

## The Oregonian

# Activists Want Portland to Reject I-5 Expansion Through Rose Quarter

*By Elliot Njus*  
*September 7, 2017*

A group of transportation and environmental activists want Portland to say "no, thanks" to a proposed freeway expansion in the Rose Quarter.

The Oregon Department of Transportation has proposed a \$450 million expansion of Interstate 5 through the heart of Portland. The agency says adding lanes and shoulders would reduce crashes and congestion.

But more than 350 people and 26 groups have signed a letter asking the city to drop its support.

The call for a classic Portland freeway revolt comes as the City Council begins deliberating its Central City 2035 plan, a blueprint for downtown Portland and the Central Eastside that includes the freeway project.

Opponents say the project would be at best a temporary solution to congestion because it will prompt Portlanders to drive more often, re-clogging the freeway and increasing pollution.

"Our state is on fire," said Aaron Brown, a spokesman for the coalition. "We know climate change is real and happening right now, and 40 percent of our city's carbon emissions come from auto emissions."

The \$450 million expansion of Interstate 5 was among the projects singled out for funding in the state Legislature's \$5.3 billion transportation package earlier this year. The package would set aside \$30 million a year starting in 2022 to pay off debt for the project.

The state transportation department says the project would address one of Oregon's worst highway bottlenecks, saving travelers 6.5 minutes during the morning commute and 8 minutes during the evening ride. It also says the addition of an auxiliary lane connecting on- and off-ramps would reduce crashes due to weaving and merging, another cause of delays.

It's not your imagination: Traffic congestion and delays have gotten worse, much worse, in recent years.

Opponents say those estimates are far too optimistic. Instead, they say, the state should first implement tolling along the corridor, which would instead push drivers to reduce their trips on the road.

"If you really want to eliminate congestion, the only way to do it is by pricing the use of roads," said Portland economist Joe Cortright. "It's \$400 million that you might as well put in a pile and burn it, because it's not going to have any effect on recurring congestion."

The Oregon Legislature, through the transportation funding package, also directed the state to implement freeway tolling in the Portland area.

The group has already claimed a partial victory.

Aides to Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who oversees Portland's Transportation Bureau, said he'll seek a resolution asking the state to implement tolls before beginning the freeway expansion project. Such a resolution wouldn't be binding.

Saltzman and the transportation bureau, however, are supportive of the I-5 expansion project the state transportation department has proposed, which includes covers over the freeway that could improve movement on surface streets, including for bicyclists and pedestrians.

"We see the Rose Quarter project as really reconnecting the central city," said Art Pearce, the Transportation Bureau's manager for projects and planning. "It has the potential to reconnect the area, make it more of a destination ... and having more of the bike and pedestrian streets people have come to expect in other parts of Portland."

The state, Pearce said, originally proposed a much larger expansion of the freeway. What's proposed today represents years of negotiations that curtailed those earlier plans.

"It will indeed help the operations of the system, but it's not designed to be a substantial expansion of the capacity," Pearce said. "That's what makes it a compromise."

The Portland region famously, and successfully, resisted the construction of the Mount Hood Freeway, which would have run through Southeast Portland to Gresham and Sandy. The project was canceled in 1974.

More recently, the Columbia River Crossing project to replace the I-5 bridge over the Columbia River collapsed under withering criticism from both environmentalists and budget hawks.

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ODOT and the city of Portland will hold an open house on the I-5 Rose Quarter project at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 12, at the Matt Dishman Community Center, 77 N.E. Knott St. in Portland.

## **Eagle Creek Fire Managers Won't Drop Retardant on Bull Run Except to Save Lives**

*By Rob Davis  
September 7, 2017*

Although the Portland Water Bureau authorized toxic fire retardant drops in the city's pristine Bull Run drinking watershed, firefighters say there is little chance they will use it.

Lt. Damon Simmons, a spokesman for the Oregon State Fire Marshal, said fire retardant would not be dropped in Bull Run "except to save lives - that's it." None has been used against the Eagle Creek fire.

"Right now I feel good about the Bull Run," Simmons said. "It's a concern for us, but I feel like it's doing OK right now with current conditions."

He said the fire has barely touched the watershed that yields tap water for about 1 million people in Portland.

The 33,382-acre fire has not burned deeper into Bull Run since Tuesday. An analysis of fire maps by The Oregonian/OregonLive found that in the last day, the fire expanded by only about 8 acres inside a protective buffer surrounding the Bull Run drainage. That brings the total area burned in Bull Run to 105 acres - less than 1 percent of the total protected area.

Protecting the 102-square mile drainage is a firefighting priority, Simmons said.

