



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Eagle Creek Fire: Bull Run Watershed Update** *Portland's Drinking Water Remains Safe*

The Eagle Creek Fire is one of the top fires in the nation.

The Unified Command is the lead agency in fighting this fire. The Portland Water Bureau is grateful that U.S. Forest Service has prioritized protection of the Bull Run Watershed among the many issues caused by the fire.

The Water Bureau's top priority is protecting the water supply and facilities in the watershed, and keeping its staff safe. This morning's update confirms that the fire remains on the edge of the protected area.

The U.S. Forest Service prepares and periodically updates a Fire Protection Plan for the Bull Run Management Unit in consultation with the Portland Water Bureau and the Oregon Department of Forestry. The plan includes specific provisions for fire prevention, detection, and suppression. The most current fire protection plan is available on the Portland Water Bureau website, posted at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/water/article/654687>.

The Portland Water Bureau does not have a direct firefighting role. The bureau works closely with the agencies in charge, which include U.S. Forest Service, the Oregon Department of Forestry, and local fire departments. The bureau provides information to the joint fire command to support management of the fires and protection of the watershed.

On Monday, Sept. 4, U.S. Forest Service notified the Portland Water Bureau that, if necessary, it would use fire retardant to fight the Eagle Creek fire. Under the terms of the Fire Protection Plan, U.S. Forest Service is authorized to use retardant under certain circumstances.

To date, fire retardant has not been used to combat this fire, including in the watershed.

“The U.S. Forest Service will not normally make retardant drops in avoidance area,” said Oregon State Fire Marshal and Portland Fire & Rescue representative Lt. Damon Simmons. “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 Portland Water Bureau has taken steps to prepare for the possible use of retardant by the U.S. Forest Service.

The bureau continues to monitor water quality to ensure that the water remains safe. The U.S. Forest Service Fire Protection Plan and national policy prohibit the use of retardant near waterways. 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.

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