawyer whose firm is representing the Legislature said in a letter.

A copy of the letter, sent on Friday to members and staff of the Legislature by Edwin Harnden of the Barran Liebman law firm of Portland, was obtained by The Associated Press.

"The Legislature will protect the privacy of those individuals who disclosed personal information relating to harassment issues in the Capitol," Harnden wrote.

On Aug. 1, Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian filed a complaint with his own department accusing Senate President Peter Courtney and House Speaker Tina Kotek, both fellow Democrats, of allowing a sexually hostile environment and of being slow to protect women from Republican Sen. Jeff Kruse. Kruse resigned earlier this year as the #MeToo movement against sexual misconduct swept politics, entertainment and other industries.

Kotek and Courtney have said they acted quickly when complaints emerged about Kruse, who an independent investigation determined had harassed women in the Capitol with prolonged hugging, groping and other unwelcome physical contact.

"The 'MeToo' movement has woken everybody up that this is not OK behavior," Kotek told reporters on Aug. 2 in response to Avakian's complaint. She said if it leads to an investigation that helps create a better atmosphere in the Capitol and better outcomes for victims, that she is open to it.

The complaint from Avakian, whose term ends at the end of the year, came as a surprise, and after Kotek and Courtney had already asked the Oregon Law Commission to review policies on harassment and recommend ways to improve them by year's end.

Since the #MeToo movement caught fire, about half of all state legislatures in America have changed their sexual harassment policies, most often by boosting their own training, according to a 50-state analysis by The Associated Press.

CRASH

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Their reports have been forwarded to District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff for further review.

COUNCILOR

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According to a case report by Bend Police, officer Childers was driving his patrol vehicle Friday morning near City Hall when he noticed Boozell riding his bicycle.

"As I approached, I advised Boozell he had a warrant for his arrest and asked him to step off his bicycle," Childers wrote in a case report. "Boozell said, 'Nope' and something about being late for a meeting."

According to Childers, Boozell attempted to ride away but Childers caught up to him on foot.

"I grabbed Boozell by the arm and used my body weight to push him to the left. By doing so Boozell lost his balance (and) fell off the left side of his bicycle."

The fall to the ground caused several "small abrasions" on Boozell's legs, but he declined medical treatment, according to court documents.

Boozell reportedly told Childers he knew he had a warrant for his arrest for "the same case he had been fighting for years."

"I asked Boozell why he ran from me," Childers wrote. "Boozell said he ran because he was in the middle of election preparations and he knew he would be going to jail for three months."

County jail inmates are allowed to vote in Oregon, according to Deschutes County Clerk Nancy Blankenship.

But people housed under the authority of the Oregon Department of Corrections — aka state prisons — are not.

Ash declines to endorse end to sanctuary status

By Chris Collins
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The name of Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash is absent from a letter signed by 16 of Oregon's 36 county sheriffs supporting the repeal of the state's sanctuary law.

The letter was written by Clatsop County Sheriff Thomas J. Bergin. Bergin said he is urging repeal of the law, which forbids state agencies, including law enforcement, from using state resources or personnel to arrest people whose only crime is that of violating federal immigration law, because it "undermines respect for law in significant ways."

Ash

In a letter, Ash wrote that he supports sending Ballot Measure 105 to the voters.

"I did not sign Sheriff Bergin's letter in support of the measure because I didn't agree with using the Mollie Tibbetts family's personal tragedy for political purposes, especially without knowing how they felt about it," Ash wrote.

Bergin pointed to the July death of 21-year-old Iowa college student Mollie Tibbetts as an example of "the violence and heartbreak illegal-immigrant criminals can visit on Americans and their families."

Police have arrested a 24-year old Mexican national who police say was in the country illegally on a charge of first-degree murder in connection with Tibbetts' death.

Ash wrote in his letter that whether the state's sanctuary law is kept or repealed "it will not affect the way we do business at the Baker County Sheriff's Office."

"One of the reasons the law was passed 30 years ago was to prevent racial profiling. I have zero tolerance for racial profiling, and my office will not engage in it whether or not Measure 105 passes."

The current law allows local law enforcement agencies to notify U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) if someone in custody at the jail also is suspected of immigration violations, Ash stated.

"It's legal (even wit the current law), and it's our policy," he wrote. "I am a simple person, and I don't have much use for politics. Baker County is generally a safe and peaceful place to live, work, raise families, and recreate.

"Whether the voters choose to pass Measure 105 or keep the current law in place, we will continue to put those who threaten public safety behind bars while serving and protecting our community with courage, fairness, honest, and integrity," he wrote.

Sheriffs in these counties signed Bergin's letter: Gilliam, Harney, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Malheur, Douglas, Curry, Coos, Klamath, Union, Grant, Wheeler, Lake and Deschutes.

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