A major stand-replacing fire in Bull Run, which hasn't burned over since 1493, would be catastrophic for Portland's water supply. City records say the impact on water quality "would be

immense, and would cause a very significant multi-year water supply emergency" for the city and its wholesale water customers.

The city and U.S. Forest Service agreed in 2008 that retardant could be used in Bull Run. The agreement between the two agencies allows federal fire managers to apply the red slurry without permission during an initial attack. But if a fire persists, the agreement says, the federal agency must coordinate with the city.

After the Eagle Creek fire started, the Forest Service notified the city Sept. 4 that it might use retardant, the Portland Water Bureau said.

The bureau acknowledged in a written statement on Sept. 6 that it "has authorized unified command to use whatever measures are necessary to fight the fire within the watershed and is prepared to support their efforts in any way we can."

In a subsequent email, the bureau said it "has anticipated the possibility of needing to authorize the use of retardant" and had developed a plan for monitoring its use.

Jaymee Cuti, a bureau spokeswoman, refused to say which city official authorized it.

Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees the water bureau, said the water bureau's director, Michael Stuhr, is handling day-to-day coordination with fire managers. Fish said the U.S. Forest Service told city staff earlier this week that retardant could be used in extreme circumstances.

"They did not object, nor have I," Fish said in a statement.

Retardant poses risks to fish and water quality. An accidental drop in a Deschutes River tributary in 2002 killed 22,000 fish. Firefighters are not allowed to apply it within 300 feet of water except when someone's life is in danger.

Cuti said if retardant got into Portland's water supply, the most likely impact would be an increase in the water's nutrient load and a potential increase in algae production. Algae can make water taste and smell bad.

Retardant is 85 percent water, 10 percent ammonium phosphate fertilizers and 5 percent corrosion inhibitors and thickeners.

The Forest Service uses retardant in fewer than 1 in 10 fires, said Jennifer Jones, an agency spokeswoman. The Forest Service has dropped 92,000 gallons on fires in the Columbia River Gorge and Mount Hood National Forest since 2014.

"When a fire is getting away from you, it's a really important tool to slow the fire down so you can get firefighters safely there on the ground," Jones said.

The practice has drawn two lawsuits from the Eugene-based Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, which forced the Forest Service to study the environmental impacts of retardant use.

Andy Stahl, the group's executive director, has said that retardant would be a waste on the weather-driven Eagle Creek fire. "There is no evidence that it serves any useful purpose in stopping forest fires," he said in an interview Wednesday.

The water bureau on Thursday temporarily dialed back its use of Bull Run water because of delays in a shipment of ammonia to the city's Lusted Hill treatment facility. Half of the city's water is coming from its Columbia South Shore groundwater supply for the next day. It will take about two weeks for the mixed supply to reach Portland's taps.

# The Portland Tribune

## Payback, But How Many Will Return

By Peter Korn

September 7, 2017

### City navigates breakthrough Right of Return policy for those displaced from North and Northeast Portland by gentrification

Cupid Alexander has no idea how many of the 1,100 people who have applied for housing under the Portland Housing Bureau's new preference policy for North and Northeast Portland are black. Which sort of makes sense, and sort of doesn't.

Alexander has been in charge of implementing the application process for the country's largest neighborhood-wide Right of Return policy. The first round of applications has closed for those seeking a city subsidy that will help them buy homes in North/Northeast or stay in their current North/Northeast homes. Next year will start another round of applications for people competing for rent-subsidized apartments in North/Northeast.

The entire neighborhood has been broken down block by block into one, two and three-point zones which represent the extent that urban renewal took place there. Prove your parents or grandparents lived in a three-point zone and those three points are yours. Prove you live or lived in a three-point zone and add another three points to your total. Prove somebody in your family lived in one of the hundreds of homes that were seized by the city through the right of eminent domain and you go to the top of the list, regardless of how many total points you earned.

The plan is that any new homeowner grants or subsidized apartments involving city money in North/Northeast from now on will go to people with the highest point totals. That's social engineering on a grand scale, and groundbreaking public policy, says Justin Steil, a housing and law expert at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

New York, Oakland and San Francisco have all tried to give residents of gentrifying areas preference when a subsidized apartment building goes up in their neighborhood, Steil says. But until now no city has tried to give preference to residents who live outside a neighborhood on the basis of their parents or grandparents having lived there.

"My guess is this is the broadest Right of Return policy a city has created," Steil says. "It's challenging because the nature of cities and urban America is that neighborhoods change."

