

## **The Oregonian**

# **Portland's Bull Run Drinking Water Unaffected as Columbia Gorge Fires Reach Watershed**

*By The Oregonian/OregonLive  
September 5, 2017*

Note: Updated to reflect fire burning inside the watershed, risks large fires pose to drinking water.

City of Portland officials say wildfires in the Columbia Gorge have encroached the city's Bull Run Watershed but so far have not reached or harmed the water. Nor, they say, has the ash falling throughout the area impacted water quality.

For now, they say, nothing is changing about the way water is delivered to customers of the Portland Water Bureau and water remains safe to drink.

Despite having entered the watershed, fire is not burning near the reservoir or the water supply infrastructure, officials reported about 4 p.m. Tuesday. Edward Campbell, the Portland Water Bureau's resource protection director, said fire is about 18 or 19 miles away from the city's headworks facility, where drinking water first enters pipes.

The city doesn't know exactly how far the fire has advanced or how much of the watershed has burned.

Campbell said that although he is hopeful winds in the gorge will ease, "it's concerning how far it can possibly move."

The bureau would switch to its back-up water supply at the Columbia South Shore well field if the headworks had to be evacuated, he said. That supply can meet the city's base demand, he said.

Water bureau leaders have authorized officials with the joint fire command to dip into Blue Lake and other water sources inside the watershed -- except the drinking water reservoirs -- to slow the spread of the fire.

It's too soon to say what, if any, effect the fire will have on a drinking watershed described as being one of the nation's most pristine.

Erosion increases after fires, and can lead to more sediment getting into the water, bringing higher treatment costs. Nutrients that run off after fires can cause algal blooms in reservoirs that make the water taste and smell bad, said Jeff Writer, an environmental engineering instructor at the University of Colorado.

"We've seen impacts persist for years," Writer said. "The utilities have to be ready and able to deal with this for many years."

But Portland is lucky. Even after hot fires that scorch the soil, rain tends to still infiltrate the ground on the western slopes of the Cascades, said Gordon Grant, a U.S. Forest Service research hydrologist. "It's good that it drizzles here," he said.

"As long as the fire's not in the vicinity of the infrastructure itself, I'd expect the impacts to be relatively minor," Grant said. "Call me back if the thing gets in there and burns really hot."

Water Bureau director Michael Stuhr, in a statement, expressed gratitude for state, federal and local agencies that are helping track and fight fires and providing city water officials with information.

As of Tuesday morning, the Eagle Creek fire in the Columbia Gorge had grown to 10,000 acres.

Winds push the fire westward, forcing evacuations of numerous communities and filling the skies with smoke and ash.

Wildfires are burning near the Columbia River in wide stretches of the Gorge. The city's Bull Run reservoirs are located about 15 miles south of the river.

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Fire Reaches Bull Run Watershed, But Not Reservoir Yet**

*By Jim Redden  
September 6, 2017*

#### **Portland Water Bureau says it is prepared to switch over to groundwater wells along Columbia River if the need arises**

The Portland Water Bureau says the fire in the Columbia River Gorge has reached the Bull Run watershed, the primary source of water for much of the region.

But, in a Tuesday afternoon statement, the bureau said fire was not threatening the Bull Run Reservoir and or water distribution infrastructure.

The bureau says it is prepared to switch over the city's groundwater wells along the Columbia River if the need arises.

The bureau also says it has been working closely with all local, state and federal agencies fighting the fires since the Indian Creek fire started in July. It has authorized water to be drawn from Bluw Lake and other water sources in the watershed to fight the fires, but not the reservoir.

On Monday, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown briefed Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Nick Fish, who is in charge of the bureau, on the status of the fires.

"I am thankful for the close working relationship with our partner government agencies, said bureau director Michael Stuhr.

In fact, the announcement came at a time when the water level in the Bull Run reservoir drops so low that turbidity becomes a potential problem, prompting the bureau to consider blending it with Columbia South Shore Well Field water.

