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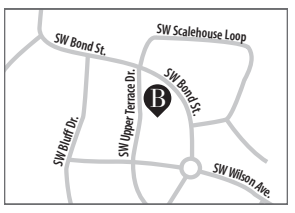

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LOCAL, STATE & REGION

LAKE COUNTY

Fire quadruples in size, topping 86,000 acres

BY JAIMIE DING
The Oregonian

A wildfire spreading rapidly in the Fremont-Winema National Forest has more than quadrupled its size in two days.

The Cougar Peak Fire was discovered Tuesday afternoon about 15 miles northwest of Lakeview, a rural south-central Oregon town and the Lake County seat. The blaze grew to about 20,000 acres by Wednesday night, according to the U.S. Forest Service's Lakeview Ranger District.

Then, by Friday morning, it had grown to 83,339 acres.

The fire had burned over 86,000 acres as of Sunday and was completely uncontained, and its cause is under investigation.

Swaths of the county — from the national forest in the west to U.S. Highway 395 in the east — remain under Level 3 "go now" evacuation orders. And an American Red Cross evacuation center was established Thursday night at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints along Highway 395 north of the Lakeview town center, the Lake County Sheriff's Office said.

The fire is growing faster than anticipated, making it difficult to update evacuation levels, the sheriff's office said. Eight structures have been threatened, but none has been destroyed, according to the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center.

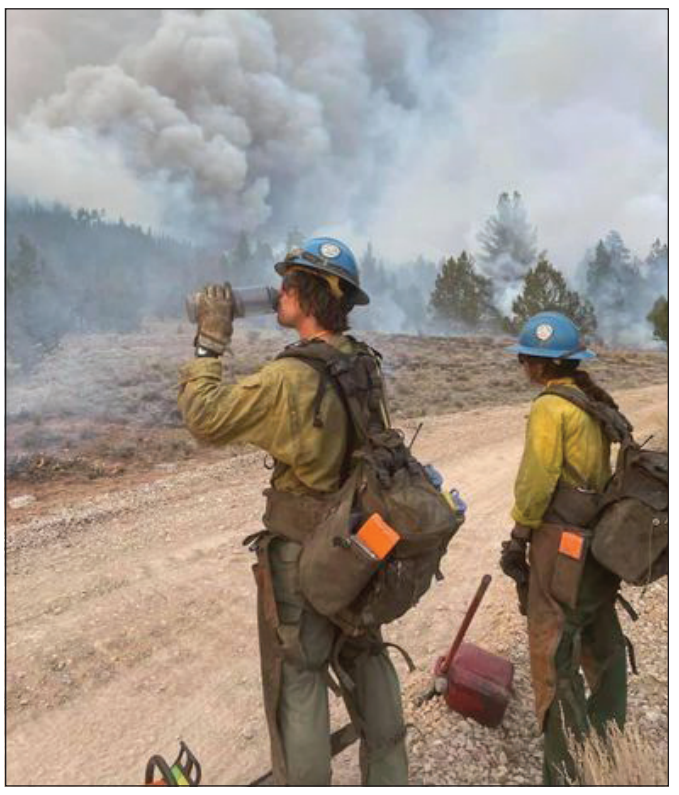
Law enforcement officials are going door-to-door in affected areas and sending messages using OR-Alert. The sheriff's office asks residents to keep watch for updates and law enforcement officers.

Gov. Kate Brown invoked the Emergency Conflagration Act on Wednesday, putting the State Fire Marshal in charge of battling the fire. And after "significant fire activity" Thursday, early rain was projected to improve firefighting conditions Friday, fire officials said.

The fire area received a quarter-inch of rain — a total Jim Hampton, a fire behavior analyst, said is enough to end the wildfire season during some years.

But this is not a "typical season," Hampton said: Fuel moistures have been at or near record lows as the area enters its second year of drought.

Hampton said the coming week's sunny weather will bring renewed risk of dry fuels like branch wood and conifer needles catching fire.



InciWeb/Cougar Peak Fire

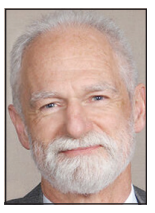
The Prineville Interagency Hotshots firefighting crew works on the Cougar Peak Fire on Wednesday.

Researcher has theories on what's happening with cattle mutilations

BY SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

In the wake of recent cattle mutilations across the West, ranchers are asking who — or what — is responsible.

According to FBI records, thousands of killings and apparent mutilations of cattle have happened since the 1970s. In each case, a cow or bull is found dead with body parts such as eyes, tongues and genitals missing.



