



Josephine County Fair's first blue ribbon winners announced

ENTERTAINMENT, 6B

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Daily Courier

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\$301M already spent to fight Oregon wildfires

The state's 2018 fire season will be one of costliest on record

By Jeff Duewel
of the Daily Courier

If it seems like it's among the costliest fire seasons in memory in Southwest Oregon, it is.

Statewide, the 2018 fire season is actually behind the pace of the record-breaking 2017 season, which topped \$440 million in wildfire suppression costs.

That's for all land bases, and that figure is three times the average of \$145 million spent annually from 2010 through 2016, according to data from the

Northwest Interagency Coordinating Center.

So far in 2018, large fires in Oregon have cost \$301.6 million to fight, according to the NWCC. A large fire is categorized as anything more than 100 acres of forest or 300 acres of grassland. And Southwest Oregon has taken the biggest hit, with more than half of the state's total suppression costs.

The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest has already spent \$141.8 million fighting fires, with the Miles (\$66 million), Taylor Creek (\$25.8 million), Natchez (\$24.8 million) and Klondike (\$14.6 million) covering most of that.

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SCOTT STODDARD/Daily Courier

A hillside near Eight Dollar Bridge between Selma and Kerby burns Friday evening as the Klondike Fire continues to wreak havoc on the Illinois Valley.

TAYLOR CREEK FIRE
52,588
ACRES

PERSONNEL 632
CONTAINMENT 58%

KLONDIKE FIRE
66,332
ACRES

PERSONNEL 830
CONTAINMENT 15%

Sources: Taylor Creek and Klondike fire information officers

Winds drive 4,000-acre Klondike run

By Jeff Duewel
of the Daily Courier

The Klondike Fire burning west of Selma and Kerby made a run Friday evening into the night as winds picked up and stoked the flames.

The active fire and more burnouts near fire lines added 4,000 acres to the Klondike, which has now burned 66,332 acres since its ignition July 15 during a lightning outbreak.

It's the largest fire left in the immediate area and has put the communities of Selma and Kerby on edge the past two weeks, with flames visible from

Redwood Highway.

Another public meeting about the wildfire is planned for 6 p.m. Monday at Illinois Valley High School in Cave Junction.

Brentwood Reid, a spokesperson on the fire, said winds from the northeast pushed the fire into the Fall Creek drainage, where it moved 2 miles.

Dry conditions allowed the fire to burn into the night.

Fall Creek is west of Forest Road 029 that leads to the Baby-foot Lake Trailhead and the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. The

Turn to WINDS, Page 7A

Racing pigs have fairgoers squealing with delight



Photos by TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

Alaskan Racing Pigs Strawberry (left) and Sourdough Jack take to the track Friday as they are cheered on by fans including Drew Gasperson (raised arms). "It's awesome," he said. "I come out for every show. The pigs are kinda cute."

Not-so-thundering hooves barrel around track

By Jason McMillen
of the Daily Courier

When one thinks of racing, horses, dogs, athletes and drivers come to mind. But for the first time at this year's Josephine County Fair, piglets got in on the fun when the All-Alaskan Racing Pigs took the stage.

"It was cute, very cute," stay-at-home mother Amber Friend said. "I loved it and the kids loved it."

Friend, who lives in Medford, was accompanied by her two young children Kya and Eva, as well as her retired parents Will and Pam Abbot, who live in Grants Pass.

The family, who joined many others taking advantage of clearer skies as winds carried wildfire smoke elsewhere, was out to enjoy a day in the sunshine and have a little family fun.

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Deana Hicks, 10, is all smiles as she poses with Strawberry. Not only did Hicks have her photo taken with Strawberry but she picked up some pig paraphernalia and products, as well.

County set to close deal on riverfront property near fairgrounds

It will pay \$625,000 for 4.4 acres

By Shaun Hall
of the Daily Courier

Josephine County is about to close a \$625,000 deal to buy a piece of attractive riverfront property adjacent to the county fairgrounds and located just downstream from the city's Tussing Park.

The county Board of Commissioners is slated to vote Wednesday on the purchase, although specific plans for the land's future have not been announced.

Commissioners have talked about possibly moving the county's nearby public works facility and redeveloping nearby lands for a mix of hotel, retail and pedestrian-friendly uses, using public and private money. There have been moves to begin county and city master plans for the fairgrounds and surrounding neighborhood.

"There will be robust opportunities for public involvement and input" regarding the parcel's future, according to Helene Lulich, the county's real estate property manager.

The 4.4-acre parcel, which mainly sits atop a bluff where Allen Creek enters the Rogue River, would give the county nearly 600 feet of riverfront access. The property has lots of trees, some open areas and a home built in 1935. County assessor records put its value at \$472,000.

The location is across from the River Vista special events area of Reinhart Volunteer Park, and it's a few hundred feet downstream from that park's pedestrian bridge across the river.

Paired with the city's Tussing Park, which abuts the property via a narrow strip of city-owned land along the waterfront, the purchase would provide about a third of a mile of public ownership of riverfront land — about the same amount of river frontage found at Riverside Park, upstream of Caveman Bridge.

The parcel, once considered for a bed and breakfast, is zoned by the city for "riverfront tourist commercial" uses, which "should occur in a park-like setting," according to the city's urban renewal plan.

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Volunteers tackle relentless milfoil growth in Lake Selmac

By Jeff Duewel
of the Daily Courier

SELMA — Volunteer Mike Mazingo hurled a metal contraption vaguely resembling a leaf rake 15 or 20 feet into the weed-choked waters of Lake Selmac on Thursday morning.

It slowly sank, bubbling through a bed of greenery, before he pulled it back to the bank and hoisted a load of milfoil onto the ground.

The tool cuts through and, with razor-sharp outside edges, is part of an effort to remove a plague of the invasive plant from Josephine

County's most popular recreation lake. Volunteers from two local fishing clubs have been at it once a week since late June, and there's a push to get more help. The tool cuts through and at the same time collects weeds, but it's no match for a 160-acre lake full of the stuff.

"It's never-ending," said Mazingo, a member of the Southern Oregon Flyfishers. "You can throw it in the same spot and get weeds every time. We need more volunteers."

Lake Selmac, a reservoir that opened in 1961, has always had weeds, but they're getting

worse over time as sediment builds up and the lake shallows, anglers and biologists agree.

The weeds also were blamed for the death of about 100 large bass found floating just before Thanksgiving last year.

The short but intense event likely occurred from lack of

oxygen, triggered by decomposing mats of weeds. The larger fish are more susceptible to oxygen deprivation, according to fish biologists, and smaller fish and other organisms were not affected.

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