The announcement also comes a little over a month after the City Council voted to spend up to \$500 million to build a filtration plant that can remove ash from wildfires and silt from landslides from Bull Run water. It will take around 10 years to complete, however.

The decision was prompted by the need to fight the cryptosporidium parasite in the Bull Run watershed. The council could have chosen a less expensive ultraviolet plant, but chose the filtration option in large part because it could remove so many more contaminants from the water.

## Willamette Week

# Why is Portland's Transgender Homeless Population Growing So Fast?

*By Thacher Schmid*  
*September 6, 2017*

**The number of transgender homeless people living on Portland-area streets has officially doubled in the past two years.**

When she first considered transitioning from a man to a woman, Sophia Conquest made a checklist of "bad and good things."

On the bad side: As a transgender woman, she'd essentially have a target on her back. "I knew it was going to happen," Conquest says.

The day before WW interviewed her last month in Pioneer Courthouse Square, Conquest says, a child threw rocks at her. Earlier that week, she adds, a woman physically assaulted her in a confrontation that began with the woman insulting Conquest with slurs, like "She Man." Conquest eventually fended her off with her purse while running away.

Such conflict is better than living a lie, she says. Before transitioning, "I was constantly trying to kill myself."

Conquest isn't alone. The number of transgender homeless people living on Portland-area streets has officially doubled in the past two years.

It's still a tiny count: In Multnomah County, the number of transgender homeless individuals counted in the official "point in time" homeless count went from 20 in 2015 to 44 this year.

"That number is absolutely an undercount," says Stacy Borke, senior program director at Transition Projects Inc (the name refers to transitioning into housing, not gender). "They do not identify themselves in the street count due to the safety issues."

Both transgender houseless people and experts say the rise is due to anti-trans discrimination in housing—sometimes bias from landlords, sometimes rejection by family and friends.

Conquest says her housing options have been narrowed due to discrimination so many times she "stopped counting." "I actually had a couple [recent] housing situations that might have panned out, and then they found out that I was trans. And then they were like, 'Oh, never mind.'"

Soft-spoken and quick to laugh, the 27-year-old Conquest is a hypnotist, dominatrix and former mixed martial artist. When asked about her martial arts prowess, she challenged this reporter to spar at Pioneer Courthouse Square—an offer that was immediately declined.

Conquest is "couch surfing" now, she says, but has lived on the street, always sleeping among friends. "I'm sort of trying to avoid staying on the street because I don't feel like being raped or murdered," Conquest says, with a wan smile.

Nationally, discrimination against trans individuals leads to both homicides and homelessness, Human Rights Campaign says. More trans people were killed in 2016 than ever before: 22.

"Some of these cases involve clear anti-transgender bias," the group's website explains. "In others, the victim's transgender status may have put them at risk in other ways, such as forcing them into homelessness."

Taylor, a lifelong Portlander and trans woman who asked that her real name not be used, found herself on the street after being hospitalized for a suicide attempt in 2015. In the hospital, she was diagnosed with gender dysphoria, a conflict between one's physical or assigned gender and the gender with which one identifies.

At the time, Taylor was a married man. His wife picked him up from the hospital.

"When we got home, she already had my stuff packed and she told me to leave," Taylor recalls.

Experts say Portland's progressiveness—including state-funded health care for people who are transitioning—allows more people to embrace their gender identity. But Jenn Burleton, executive director of TransActive Gender Center, says that increased feeling of safety has been matched by backlash.

The issue can heat up suddenly. Late last month, the normally civil biweekly meeting of a houseless advocacy nonprofit had to adjourn after a shouting match erupted over anti-transgender bias.

The Portland Village Coalition is a nonprofit group that advocates for houseless people, and whose general assemblies at the Q Center bring two dozen housed and houseless people together to discuss issues raised by local villages such as Hazelnut Grove in North Portland.