Part of the challenge, Steil says, is trying to address a hot button issue without mentioning it. That issue is race. Portland officials have acknowledged that past urban renewal policies unfairly targeted the black community. They want to use housing policies to decrease the black exodus from gentrifying North/Northeast. But the federal Fair Housing Act says they can't discriminate in any way on the basis of race.

"How do you do the first without doing the second?" Steil asks.

Portland's approach is to insist the preference policy isn't about race, it's about geography. Everyone who meets income requirements and who lived in North/Northeast, or whose parents or grandparents lived there, can tally their points and apply for homeowner loans or subsidized apartments as they are built. Even at its height as the home of Portland's black community 40 years ago, Albina was about one-quarter white.

"They did it by race but they can't undo it by race. That's the irony," says Portland State University associate professor Karen Gibson, whose "Bleeding Albina" details the impact urban renewal had on Portland's black community.

Gibson says the city's preference policy isn't perfect. She acknowledges that many people, for instance those with roots in other city neighborhoods that underwent urban renewal, might feel the new policy isn't fair. That might include Jewish and Italian residents whose former neighborhood on the south end of downtown was destroyed by urban renewal in the 1960s.

But the policy is fair, Gibson says, if people are willing to accept that undoing racism inevitably appears unjust in the same way the original racist policies were unjust.

"Whatever it is people are not going to like it," Gibson says.

Kurt Creager, the housing bureau's director, isn't shy about the depth of social engineering the preference policy is trying to address. As he sees it, black homeowners who left Albina 40 years ago left before neighborhood housing prices skyrocketed and lost out on the opportunity to accumulate wealth they could pass on to their children and grandchildren. The preference policy is an attempt to reverse some of that.

"We're trying to deal with the corrosive effects of inter-generational wealth building," Creager says.

The city is directing at least \$50 million in spending to North/Northeast and over the next decade or longer thousands of new residents in that area will be those who score highest due to their parents and grandparents. The preference policy isn't a one-time thing. "It could go on in perpetuity as far as I'm concerned," Creager says.

Incidentally, Alexander makes clear he doesn't use the phrase Right of Return because the city policy gives preference, but no guarantees, to those whose families have lived in North/Northeast. Jo Anne Hardesty, a former state representative and president of Portland's branch of the NAACP, prefers another word anyhow.

Now, the city is embarking on a pioneering program to bring back the descendants of old neighborhood residents, but Burch, shown here with relatives, is dubious about the plan.

"No one wants to use the word reparations, but that would be a more honest way to address this systemic disinvestment in the black community," Hardesty says.

The housing bureau's insistence that the North/Northeast preference policy is not about race extends to the application forms filled out by over 1,100 residents so far. The forms don't ask applicants their race. That makes no sense, in Hardesty's view.

"How are they going to know whether or not they have made reparations to the black community if they have not actually identified the race of the applicants?" she says.

Hardesty calls the new policy "a worthy vision," but says a more honest process wouldn't limit those who receive the most points to buying homes or renting subsidized apartments in North/Northeast. She'd rather the points be seen as what they are—evidence that a family was victimized by discriminatory policies—and that high scorers be given assistance to buy homes or rent apartments in whatever city neighborhood they wish.

"Let those families decide where they want to live," Hardesty says.

According to Hardesty that could never happen. "Politicians would have to be honest and say this is reparations," she says

It would also be "mindbogglingly difficult" to try and assess the eligibility for reparations on a family by family basis, says Alan Mallach, a senior fellow at the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Community Progress. For one thing, there are no objective criteria. Also, much of the information that would prove which families are most worthy may no longer exist.

"I find it half wacky and half admirable," Mallach says of Portland's policy. "The concept is admirable...You're trying to provide a generic remedy for a generic harm rather than an individual remedy for an individual harm."

Do people earning housing assistance because of their family history truly feel connected to North/Northeast or are they simply looking for better housing, Mallach asks. And should that matter?

"The question is, does the grandchild of the person wronged have a right to remedy?" he asks. "The whole question of reparations sends a whole lot of people screaming right off a cliff. It's the grand kids of the offended giving the grand kids of the people who were harmed a remedy. On balance I kind of like it. But at the same time, the race issue is difficult."

Mallach sort of likes Hardesty's idea of giving the highest scorers preference for housing anywhere in the city.

"It's not like people are going back to the same neighborhood," he says of gentrified North/Northeast. "They're going back to the same geographic coordinates." The real problem with giving high scorers a choice of neighborhoods? "You're going to piss off four times as many people," Mallach says.

Development consultant Jeana Woolley has lived in North/Northeast since 1970 and was hired to research the families and black businesses that were displaced as part of the Emanuel Hospital expansion project in the early 1970s.

