

BURN

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But those fires, while spreading wide, were of low intensity. They burned up grass, downed limbs and dead trees, but large healthy trees were strong enough to survive. The fires therefore kept it a healthy ecosystem, restoring nutrients while cleaning out fuels.

In the last fifty years, Beverlin said this is the first time fire burned the average amount of acreage that burned up in the forest before human intervention.

"If you look at how active we've been the last couple years, I'm not sure we could go at it any harder," said Beverlin, pointing out prescribed thinning projects on a map in his office.

Bob Vidourek, a retired U.S. Bureau of Land Management forester in John Day, lives on Little Canyon Mountain, a few miles south of John Day and just east of Canyon City.

Before he retired 7 years ago, Vidourek guided a series of projects that resulted in most of the 2,500 acres of BLM land on the mountain being cleaned up.

That included the thinning of forest stands, the cleaning up of a significant amount of slash from the forest floor and timber salvage sales. The projects occurred from 2003-2007.

One of the projects was a 10-year BLM stewardship contract that was purchased by a local company that hired a lot of sub-contractors to do the work.

Because of the work that was done, when the Canyon Creek Complex fire came roaring toward his property, which was placed under a Level 3 "leave immediately" evacuation order, Vidourek, whose home abuts the BLM land, says he was never really worried.

"I knew if it got into that stand, it wouldn't burn too hot," he says.

The fire did burn some of the BLM land as it roared up the south side of the mountain, but it slowed considerably after it reached the northern part of the mountain and left most of the BLM land unscathed or lightly burned.

It stopped about 1,000 feet above Vidourek's property.

"It killed everything on the other side of the mountain. I'm confident the work we did slowed the

fire down ... and probably saved some of these houses," he says, pointing in the direction of eight other homes near his.

Grant County rancher Alec Oliver says the fire barely touched a pasture his cattle lightly grazed this spring.

"I was surprised at the difference between the area where we grazed earlier this year compared with the area across the fence that hadn't been grazed in a year," he says.

What angers a lot of locals, Oliver says, is the lawsuits that have stopped a lot of proposed forest management work resulted in the damage caused by the Canyon Creek Complex fire.

Traylor, Voigt and Vidourek don't lay the blame on the Forest Service. Rather, they blame environmental groups that have sued to stop proposed thinning, slash clearing or logging projects.

"It's not the Forest Service; it's the environmental groups that have them handcuffed," Vidourek says.

Traylor says based on past promises that never materialized, he doubts forest management practices in the Malheur National Forest

will change much, despite the severity of this fire.

"They're going to tell us they'll do something but the truth is they won't do anything that amounts to anything," he says. "They are not listening to us."

Robertson said he too understands the danger of living too close to an unhealthy forest, just crossing your fingers until it lights. And he said that more thinning projects may make sense in urban/forest interfaces, which accounts for much of rural Grant County.

But he said there are different definitions of reasonable forest management, and groups like his disagree with others on how best to create a healthy forests.

"Some projects call them thinning projects, but they look more like clearcuts," he said.

Robertson said the fire has refocused the organization's efforts on making a forest "more resistant" to devastating blazes.

"Fires like these are tragic, and we have to do what we can to stop them from being so powerful," he said.

Beverlin said the Forest Service is willing to do what it can, but can't make

everyone happy.

The Forest Service fields complaints across the board. Often, people complain about logging projects too close to roads or homes, saying it is loud work and ruins their view. Beverlin said people also complain about smoke in the air when crews try to do prescribed burns in spring and fall, when they can keep control over them and use them to clean out downed fuels. He gets complaints from some groups when they take a more active role, complaints from others when they are more hands-off.

Beverlin said he will continue to work with the public to try to find the right amount of management, the right amount of logging, the right amount of firefighting, the right amount of letting nature do its thing.

"We know what a healthy forest looks like," he said. "We want to get it to the place where fire helps our forest, doesn't hurt it."

FIRE

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Dry Gulch Fire

Northwest of Richland, Oregon.

Size: 17,536 acres
Containment: 20%
Personnel: 274

Weather forecast: Close to a quarter inch of rain fell on the Dry Gulch Fire Monday, Sept. 14 calming fire behavior and slowing fire spread.