At the Aug. 25 meeting, Zoe White, a transgender woman, accused two other Hazelnut Grove residents, Joe Bennie and Marvin Ross, of anti-trans discrimination. A loud argument ensued that derailed the proceedings.

Bennie and Ross yelled back at White, apparently accusing her of speaking out of turn. Bennie accused White of "pulling a gun" on someone at Hazelnut Grove.

"It was unloaded," White responded.

White accused the Village Coalition of not upholding its bylaws by allowing two men who are "openly trans discriminatory" to participate. The group adjourned briefly. White explained what had her so upset: "They said, 'You have a dick, so in one way, shape or form, you're a man.'"

White, Bennie and Ross all returned for pizza and calmer discussion.

"This is real life, and we're in the middle of it," steering committee chairman David Bikman said.

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **Oregon's \$450 Million Plan to Widen 1-5 Has Portlanders Preparing for War**

*By Dirk VanderHart  
September 6, 2017*

You're fucking sick of traffic.

Maybe you love your car. Maybe you merely tolerate it. But chances are you're one of the 67 percent of Portlanders who commute to work in a personal vehicle. And chances are you're over it.

You already know why you're over it. People are moving to Portland in droves. Many of them also commute by car. That means our old roads are serving more vehicles, which means Portland traffic is growing worse.

“Traffic congestion in the Portland region can now occur at any hour of the day, including holidays and weekends,” reads a new report from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). “It is no longer only a weekday peak hour problem.”

It's the perfect environment for an old-fashioned Portland highway brawl.

Earlier this year, Oregon lawmakers cobbled together a \$5.3 billion package that will hike gas prices, raise vehicle registration and title fees, and even tax bicycle sales—all in the name of improving the state's transportation system.

There's a lot that's good about the bill, including unprecedented money for transit service, bike lanes, and crosswalks. But one of the largest single projects included in the package comes with serious questions.

For \$450 million, ODOT wants to slay one of its long-time dragons: A notorious choke point on Interstate 5 as it rushes—or, more often, crawls—through the Rose Quarter.

By widening the stretch of highway between I-405 and I-84 by a lane in each direction and adding shoulders, state officials say they can speed up Portlanders' daily trips up and down the city's busiest corridor. Portland city planners—tantalized by the project's promises of new bridges, bike routes, and the chance to increase density in the Rose Quarter—are on board.

But this being Portland, it's not that simple.

In the city's grand four-decade tradition of looking askance at freeway expansion, a coalition of transportation activists, environmental groups, and economists are trying to stop the megaproject before it starts.

They point to research that suggests widening the highway won't ultimately do much for congestion. And they argue that agreeing to dump hundreds of millions of dollars into a freeway makes hypocrites of city officials who talk tough about reducing carbon emissions and ending road death.

Now, with Portland City Council set to take up a plan that could put the city's formal stamp of approval on the Rose Quarter project, things are about to get loud.

“This is the place to start taking the project apart,” says Chris Smith, a Portland planning commissioner who's repeatedly tried to defang the I-5 proposal in the last five years. “I'd like to fire a warning shot right now at council.”

There's no denying that the stretch of freeway in question has big problems.

As I-5 makes its way through the heart of Portland, its two lanes are suddenly fed by two other highly trafficked interstates, I-84 and I-405, as well as traffic from what transportation wonks call “the box”—the busy spot where Broadway and Weidler meet Williams and Vancouver.

The result is an ugly gray ballet.

Southbound drivers hoping to exit I-5 onto I-84 are forced to merge right, even as drivers entering I-5 from Broadway are trying to merge left. Likewise, northbound Priuses looking to exit I-5 and take the Broadway Bridge jostle with Subarus trying to come off of I-84.

In all, there are four of these “weaving sections,” each of which contributes to sluggish pandemonium. According to ODOT, this stretch of I-5 boasts the highest crash rate of any

highway in the state. Most of those collisions are rear-end crashes at relatively low speeds—fender benders. (The author observed one of these on Labor Day, failing spectacularly to take a picture.)