On her Northeast Portland block there are about 16 homes, and 20 years ago, Woolley says, all but three were owned by blacks. Today all but three are owned by whites. But Woolley isn't sure if her black neighbors who left—or their children or grandchildren—are owed anything by the city.

Most of those departed neighbors were the children of the homes' original owners, who sold the properties after their parents died. "They basically chose a paycheck," Woolley says. "It sounded like a lot of money."

In Woolley's view, families who rented in North/Northeast suffered more hardship than those who owned and sold homes, and should get priority. Many of them—whether their houses or apartment building were knocked down or simply became unaffordable as the neighborhood gentrified—had to find homes with higher rents, and in neighborhoods where they were not welcome.

"The renters really didn't have a choice," Woolley says.

For a Right of Return policy to work, the people who have that right need to know about it. Housing bureau officials over the last year have made presentations at 42 community centers, 18 libraries and 24 nonprofits, and over 3,000 city residents received direct mail about the program. But as far as Germaine Flentroy is concerned, the outreach isn't working.

Flentroy until recently was director of community safety for the Rosewood Initiative, a community center on Southeast 162nd Avenue that serves many displaced Northeast Portland residents. He says virtually none of the people he works with are familiar with the preference policy.

"East County has never heard of this," Flentroy says of the preference policy.

Flentroy says when the city needs to talk to its black community, officials typically deal with what he calls "safe bet African-Americans," black residents from the inner North/Northeast who are connected to traditional neighborhood institutions and accustomed to dealing with City Hall.

According to Faye Birch, who co-owned a house on North Williams Avenue until selling it to the city last year for a proposed neighborhood cultural center, Portland's black community doesn't trust the Portland Housing Bureau to fairly implement a Right of Return policy, and to do it with transparency.

"They're trying to recreate a black community that they destroyed," Birch says. "They're probably not the ones to do it."

Birch and her sister Avel Gordly inherited the house on North Williams which their parents bought in 1949—before most black families arrived in North/Northeast. In fact, Birch says, black families couldn't buy homes in that neighborhood then, so her parents had a white Jewish friend buy the house for them.

Birch, incidentally, prefers the term "Right of Return," because "preference policy" to her sounds too much like affirmative action.

Lisa Bates, director of Portland State University's Center for Urban Studies, also prefers "Right of Return." And she says that the program should not be limited to low and moderate income qualifiers.

"Racism affected all incomes of people," Bates says.

Bates is also concerned about what she calls "micro-segregation." She's not sure how much progress will have been made if North/Northeast becomes increasingly white and high-income except for the black families placed in city subsidized apartment buildings. She'd like to see the preference policy help middle class blacks stay in and return to the neighborhood.

All of which only emphasizes that it's impossible to design a Right of Return or reparations policy that will be fair to everyone, Bates says. Especially when fair housing law says the city can't simply provide either on the basis of race.

"It's a legal way of doing it," Bates says of Portland's preference policy. "If you are a proponent of direct reparations it's probably not the best way of doing it."

And it's unprecedented, says Center for Community Progress fellow Alan Mallach.

"It's the sort of thing that makes people in the rest of the country wonder if people in the Northwest have gone completely bonkers, but in a positive way," Mallach says.

Who wants to move back?

"Why would I want to move back?" asks Germaine Flentroy, who graduated from Jefferson High School in 1990 and now lives in Boring.

The city can offer Right of Return priority to residents whose families once lived in North/Northeast Portland, but Flentroy thinks most, like him, won't want to return. "The infrastructure has changed," he says. "You've got New Seasons and Whole Foods. The whole of Albina is not welcoming to us. They could give me a free household and I don't want to go back."

There are few black people in Boring, Flentroy says, but he likes the rural environment and he definitely likes the education his children have been getting at the schools there.

People all over the city are making compromises on where they live, says Portland Housing Bureau director Kurt Creager. He's not worried about a shortage of displaced families willing to accept grants or subsidized apartments to live back in North/Northeast.

Flentroy, who could get the full six points under the city's priority ranking system, is convinced many of those who do return to the old neighborhood will find themselves adrift in an unfamiliar and expensive environment, with few attainable jobs available close to where they live.

"They're going to be very unhappy," he says.

If the city wants to provide reparations for the families that were displaced, Flentroy says, the money would be better spent helping them purchase homes and create community where most of those displaced families now live—in East Portland.

But that doesn't fit Creager's vision for the preferential policy. "It might reinforce the diaspora," he says. "I'm not sure we want to do that."

