

Firefighters gain upper hand on blazes

Evacuations lifted for Anthony Lakes

By George Plaven
EO Media Group

Weekend lightning ignited more than 20 fires locally, but crews kept most to less than one acre.

The John Day Interagency Dispatch Center dispatched resources to 34 reports of smoke or fire from Aug. 11-14, and most of the incidents are controlled or out. Resources were on scene Monday to several new fires reported that day, including one near Magone Lake that was under one acre.

Regionally, a wildfire burning near Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest is now largely under control as management of the blaze transitions to a smaller, more local firefighting team.

The Bear Butte fire, located 20 miles northwest of Baker City, has charred 499 acres and is 85 percent contained as of Monday morning. The Baker County Sheriff's Office has lifted evacuation orders around Anthony Lakes recreation area, though road closures remain in effect for Forest Service roads 73, 43, 7325, 5185 and the Elkhorn Crest Trail.



A truck drives on a gravel road near the Bear Butte Fire in the Wallowa Whitman National Forest.

A Type 3 incident management team took control of firefighting operations Monday, and approximately 160 personnel remain assigned to the fire. Crews will continue to mop up hot spots around the fire perimeter, as well as identify hazard trees and boulders along the Anthony Lakes Highway.

While recent storms have brought much-needed mois-

ture, the rain has also made for loose and unstable soil within the fire area, increasing the risk for down trees and rock slides across the roadway. Roads will stay closed until firefighters can fully assess the safety of the area.

The cause of the Bear Butte fire still is not known.

The largest incidents from the weekend's lightning include:

- North Fork Cable Creek fire, located 10 miles southeast of Ukiah. The 28-acre blaze was reported Saturday, burning in grass and timber and threatening nearby structures. The fire is now 80 percent lined, and crews are working on securing the perimeter. Resources include six engines and three water tenders.
- Corn Cob Creek fire, lo-



Contributed photo/U.S. Forest Service

The Corn Cob Creek Fire, located on the Heppner Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest, burned four acres and is now fully contained.

ated near Wheeler Point on the Heppner Ranger District. Firefighters have fully contained the fire at four acres, and are conducting mop-up activities.

- Red Fir Fire, located 20 miles southwest of La Grande. Like the Corn Cob Creek Fire, it is now fully contained at four acres.

The North Fork John Day Ranger District was hit with 12 total fires, and more smoke reports are expected this week as weather conditions improve. Four fires

are located within the North Fork John Day Wilderness near Winom Butte, and aerial attacks have so far been unsuccessful due to low cloud cover that's prevented aircraft from flying into the area.

Fire managers plan to get resources on scene as soon as safely possible. Meanwhile, the fire danger rating is still extreme despite the recent rain, and Phase C public use restrictions are in effect banning all campfires and chainsaw use.

Influx of visitors creates fire concerns

Eclipse falls during peak fire season

Blue Mountain Eagle

As tens of thousands of people descend on Grant County, fire danger is a major concern.

Hot, dry conditions with little to no recent precipitation has left residents and officials on edge.

To minimize fire danger, visitors should obey all road closures and follow all fire restrictions, U.S. Forest Service Public Affairs Specialist Mike Stearly said. Campfires and chainsaw use are currently prohibited.

If people see a fire, Stearly urges them to call 911, or if out of cell service contact any nearby Forest Service personnel. If a person starts a small fire and has a blanket, shovel or fire extinguisher, Stearly said they should attempt to put the fire out. However, he urged people to not attack large fires.

In order to prevent fires, Stearly said people should not travel cross-country, not park on grass, should smoke inside or in an area of bare ground and should ensure there are no dragging chains on their vehicle. He also advocated for people to use generators responsibly, avoid creating sparks and

above all be aware of their surroundings.

"Folks should leave their fireworks at home, as they are not permitted on the National Forest," he said.

To address fire concerns, a National Interagency Wildfire Prevention and Education Team has been activated to assist with fire prevention awareness in the days before and during the upcoming solar eclipse. The team will be staffing information centers to provide critical fire prevention messages and visitor information. Several information boards will also be placed throughout the forest to provide key information, including maps and pertinent regulations, as well as fire prevention information.

"We anticipate that many individuals traveling to view the eclipse may not be aware of the current wildfire danger," said April Phillips, Fire Prevention Team Leader.

Fire prevention tips

- Drive on established roads and avoid driving or parking on dry grass. Automobile exhaust systems can reach temperatures up to 2,800 degrees Fahrenheit, and pulling off to the side of the road can ignite surrounding vegetation.
- Ensure all parts of your vehicle are secure and not dragging. A loose safety chain

or muffler striking a rock or pavement will send a shower of sparks into dry vegetation.

- Use a propane grill or backpack stove instead of a charcoal grill or campfire. Fire restrictions are in place in most of Oregon.
- Carry a shovel and fire extinguisher or gallon of water in your vehicle (required in some areas).

Due to extreme fire danger the following restrictions are now in place on the Malheur National Forest:

- No campfires. Liquid and bottle gas stoves only.
- No internal combustion engine operations except for motor vehicles. Operate generators only in areas bare of vegetation in a 10-foot diameter or in the bed of a pickup

truck or installed in an RV with a 10-foot discharge area cleared of vegetation.

- Smoking is allowed only in enclosed vehicles, buildings, developed recreation sites

or cleared areas.

- No off-road or off-trail vehicle travel or travel on roads not cleared of flammable materials. Obey all road closures.

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Welcome to Grant County



The eclipse, the first total solar phenomenon to cast a shadow over North America since 1979, will move across the state at mid-morning on August 21. No place in Oregon will offer a greater opportunity to catch this rare sight than Grant County, thanks to our likelihood of cloudless skies and our position smack-dab in the eclipse path. Virtually all of the 4,500-square-mile county – with its friendly small towns and bountiful forest and range lands – has a front row seat.

For at least a year, Chamber of Commerce members and the local communities have been preparing to welcome sun-gazing visitors with activities, special events, and of course, those funny-looking safety goggles. But while August's eclipse offers a brief show – about 2 minutes in duration – there are plenty of other spectacular reasons to visit the county, at any time of the year.

Grant County is the jewel of the John Day River territory, a special place where the high desert meets the mountains. Rugged and remote, the county features pine forests, snow-capped mountains, lush range lands, and verdant river valleys. The result: breath-taking scenery and recreation opportunities.

What's there to do? Take a bike or a motorcycle out on our open roads, explore the wilds with your snowmobile or horse, hike a mountain trail, fish the rippling waters of our streams, or revisit the area's rich history at one of our museums. Think gold rush, ancient fossils, timber and cattle barons – there's a wealth of the old West awaiting you here.

And whenever you visit, don't forget to enjoy our clear sky. Odds are, conditions will be perfect for the eclipse, but the sky here can't be beat for star-gazing just about any night of the year. So come see us in 2017 – We'll be glad to share the beauty of this special place with you.

Jerry Franklin, president
Grant County Chamber of Commerce

... the 2017 solar eclipse capital of Oregon ... and so much more!



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