Even without crashes, the I-5 interchange is plagued by delays. The American Transportation Research Institute, a trucking industry group, says I-5's junction with I-84 is one of the top 50 bottlenecks in the country—the only junction in Oregon that has the dubious honor of cracking the organization's top 100.

And it's getting worse. According to ODOT, the average time it takes to travel through Portland on I-5—in either direction—increased from 2013 to 2015, no matter if drivers were traveling in the morning, at mid-day, or in the midst of rush hour. (Oddly, the agency's ideal “free flow” through the area is when vehicles can travel 60 mph—faster than the posted speed limit.)

The state presents its I-5 project [PDF] as a solution. For \$450 million (an exceedingly early estimate that many suspect will rise), ODOT wants to create an additional “auxiliary lane” in each direction through Rose Quarter.

That means that the on-ramps onto I-5 that currently force abrupt weaving will continue as lanes, offering drivers more time to merge with I-5's traffic. ODOT believes the new lanes will cut crashes by 30 to 50 percent—and when there are crashes, new shoulders will get disabled vehicles away from the flow of traffic.

Taken together, ODOT says the improvements will shave 6.5 minutes off travel time during the peak morning commute, and eight minutes during evening rush hour, “with more reliability mid-day.”

This plan has predictable and influential backers, including the Port of Portland and the Oregon Trucking Association (OTA).

“You need to recognize that that I-5 Rose Quarter section is the only two-lane section of the freeway between Canada and Mexico that's through an urban center,” says OTA President Jana Jarvis. “We see a great need for added capacity.” (ODOT insists that auxiliary lanes don't actually create “added capacity,” instead smoothing out the capacity that's already in place.)

“We see the value in a project that gives cars and trucks that are merging and weaving on and off at the exit more time to do so and reduce collisions,” says Melanie Mesaros, a spokesperson for the Port of Portland.

The I-5 proposal has aspects that tantalize city planners and active transportation wonks, too.

A centerpiece of the project—pushed for by city officials over years of discussion and public process that tamed an even more highway-centric design—is the “cap.” Existing bridges where Weidler, Broadway, and Williams cross the highway would be replaced with a single massive cover that would bury I-5 for a couple of blocks, diminishing the freeway's gashing presence.

The plan also calls for a new bike and pedestrian bridge that would connect North Winning Way—just north of the Moda Center—to Northeast Clackamas, across I-5.

Those elements of the plan have the Street Trust, Oregon's largest biking, walking, and transit advocacy organization, keeping mum—even though the group believes that widening the highway is pointless.

“Our priority is to make sure these local street improvements don't get value engineered out of the project,” says Gerik Kransky, the organization's policy director. “Let's set a precedent of how cool it could be to build a cap.”

Another element of the project has the city's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) salivating: Once it improves I-5, the state is pledging to lift congestion standards near the highway, which would allow for denser development in the Rose Quarter.

The money for all these changes, of course, has to come from somewhere.

The \$450 million megaproject will be partly funded with \$30 million a year from state coffers—money that the legislature dictated should begin flowing in 2022. That's a huge influx of cash for Portland, which perennially struggles to pay for even routine road maintenance. (For context, Portland expects to make roughly \$16 million a year from the 10-cent gas tax that officials begged voters to pass last year.)

"I don't think we would be able to practically do this without a coincidence of something on the freeway," says Joe Zehnder, the city's chief planner. But he notes: "It's still, at the end of the day, an investment in a freeway system."

And in a city that's built a reputation out of opposing freeways, that's a problem.

The words "freeway project" have long been epithets to Portlanders.

In the 1970s, the defeat of the proposed Mount Hood Freeway saved hundreds of homes—and ensured that Southeast Portland wasn't disastrously bisected. The death of that highway is frequently held up as the moment Portland became a national innovator in urban planning.

More recently, a \$2.8 billion plan for a new I-5 bridge over the Columbia—the "Columbia River Crossing," or CRC—was laid to rest in 2014, after years of acrimony between Portland, Vancouver, business owners, commuters, and alternative transportation advocates.