## **No Fire Retardant Used in Bull Run Watershed Yet**

*By Jim Redden*

*September 7, 2017*

### **Portland Water Bureau considers it highly unlikely retardant could enter water supply system but is monitoring the quality and has a back up plan**

No fire retradant has yet been dropped in the Bull Run Watershed, although the U.S. Forest Service, which is fighting the fires in the Columbia River Gorge, has the authority to do so.

"The U.S. Forest Service will not normally make retardant drops in avoidance area," Oregon State Fire Marshal and Portland Fire & Rescue representative Lt. Damon Simmons said Thursday morning. "Number one on the list of avoidance areas is watersheds. Retardant is not dropped on watersheds unless there is an imminent threat to life."

The watershed is the primary source of water for Portland and much of the rest of the region. According to the Portland Water Bureau, which owns and operates the reservoir and distribution infrastructure in the watershed, the forest service said on Monday that it would use retardant if necessary.

But as of Thursday morning, the bureau says the fire is only at the outskirts of the protected area in the watershed. Its progress slowed overnight as temperatures and the wind dropped.

The use of fire retardant in the watershed is authorized by the Fire Protection Plan for the Bull Run Management Unit prepared and periodically updated by the forest service in consultation with the bureau and the Oregon Department of Forestry. The plan includes specific provisions for fire prevention, detection, and suppression. The plan and national policy prohibit the use of retardant near waterways.

The bureau says it has taken steps to prepare for the possible use of retardant. It continues to monitor water quality to ensure the water remains safe. In the unlikely event that any retardant enters the water supply, the most likely impact would be an increase in the water's nutrient load and a potential increase in algae production.

If necessary, the bureau is prepared to switch the water supply to its backup groundwater wells along the Columbia River.

The bureau says that is continuing to work closely with the Incident Command, which has the authority to manage the fire. In the event that retardant is used, the bureau will share that information with the public as soon as it is notified by U.S. Forest Service.

By coincidence, the bureau began blending the two water sources Thursday. The activation of the well field was in response to a temporary shortage of ammonia at the bureau's Lusted Hill treatment facility. Due to the shortage, the bureau was unable to treat a sufficient amount of water from the Bull Run to meet all customer demands. As a result, the bureau is blending groundwater at approximately 50 percent.

The shortage resulted from transportation delays. A delivery was expected within 24 hours, which will allow the bureau to return to 100 percent Bull Run.

You can read the fire protection plan at [www.portlandoregon.gov/water/article/654687](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/article/654687).

## **Despite Opposition, Saltzman Still Backs Rose Quarter Freeway Improvements**

*By Jim Redden  
September 8, 2017*

### **City transportation commission urges Portlanders to learn more about current version of project at Tuesday open house**

Transportation Commissioner Dan Saltzman is still committed to completing the freeway improvements in the Rose Quarter, despite the organized opposition to the project expressed during Thursday's City Council meeting.

In a lengthy statement posted on his website, Saltzman, who is on charge of the Portland Bureau of Transportation, agreed with critics that the state should impose tolls on I-5 and I-84 to discourage driving in the area as soon as possible.

But Saltzman also said the project is far more than simply a freeway expansion, as the critics claim. As refined and approved by the council in the N/NE Quadrant Plan, Saltzman argues it is a safety improvement and redevelopment project that will help unite the area by adding pedestrian and bike connections, too.

"This project is but one piece of a larger vision for significantly improving the Lloyd District, Lower Albina, and the Rose Quarter. The N/NE Quadrant Plan, which encompassed these Central City districts and was adopted by City Council in 2012, was developed to integrate land use, urban design, and transportation strategies to guide future development in the area," Saltzman said in the statement that was posted on Sept. 7.

The Oregon Department of Transportation has declared the Rose Quarter the most congested bottleneck on I-5 in the state. The 2017 Oregon Legislature included funding to finalize planning on the project in the \$5.3 billion transportation package it approved earlier this year. Total projects costs are estimated at \$450 million.

The project is opposed by a coalition of environmental and alternative transportation organization calling themselves No More Freeway Expansions. They include OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon, the Audubon Society of Portland, BikeLoudPDX, and the NAACP Portland Branch. Several representatives testified during the first hearing on the Central

City Plan update that the project is a waste of money that will only increase congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Saltzman was ill and did not attend the meeting. But in his statement, he said that he will bring a resolution to the council this fall to ensure a variety of goals are met as the project moves forward. In addition to calling for tolls that increase during times of peak congestion, the resolution will seek to ensure the project does not take city funds from other necessary transportation projects and that it respects the history and character of the area.

Saltzman also urged interested Portlanders to attend the first open house on the project, scheduled from 5 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 12, at the Matt Dishman Community Center, 77 NE Knott Street, Portland.