Grizzly Bear Complex

Located 20 miles southeast of Dayton, Wash., on the Umatilla National Forest, in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness and the Washington/Oregon border. The main incident command post is located in Elgin.

Size: 76,475 acres
Containment: 44%
Personnel: 331

Weather forecast: Cooler temperatures will start slowing any fire growth to low.

COPS & COURTS

Arrests and citations in the Blue Mountain Eagle are taken from the logs of law enforcement agencies. Every effort is made to report the court disposition of arrest cases.

Circuit Court

CANYON CITY – The Grant County Circuit Court reported the following fines and judgments:

- Kevin John Rapp, was found in contempt of court for not paying his monthly child support payments. He was sentenced to 18 months bench probation with specific terms to comply with Child Support Enforcement, and 20 days in jail, to be suspended if child support payments are paid each month of probation beginning Oct. 15.

- Norman Kelley Burnett, 64, pleaded guilty to attempt to commit fourth-degree assault. He was sentenced to bench probation for 12 months and 40 hours community service. He was fined \$200, and ordered to have no contact with the victim.

Grant County Sheriff

CANYON CITY – The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of Sept. 3-10:

- Concealed handgun licenses: 12
- Average inmates: 15
- Bookings: 8
- Releases: 9
- Arrests: 2
- Citations: 1
- Fingerprints: 15
- Civil papers: 20
- Warrants processed: 3
- Asst./welfare check: 2

Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 133 calls during the week of Sept. 7-13. Along with the various traffic warnings, trespassing, injured animals, noise complaints and juvenile complaints, these calls included:

- John Day Police:** Sept. 9: Domestic reported on Johnson Street in Prairie City; theft reported in the Country Spice area.

Sept. 11: Theft reported at the West Shell station; theft reported on Cottonwood Street in Mt. Vernon.

Sept. 12: Cited a John Day man for no brake lights on a trailer.

Sept. 13: Theft reported at two John Day businesses.

Grant County Sheriff:

Sept. 7: Report of a theft in the Marysville Road area.

Sept. 8: Trespassing reported in the Long Creek area.

Sept. 9: Harassment reported on Trafton Lane.

Sept. 10: Grass fire reported on Highway 26 east of Laycock Creek.

Sept. 12: Cited three people from Springfield – a woman for speeding and two men for minor-in-possession of marijuana.

Sept. 13: Shots fired on Highway 402.

John Day ambulance:

Sept. 8: Responded for an 84-year-old woman.

Sept. 10: Responded for a

64-year-old man with a leg injury; responded for an 86-year-old man.

Justice Court

CANYON CITY – The Grant County Justice Court reported the following fines and judgments:

- Violation of the basic rule: Deborah Darlene Gibson, 49, Prairie City, 74/55 zone, fined \$135; Debra May Walker, 35, Dayville, 72/55 zone, fined \$135; Gustav D. Stiner, 28, Pendleton, 75/55 zone, fined \$160; Kelly Lynn Melberg, 50, Onalaska, Wash., 77/55 zone, fined \$160.

- Passing a stopped vehicle crossing: Noble Hicks, 82, Prairie City, fined \$260.

- Driving without a license: Debra May Walker, 35, Dayville, fined \$260.

- Driving uninsured: Debra May Walker, 35, Dayville, fined \$260.

- Careless driving-no accident: Toby James Yazzie, 22,

John Day, fined \$220; Christopher Alan Hollister, 28, Fresno, Calif., fined \$260.

- Exceeding trailer length: Jason Taalen, 24, Menisno, Manitoba, Canada, fined \$110.

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"Those Who Protect and Serve" Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father;

We come before you with humbled hearts.

We pray Your protection over all law enforcement as they faithfully serve our communities. We lift up to you the safety of our first responders. We pray for the families who have lost loved ones serving in the military, law enforcement, and fire fighting. Comfort them and provide them with Your peace.

God we ask for Your healing over our communities. Let us come together to unite in peace and prayer.

In Your Name we pray.



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Long Creek, Oregon



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