And now that it has state funding, the I-5 Rose Quarter proposal has drawn opponents who had a hand in killing both of those failed efforts.

In August, a group calling itself No More Freeway Expansions registered as a lobbying entity with the City of Portland. Among the group's listed representatives: Joe Cortright, a local economist who played a key role in pushing back against the CRC, and Ron Buel, another CRC opponent who worked for former Portland Mayor Neil Goldschmidt as he fought the Mount Hood Freeway in the early '70s.

Working alongside them is Chris Smith, the respected planning commissioner who's fought the I-5 project for years, and Aaron Brown, an advocate who managed last year's campaign for a local gas tax. Organizations like OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon, the Audubon Society of Portland, BikeLoudPDX, and the NAACP Portland Branch are also supportive.

Their essential message: The I-5 scheme is a massively expensive and unnecessary project that, if anything, will make things worse.

They start with the promise to ease congestion—those eight sweet evening minutes ODOT says you'll snatch back when the project is complete.

What might be free-flowing lanes in the months after a project is completed inevitably become choked again, as more people rush to use the now-convenient freeway.

Even if the agency is correct about those numbers, chances are good that the relief will be temporary. That's because more-efficient freeways tend to attract more drivers. What might be free-flowing lanes in the months after a project is completed inevitably become choked again, as more people rush to use the now-convenient freeway.

In economist speak, this concept is known as “induced demand,” but in everyday parlance, it comes down to something even ODOT concedes: You can’t build your way out of congestion.

Far more effective than more lanes, opponents argue, would be “congestion pricing”—the act of tolling drivers at varying rates depending on time of day, deterring peak-hour congestion.

“It is the one thing that works,” says Cortright. “It is the only thing that will fix it.”

Legislators might be coming around to that opinion. Tolling currently doesn’t exist in Oregon, but included in this year’s transportation package was a requirement that officials pursue congestion pricing on both I-5 and I-205, from the Columbia River to where the two highways converge in Tualatin. The Oregon Transportation Commission has a mandate to apply for federal approval for such a system by the end of next year.

Tolling comes with some fraught questions—particularly when it comes to disproportionately affecting low-income commuters who have to drive at peak hours—but Cortright and others argue it alone would be enough to solve the Rose Quarter’s problems.

“We know that widening highways will not address congestion,” says the Street Trust’s Kransky. “So let’s talk about what we should do. Congestion pricing is probably that thing.”

But the many opponents of the I-5 project go even further than questioning the proposal’s effectiveness. They also say it goes against things Portland claims to stand for.

Portland’s climate action plan—a source of frequent boasting from city officials—includes a goal of reducing carbon emissions by 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

“And yet,” the anti-expansion group noted in a letter to city council in August, “as with other freeway expansions across the country, this project encourages more driving and more carbon emissions, not less.”

Opponents also note argue the “safety” component of the I-5 project probably won’t prevent traffic-related injuries or deaths—which is the goal of Portland’s oft-touted Vision Zero efforts.

The fender benders playing out on I-5, after all, take far less human toll than many collisions on Portland’s “high-crash network”—the web of roads throughout the city, some of which are controlled by ODOT, where nearly half of Portland’s deadly and serious crashes occur.

According to the Portland Bureau of Transportation, the city’s seen 28 traffic-related deaths this year.

All of these arguments were laid out earlier this year by Smith, who in February attempted to convince fellow members of the Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission to remove the I-5 project from the city’s Transportation System Plan. (Public planning is maddeningly convoluted, but the basic gist is that removing the project from Portland’s plan would put the city in conflict with the plan created by the Metro regional government, potentially forcing some kind of reckoning.)

“We killed 45 people on our streets last year,” Smith said at the time (it was actually 44). “None of them died on this stretch of freeway. We don’t kill people on this stretch. We do kill people on the orphan stretches of highway that ODOT is responsible for. [Yet] somehow half a billion dollars is going to materialize to make driving easier in the central city.... This is a massive misallocation of resources.”