To read Saltzman's statement, go to [www.portlandoregon.gov/saltzman](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/saltzman).

For more information on the project, visit [i5rosequarter.org](http://i5rosequarter.org).

To read a previous Portland Tribune story on the issue, go to [portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/371100-253913-just-say-no-to-freeways](http://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/371100-253913-just-say-no-to-freeways).

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **A Shake Up at the City's Office of Neighborhood Involvement Has Managers Packing Their Bags**

*By Dirk VanderHart  
September 7, 2018*

The axe finally fell at the city's Office of Neighborhood Involvement on Wednesday.

In a shake-up that had been expected for months, three managerial spots within the troubled bureau have been converted to lower-paying positions, sending two members of the ONI management team out the door in coming weeks. At the same time, two more high level employees have recently departed the bureau for new city positions, and ONI recently got a new full-time director, Suk Rhee.

"We're trying to take a more methodical approach to how to organize the work there," says Marshall Runkel, chief of staff to Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees the bureau. "That's what the re-organization is really all about."

The result is a sea change in the leadership of a many-pronged bureau that's seen plenty strife in the last year.

Last November, a city audit painted leadership of ONI as rudderless, and suggested the bureau had favored some neighborhoods over others when distributing grant money. The audit put a target on the back of Amalia Alarcon de Morris, a longtime ONI employee who'd been the bureau's director for more than a decade. Morris stepped down in March, under pressure from Eudaly's office.

But it wasn't enough to clear the air.

In April, news broke that ONI employees hadn't been turning in receipts for their purchases on city-owned credit cards, and that more than \$120,000 in funds couldn't be accounted for. That led to threats from the city's Office of Management and Finance to suspend the credit cards of 34

ONI employees, according to the Oregonian. The bulk of unaccounted for employee expenses, once reported, were legit.

Still, the culture of the bureau was troubled, observers say. Eudaly appointed her then-deputy chief of staff, Dave Austin, to take over the bureau while a new director was found. Austin set into motion a series of changes announced by Rhee in a memo to employees [PDF] on Wednesday, in what she called a "an intentional redesign of ONI's structure to support closer working relationships between the Director role and program centers."

Under the redesign, three management positions have been downgraded to "coordinator" jobs, a distinction which limits the power people filling those positions will have without approval from Rhee. At the same time, cannabis policy within the bureau has been given a more prominent role. Here's a list of the reclassifications:

For two ONI managers, Theresa Marchetti and Brian Hoop, the changes meant reapplying for jobs that had less authority and lower pay. Both Marchetti and Hoop have instead decided to leave the city in coming weeks, according to Rhee's memo.

Marchetti oversaw livability programs, like liquor licensing, graffiti abatement, noise control, and cannabis regulation. Hoop had sway over a host of neighborhood-focused programs.

Two other senior ONI staff departed prior to the restructuring: former Crime Prevention Manager Stephanie Reynolds and Operations Manager Amy Archer-Masters, who took a job at Portland Parks and Recreation. Reynold's position (which is now a coordinator position rather than manager) has been filled. Archer-Masters' has not.

Rhee wrote in her memo to employees that she's hoping to fill the vacancies left by Marchetti, Hoop, and Archer-Masters "sooner rather than later so that we can provide stability to our bureau operations and culture, and move forward in key strategic planning and budgeting functions."

"I know that responses to change can range between welcome and exhilarating to exhausting and unsettling, and everything in-between," the memo concluded. "As we move forward, I share my expectation and optimism that each of you bring your best selves to the work—I have seen it and experienced it already."

## **Former Top Aide to Chlow Eudaly Has a New Job – and an Atypical Paycheck – in Two of Her Bureaus**

*By Dirk VanderHart  
September 7, 2017*

It took a while, but Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's office finally found a way to pay a high-ranking aide the money it had promised: By giving him an entirely new job.

Dave Austin—who joined Eudaly's office as Deputy Chief of Staff but in recent months helmed the troubled Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI)—took on a new role on Tuesday. In a bit of juggling that doesn't appear to have precedent, Austin will now serve as a public information manager for two bureaus controlled by Eudaly, a maneuver that allows him to receive higher pay than would normally be allowed, according to Marshall Runkel, Eudaly's chief of staff.

Under the city's current pay scale, the classification for Public Information Manager tops out at an annual salary of \$105,851—more than the max \$93,434 Austin could make as an aide in

Eudaly's office, but less than he was making at Multnomah County as a communications director.