Nation

Ranchers and detectives have speculated widely about what's happening, theorizing aliens, cult members, pranksters or even the CIA could be responsible.

The Capital Press sat down for a Q&A with retired, award-winning Canadian veterinary pathologist Nick Nation, who has researched the issue and has a theory.

In Alberta, Nation has analyzed the carcasses of mutilated cattle and, more recently, dismembered house cats. In both cases, he's come to the same conclusion: scavenger animals, primarily coyotes, are responsible.

Q: You started researching the issue of cattle mutilation in the 1980s. At the time, you came to the conclusion that scavengers were responsible for body part removal. Do you still believe that?

A: Yes. I'm still convinced coyotes and occasionally some other species, you know, birds, skunks, even mice, will do damage to these carcasses. It's the bizarre nature of the appearance of the animal that gets people concerned that there may be some nefarious activity going on.

Q: Wouldn't coyotes leave obvious bite marks? We hear from ranchers and detectives that the wounds usually look clean-cut.

A: That's common in coyote predation, and it's also a feature on the cats we've done a study on. The one thing that makes people think they're dealing with malicious intent is that they think they've got a surgical-like or even laser-like cut. What we've found in predations known to be from coyotes scavenging a carcass is they'll bite and then pull back, leaving what appears to be a straight-line cut. There are also little bite marks, but you have to look closely for them.

Q: How do you know the cases you've studied have definitely been coyotes?

A: The incidents were captured on video camera, or we used eyewitness accounts where the owner saw coyotes mutilating the animals.

Q: So why is it farmers often don't find footprints? Shouldn't there be coyote tracks?

A: That's fair game, a fair comment. My experience is that you seldom get a person bringing in an animal in wintertime saying it was mutilated. And the reason is that the paw prints are right there in the snow, so (farmers) know what happened then. In the summer, paw prints aren't as easy to spot.

STATE & REGIONAL BRIEFING

Asian giant hornet nest destroyed in Washington

Officials say they've destroyed a second nest of Asian giant hornets found in northwestern Washington state this year and are preparing to take down a third.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture said in a Facebook post that a team eradicated the nest Saturday in northern Whatcom County, near the town of Blaine along the Canadian border.

It said a third nest this season has been located and that planning is underway to eradicate it.

The nests have been within a few miles of each other. The first nest this year was destroyed in August. The hornets were first detected in the U.S. in 2019 in Whatcom County.

Asian giant hornets are an invasive pest not native to the U.S. They are the world's largest hornet at 2 inches long, and a predator of other insects, including honey bees that pollinate many of the crops in Washington's agriculture industry. While not particularly aggressive toward humans, their sting is extremely painful and repeated stings, though rare, can kill. They're sometimes called murder hornets because they prey on other bees.

Mask opponents return to school despite court order

Protesters returned to the grounds of Skyview High School in Vancouver, Washington, on Friday, fueled both by recent anti-mask demonstrations and a judge's attempts to quash them. At the school, protesters stood with far-right figures such as Joey Gibson, founder of Patriot Prayer, a group that has attracted racist and violent followers, and Tusitala "Tiny" Toese. The crowd grew to around 40 people between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Some in the crowd held signs opposing mask mandates in Washington schools. Others, including Gibson, said this particular protest stemmed from the recent court order.

On Tuesday, Clark County Superior Court Judge Suzan Clark ordered an injunction to prevent rallies and protests "that disrupt education services." The order was a response to recent, vitriolic anti-mask protests near Skyview, including a Sept. 3 protest that included members of the Proud Boys and culminated with administrators placing three campuses into lockdown. According to the order, such protests can no longer occur within a mile of any property owned by Vancouver Public Schools. The district owns roughly 40 properties in the county.

California man presumed dead after jumping cove

A California man who attempted to jump across a wide cove of frothing water at Cape Perpetua Scenic Area on Thursday is presumed dead, according to state police.

Steve Allen, 67, of Walnut Creek, California, apparently tried to hurdle Devil's Churn, a narrow boiling inlet just off Highway 101 south of Yachats on the central Oregon coast.

Devil's Churn, a popular stopping point at Cape Perpetua, is a somewhat narrow slice in the coastal basalt rock known for boiling water that kicks up large sprays of waves.

Allen was last observed by rescue agencies unresponsive prior to losing sight of him, officials said. The U. S. Coast Guard and other responding agencies suspended their search.

— Bulletin wire reports

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