



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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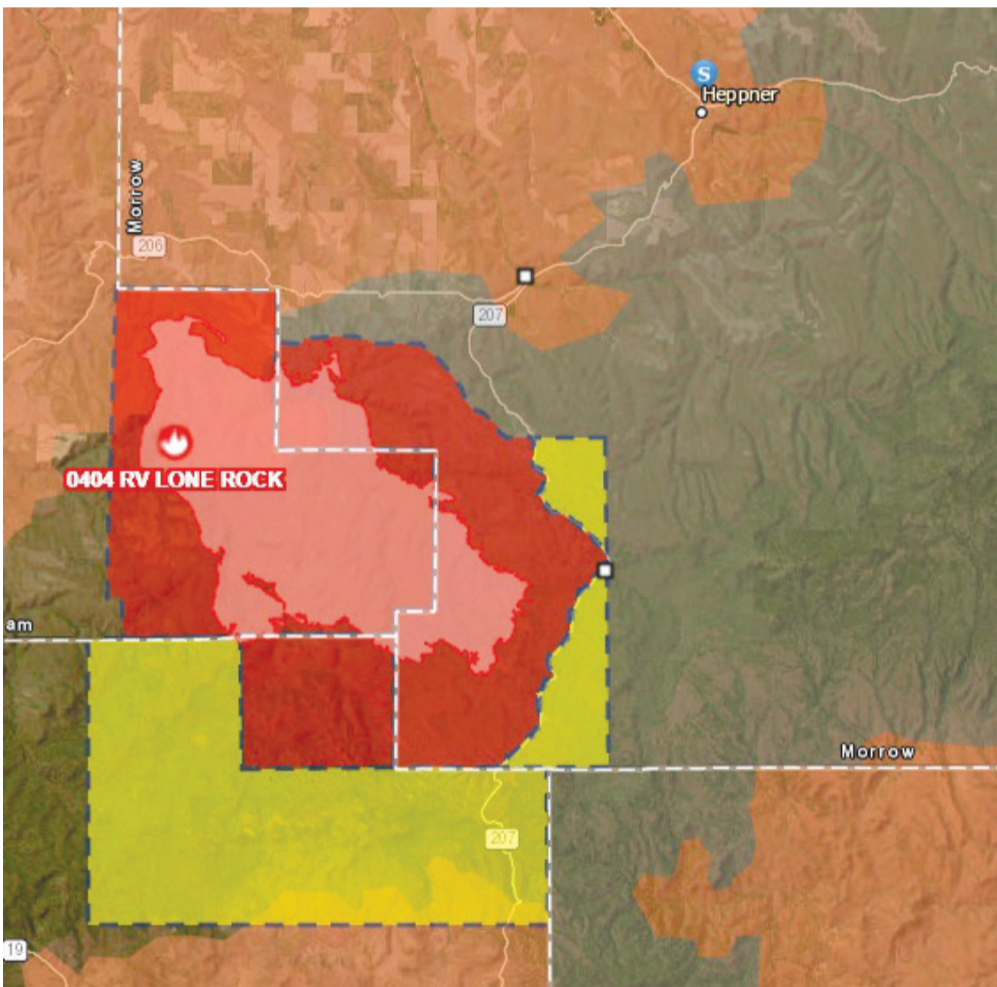


VOL. 144 NO. 28 8 Pages Wednesday, July 17, 2024 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Lone Rock fire threatens Hardman



Lone Rock Fire approaching Hardman, Oregon Sunday night July 14th. ~ Photo by Kelsie Worden



The size of the fire as of Tuesday afternoon. ~ Contributed Image

By Chris Sykes

The Lone Rock Fire in Gilliam, Morrow, and Wheeler counties has rapidly expanded, threatening Hardman, Oregon. The fire started on July 13, 10 miles southeast of Condon, Oregon, and has spread to 64,860 acres as of the latest report. High temperatures in the 90s and 100s last week, combined with dry conditions, have exacerbated the fire's growth.

Response and Resources:

The Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is mobilizing resources to assist local efforts. A task force from Linn County and a division supervisor were dispatched early this morning.

Firefighters from Gilliam County, the Oregon Department of Forestry, and the Prineville Bureau of Land Management have been combating the fire since its inception.

Governor Tina Kotek invoked the Emergency Conflagration Act on Monday, allowing the OSFM to deploy additional resources.

The OSFM's Red Incident Management Team will be in unified command with Northwest Team 2 starting Tuesday at 10 a.m.

Structural task forces from Benton, Clackamas, Lane, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, and Yamhill coun-

ties have been assigned to the fire. The Linn County task force was sent on Sunday, along with other resources through Immediate Response.

Evacuation and Safety Measures:

The Gilliam County Sheriff has issued Level 2 (Be Set) evacuation notices for Lone Rock.