So Eudaly's office has gotten permission from the city's Bureau of Human Resources to do something unconventional. Under an arrangement that began earlier this week, Austin will spend much of his time running communications at the Bureau of Development Services (BDS), where he now has an office. But he'll also steer public information at ONI. And he'll still apparently offer assistance to Eudaly's office.

ONI and Eudaly's office will chip in a combined \$19,000 on top of Austin's BDS salary, landing him \$124,900 a year, according to Runkel.

"We're buying back some of that time," he says.

The result is a job that has little, if any, precedent in Portland's commission form of government, where control of bureaus can be re-dealt like playing cards at the whims of the mayor, and commissioners can wildly diverge on the messages they want to send. The city's bureaus often employ their own public information officers to respond to media requests, author press releases, and do other duties. Having a single person in charge of public outreach for two bureaus is unconventional (the Bureau of Human Resources hasn't responded to our inquiries about precedent).

But Austin, a former Oregonian reporter who arranged a central communications structure for the various departments of Multnomah County, argues it helps put out a strong message.

"I'm not shy about saying when I was at the county, our exposure was way better than the city's when it came to media stories, getting the word out," he said today. "Now I'm at the city. Why not take advantage of that expertise and experience?"

Both Runkel and Austin say the new role will be about more than talking to media. Austin laments the state of the websites for both bureaus that now employ him, and says they need to better explain to the public what they do.

Eudaly's office had long planned to put Austin to work running communications for its two bureaus—and pay him more in the bargain—but the arrangement it's arrived at is somewhat unexpected. As we reported in March, Runkel had initially hoped to tap an old budgetary strategy that was in vogue during his first tour through City Hall, as a staffer for former Commissioner Erik Sten.

Back then, it was common for commissioners to pay for personal aides by dipping into the budgets of bureaus they controlled. Former Mayor Charlie Hales put an end to that practice, though, meaning Eudaly's office needed to find a new arrangement.

Austin insists he wasn't clamoring for a higher salary, but says he took the job with the city with an understanding that Eudaly would try to meet his county paycheck (something Runkel confirms). He was brought onto the city's payroll making \$93,434, but that pay shot up by 54 percent (to a rate of \$143,811 a year) when he took over ONI as interim director in March. He crafted a shake-up of the bureau before handing it off to new full-time Director Suk Rhee.

Austin's new position will create questions in City Hall: Is he trying to form up another centralized communications office, as he did with the county? We asked, and Austin would only say: "I'm focused on these two bureaus. I'm gonna make damn sure that we improve the ability to let the public know the work we're doing and why it's important. If I can do it, then we'll be successful."

**OPB**

## **Why the Eagle Creek Fire Is a Major Threat to Portland's Drinking Water**

*By Amelia Templeton  
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Of all the resources that hang in the balance as firefighters attempt to slow the growth of the Eagle Creek Fire, one stands out: the Bull Run watershed.

It's 150 square miles of hemlock, fir and cedar trees just south of the Columbia River Gorge. The forest soaks up rain and fills the lakes and reservoirs that provide drinking water for close to 1 million people in Portland, Gresham, Beaverton and Tigard.

The watershed is part of the Mount Hood National Forest. It's protected by special legislation that limits logging, hiking and most human activities to avoid contaminating the water.

On a map, the boundaries of the Bull Run are shaped like a triangle, with its tip pointing at the Columbia Gorge.

As of Thursday, the perimeter of the Eagle Creek Fire looked a little like a claw reaching for the Bull Run.

"The fire is all across the north flank of the watershed, within the gorge," said Edward Campbell, director of resource protection and planning for the Portland Water Bureau. "It's not too nuanced. The widespread nature of the fire, the weather forecasts of not seeing significant rains mean that we're going to be coexisting with this fire for some time."

Campbell said the fire is without question the most serious threat to Portland's drinking water supply in many years. Fire managers said Thursday they were allocating additional crews and resources to help protect the Bull Run.

They've identified a Bonneville Power line on the northwest edge of the watershed and some old roads that could serve as a fire line if needed and a small lake in the watershed where helicopters can fill up buckets of water to drop on the fire.

"We are allowing helicopters to draw water from Blue Lake. It is not a body of water that we supply to you as customers," said Nicole Adams, a bureau spokeswoman.

More controversially, Campbell said the bureau has authorized the U.S. Forest Service to drop fire retardant in the watershed if necessary.

"The current circumstances are such that we do not in any way want to provide any restrictions in the set of tools that the firefighters have," he said.

The retardant is fertilizers, made of ammonium compounds mixed with water, which can form a combustion barrier between fire and vegetation.