His words held sway. In 2012, when Smith last tried to convince the commission to kill the project, he was the only vote in opposition. This time, his viewpoint narrowly lost out, four votes to six.



“I got three more votes this time,” he tells the Mercury. “Give me time and I’ll get there.”

So what’s actually at stake in the current debate?

On Thursday, September 7, city council is slated to begin considering the Central City 2035 Plan, a sweeping blueprint for how inner-city Portland will grow and transform in coming decades. Tucked into that plan are updates to the city’s list of favored transportation projects. And among those projects are three separate items that would give the city’s blessing for the I-5 widening endeavor.

It’s those three items Smith tried to get the planning commission to remove in February. Now he and his allies are going to try to convince city council to do the same.

History suggests they face long odds. Three of the council’s five members—Nick Fish, Amanda Fritz, and Dan Saltzman—voted to include the project in a plan approved in 2012 (again, public planning is grotesque in its minutiae). And when asked about the project by Willamette Week in June, four councilmembers’ offices voiced support for the proposal.

The council’s remaining commissioner, Chloe Eudaly, “is skeptical about the whole thing,” according to her chief of staff, Marshall Runkel.

If the city were to pull the I-5 project out of its transportation plans, there would be questions. Among them: How would Portland reconcile its views with Metro and the state, which believe the benefits of the project have statewide significance? Could ODOT force Portland to comply with at least part of the project?

And perhaps most importantly, if Portland activists do successfully dismantle the project, will the city be able to use any of the money on more worthy things? Most people the Mercury spoke with for this story are inclined to believe no, suggesting that killing the effort would earn the city political ire. The money might instead be passed out to another highway project elsewhere in the state.

But perhaps there’s another way.

The lobbying group led by Cortright has so far met with only one councilmember: Saltzman, the city’s transportation commissioner. He was on vacation when the Mercury reached out, but according to sources in his office, the commissioner left the meeting with a new perspective on the I-5 project.

While he won’t push for removing the thing from city plans, Saltzman is now expected to introduce a resolution calling on the state to institute tolls first, and then decide whether the extra highway lanes are necessary.

Even if passed, the resolution would be essentially toothless. There’s no guarantee that ODOT would agree. “If city council wants to make some recommendations, we will certainly be willing to listen to them,” says Don Hamilton, an ODOT spokesperson. “That’s as far as I’m going to go on that right now.”

Still, it’s a sign that advocates’ efforts have already been somewhat effective. And with a final council vote not expected until January—and plenty of opportunity for outcry in the meantime—there’s no telling what could happen.

Discussing the possibilities, Cortright’s rhetoric inevitably returns to the Mount Hood Freeway fight, the city’s shining beacon of highway death.

“Forty years ago, we were smart enough to figure out how to do something other than build another freeway,” he says. “I’ve got to believe we’re smart enough to figure out how to do that today.”

## **The Portland Business Journal**

### **5 Things to Know for Wednesday: The Gorge Fire Continues, But Positive Signs Emerge**

*By Andy Giegerich  
September 6, 2017*

It's a bammo-socko news cycle these days, Portland.

Here are Five Things to prove it.

#### **It continues**

We'll start in unincorporated Washington County, where Nike revealed the next phase of its 2 percent global workforce layoffs. At the Oregon Nike campus, that means 490 jobs will go away.

Nike had already laid off 255 workers in July. It employs 70,000 workers worldwide, meaning, after doing the math, Nike might be only about half done with its reductions.

The fire continues, too

The Columbia Gorge fire is still burning, and there are still plenty of concerns. Here's a look at many of those, culled from the stellar work of other media sources as well as our own staffers' analyses.

Pete Danko, for instance, looked at the energy impacts of the blaze while Erik Siemers explored the tourism economic impact.