The sheriffs' offices of Gilliam, Morrow, and Wheeler counties have Levels 2 and 3 evacuations in place.

The Red Cross is supporting shelters for displaced residents.

Emergency Manager Steve Freeland of the Morrow County Sheriff's Office reported that the task force is holding ground around Hardman, Oregon, keeping the fire on the east side. Freeland praised local communities, farmers, ranchers, volunteers, and firefighters from Heppner, Lexington, and Echo for their efforts.

Impact and Forecast:

The fire grew to over 30,000 acres by Monday, driven by gusty winds and dry conditions.

Oregon State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple highlighted the critical fire danger across the state, urging Oregonians and visitors to be cautious and prevent new fire starts. The forecast includes excessive heat, red flag warnings, and potential

lightning, which will further challenge firefighting efforts.

The fire's cause is under investigation, and containment is currently at 1%.

Total personnel involved in firefighting efforts are 333.

Recent Developments:

The OSFM sent resources through Immediate Response over the weekend. As the threat near the Cow Valley Fire in Malheur County has lessened, resources, including the Red Incident Management Team, were reassigned to the Lone Rock Fire.

Updates about the fire will be posted on the OSFM Incident Information blog and social media channels.

Quick Facts:
Size: 64,860 acres
Location: 10 miles SE of Condon, Oregon
Counties: Gilliam, Morrow, & Wheeler
Start Date: July 13, 2024

Containment: 1%
Cause: Under investigation

Total Personnel: 333
The combination of excessive heat, gusty winds, and dry conditions has made the Lone Rock Fire a significant threat, with efforts ongoing to contain and manage its spread.

The Heppner Gazette is still working the phones

and Facebook for updates with the Morrow County Sheriff Office, Heppner Fire and the Umatilla National Forest.

Statement from Sheriff Gary Bettencourt
Gilliam County Sheriff's Office:

Good afternoon, residents of Gilliam County,

Early this morning, the Lonerock Fire posed an unprecedented threat to the City of Lonerock. I am relieved to report that through the exceptional teamwork of the entire community and the dedicated efforts of local, state, and federal fire resources, we managed to avert what could have been a catastrophic event. The fire came dangerously close to the city and was mere inches away from complete devastation.

I am amazed and deeply grateful for the coordinated response and the resilience demonstrated by our community members, firefighters, and emergency personnel. Their swift action and tireless efforts undoubtedly saved lives and prevented significant destruction.

Though Lonerock was spared, this fire continues to grow into Wheeler and Morrow County, exhibiting erratic behavior.

The City of Lonerock will remain at a Level 3 Evacuation until further notice. This is to protect our citizens and support the efforts of local, state, and federal fire crews who will remain dedicated to monitoring and extinguishing spot fires.

Wildland Fire Safety Instructions:

As we continue to monitor the situation, it is

~Continued to PAGE SIX

Van Schoiack ranch house narrowly escapes fire devastation



Fire above the family ranch home. ~ Photo by Marie Linnell

By Chris Sykes

The Van Schoiack ranch house narrowly escaped being destroyed by the Lone Rock fire, thanks to the efforts of Dan's brother Bill and his sisters. They stayed at the ranch house all night, hosing it down and running sprinklers to keep it well irrigated. They also put a fire line around the house and performed back burning on Monday morning.

Dan expressed gratitude to the Heppner Fire District for containing the fire from Hill Ridge Road to the ranch. Although the south side of the ranch, used as pasture, was completely lost, the house, built in the mid-1960s, was saved. The neighbors to the south, however, were burned out.

Initially, Dan thought the fire would be contained

~Continued to PAGE SIX

Heppner's 'Mini Bakers' spread joy and generosity



Donna Smith and her 'Mini Bakers' Greyson Kennedy, Jada Macias, Olivia Kennedy, Ellie Reinhart, Ian Macias, Jaxson Nelson, and not pictured Ariana Matzick.

By Annalynn Black

Heppner's 'Mini Bakers' is a group of kids between the ages of 3 to 9 who have been learning the art of baking under the guidance of local babysitter Donna Smith. From muffins to pies, these little bakers have been honing their skills and even practicing the barter system.

The journey of Heppner's Mini Bakers started three years ago, and two years ago, they began organizing benefit sales. Initially, they focused on assisting local needs, such as families impacted by house fires. However, the group eventually expanded their outreach to include various charitable organizations.

According to Donna, the kids have engaged in a

barter system where they, for example, trade their baked goods for overripe bananas from the local Dollar General store. In return, they bring back delicious banana bread or muffins. Additionally, Donna explains that the kids decided to create "goodies boxes" for those in heaven. Whenever they hear about someone losing a loved one, they add it to their list and prepare these boxes to ensure that "God has plenty of goodies up there". This act also serves as a reminder to those left behind that they are being thought of and loved. Surprisingly, even the local post office has stepped in, accepting these goodie packages, stamping them, and sending them on

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