A fire management plan for the Bull Run, written in 2014, spells out the possibility that the Forest Service may need to use such chemicals during an extended firefight — but only with prior approval from the Water Bureau.

In recent years, the Forest Service has come under criticism for using retardant too often — and for the harm retardants can cause to fish populations. In 2011, the agency agreed to direct firefighting pilots not to drop the stuff within 300 feet of waterways.

Firefighters have yet to actually use retardant in the Bull Run, Campbell said. If that does happen, the Water Bureau will test for any impacts to water quality.

“The types of issues we’d be looking at are the same you would find from a discharge of fertilizer into an area,” he said.

### **A Pristine Water Source**

The Bull Run has provided Portland with abundant, pristine and affordable drinking water for more than a century. It’s a point of pride for many Portlanders.

The water supply is also uniquely vulnerable to a large fire.

It’s one of the last unfiltered drinking water sources of any large city in the country, making it ill-equipped to respond to erosion and changes in water quality that a fire can trigger.

A 2007 management agreement between the Forest Service and the city of Portland spells out what could happen if a fire burns a significant percent of the watershed area.

“The impact on water quality of a large stand replacing fire would be immense, and would cause a very significant multi-year water supply emergency for the City of Portland and its wholesale customers,” the document states.

To be clear, Portland is still far from that nightmare scenario.

On Tuesday, the Portland Water Bureau announced the Eagle Creek Fire had crossed into the Bull Run Management Unit boundary.

But they also said repeatedly that the city’s water supply remains safe.

The point at which the fire has encroached into the Bull Run management area is about 15 miles from critical infrastructure in the watershed. That includes the two reservoirs, and Headworks, which is the intake and treatment facility at Bull Run.

And while the city has evacuated some non-essential employees from the watershed and canceled maintenance operations, four people have remained on site to keep the system running.

In other places, the fire has pressed even closer to that critical infrastructure. At Larch Mountain, the fire is burning less than 5 miles as the crow flies from Reservoir 1, and less than 8 miles from Headworks.

### **Area History With Fire**

To put the threat posed by the Eagle Creek Fire in historical perspective, it’s been more than 100 years since a major fire burned in the Bull Run watershed.

More than half the forest in the Bull Run is classified as old growth, and the last time a catastrophic fire burned the entire watershed was in 1492.

Scientists who reviewed the watershed in a 2001 paper described much of it as “older forests unburned for centuries.”

If a fire does burn through the Bull Run, the short-term impact is likely to be manageable, Campbell said.

The Water Bureau has been monitoring ash fall into the reservoirs, and so far, it’s had no discernible effect on water quality.

If the Eagle Creek Fire forced the agency to evacuate its remaining staff, they'd have to shut down Headworks and switch over to the city's backup water supply: groundwater wells along the Columbia River.

Those wells supply a little less water daily than the Water Bureau typically delivers to customers late in the summer.

At a recent Portland City Council meeting, Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees the Water Bureau, described this as a "the worst-case scenario."

"If we are required to go to well water," he said, "our capacity is slightly below what we're currently delivering through the Bull Run. So there will be an appeal, if we do that, by the mayor and me for people to exercise prudence around conservation."

Fish added: "This would not be the greatest time to leave your sprinklers on all day, or take your 15th bath all day."

In that scenario, Campbell said he expects the Headworks treatment facility, which is surrounded by a concrete parking lot, would be up and running again within a few days. And the Bull Run reservoirs would soon be back online.

The real risks to the system likely wouldn't strike until winter. Then, heavy rains could erode the fire-scoured landscape, washing mud and debris into the reservoirs.

Other water systems manage mud and dirt — "turbidity," in water-system speak — by filtering their water. But because the Bull Run system has been historically free of sediment and other contaminants, Portland received a waiver to federal filtration requirements.

So the only option, if turbidity exceeded federal limits, would be to switch over to the groundwater system.

"If we were faced with more frequent episodes of increased turbidity, that would then require us to do more frequent shutdowns of the Bull Run," Campbell said.

That could mean drawing water from the Columbia wells more frequently, potentially for several years in a row.

If that happened, Campbell said, "We'd be really starting to put a lot of stress on our groundwater system."

In fact, the risk posed by a large fire that could burn the Bull Run forest canopy was among the factors that drove the Portland City Council earlier this summer to approve a plan to build a new \$500 million filtration plant.

But that plant won't be built for a decade, at least.

In the meantime, Campbell and the bureau face a 30,000-acre fire at the watershed's doorstep.

Still, he — and the 1-in-4 Oregonians who rely on the Bull Run for their tap water — might get lucky this time.

This weekend, the forecast is calling for cooler temperatures — and maybe even a little rain.