#### **What we're watching**

One thing that nearly escaped the notice of many: The Eagle Creek Fire nudged up against the Bull Run Watershed. Should it reach the area, we may have an epic disaster on our hands in Portland, where water will be hard to find.

"At this time, the fire is not near the drinking water reservoirs or water supply infrastructure," wrote the Portland Water Bureau's Jaymee Cuti. "Water from the Bull Run continues to be safe to drink."

The bureau, though, will continue to monitor water quality "and will respond to any changes in full coordination with the joint fire command." Its also ready to switch to its secondary water supply at the Columbia South Shore Well Field, as needed, Cuti said.

#### **Well put**

One fear is that, along with losing a bit of our faith in the common sense capabilities of our fellow man (seriously? fireworks? in a dry gorge?), we'll lose a scenic source of our Oregon civic and environmental pride.

KPTV's Mark Nelson makes some good points here, noting that the Gorge occupies a prime spot to repopulate itself with trees and other growth fairly quickly.

Nonetheless, in the way-shorter term, many of us share the sentiments of Portland musician Houston Bolles.

Every place of natural beauty I have observed in my life has been measured against the beauty of the Columbia River Gorge," Bolles wrote on Facebook. "I feel devastated and helpless about this loss. I am so sad and angry. I will volunteer to plant trees and rebuild trails, but I have walked through forests after fires, and know that the places that my family loves will never be the same."

### **The best**

As school starts, we're continuing to look at a number of education-related comparisons that come from the Pittsburgh researcher Niche.

Yesterday's item looked at which districts employ the best, according to salary and absenteeism info, among other data points, teachers.

### **Well-stated**

And finally, a bonus "thing" on this busy day: Oregon Business & Industry has named its coveted Statesman of the Year winner.

It's Paul Stewart, president and chief executive officer of Sky Lakes Medical Center in Klamath Falls. Stewart has earned kudos for such moves as Sky Lakes commitment of \$1.5 million over the next four years for local trails, parks, green spaces and more educational services. Sky Lakes also contributed \$600,000 toward a municipal health initiative that seeks to secure international recognition for the Klamath Falls region as a "Blue Zone" community.

The award was first conferred in 2001 by the Oregon Business Association, which merged this year with Associated Oregon Industries. Stewart will pick up his hardware at the Oct. 10 OBI Statesman Dinner, at the Oregon Convention Center.

## **OPB**

### **Surging Wildfire Reaches Watershed For Portland Area's Drinking Water**

*By Amelia Templeton and Ryan Haas  
September 5, 2017*

Officials say the Eagle Creek Fire entered the Bull Run watershed Tuesday.

The watershed provides drinking water for around 1 million Oregonians.

"At this time, the fire is not near the drinking water reservoirs or water supply infrastructure," said Jaymee Cuti, public information officer for the Portland Water Bureau.

The watershed is on 100 square miles of protected federal forest north of the Columbia River Gorge. It is the primary source of drinking water for Portland and many of its largest suburbs, including Gresham and Beaverton.

Nicole Adams, a spokeswoman for the Water Bureau, said at a press conference Tuesday that the fire is still miles away from the critical infrastructure at Bull Run, including two reservoirs and dams.

“The Water Bureau has authorized the (U.S.) Forest Service to do water drops using Blue Lake and any other resources besides the reservoirs ... to do whatever fire suppression efforts they need to do,” she said.

Adams said if necessary, the bureau can switch to its back up drinking water supply — a system of wells along the Columbia River.

Officials advise that water from the Bull Run watershed is still safe to drink.

“The bureau will continue to monitor water quality and will respond to any changes in full coordination with the joint fire command,” Cuti said in a statement.

The Eagle Creek Fire has grown to more than 10,000 acres and is zero percent contained.

Police said Tuesday that a 15-year-old boy from Vancouver, Washington is a suspect in the case. They believe he and others may have started the fire by playing with fireworks near the Eagle Creek trailhead.

No arrests had been made, nor charges filed, as of Tuesday afternoon.