



DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

CHRIS BOICE TIM FREEMAN TOM KRESS

Douglas County Courthouse, Room 217
1036 SE Douglas Avenue, Roseburg, Oregon 97470

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 9, 2021

The Archie Creek Fire – One Year Later

(Douglas County, Ore.) There are a number of days in our history that will be remembered for many lifetimes, like the infamous events on December 7, 1941 in Pearl Harbor that impacted our greatest generation in WWII, or the blast in the early morning hours of August 7, 1959, that devastated downtown Roseburg and now the catastrophic wildfires that ignited on Labor Day Weekend 2020 (September 7, 8 and 9), that forever changed the community of Glide and left so many families up the North Umpqua Highway with no place to call home. We have now eclipsed the one-year milestone since our largest and most destructive wildfire in Douglas County history, the Archie Creek Fire. The first fire was near French Creek and ignited on Sunday, September 7, burning 495 acres before it was contained. The next morning a fire was reported near Star Mountain, then later that evening a fire started near Archie Creek. By the morning of Tuesday, September 9, those two fires merged and became what will be forever known as the [Archie Creek Fire](#).

The wildfire was unlike anything we had seen before. Almost immediately, bright red, orange and pink smoke plumes filled the skies, and every city and residences within the vicinity of the fire were on high alert for evacuation notices. Reports were saying that if the winds shifted, they might have to evacuate the City of Roseburg. For many residents this invoked a palpable sense fear and foreboding that this would definitely be different than any other wildfire. Even news reporter, David Ochoa with KPIC TV recalled in a post, *“I was called into work early that day to go to the scene of a different fire. As I was there, a call came over the radio that another fire had started nearby. The fire official I was with asked if we wanted to go see that one, and so we did. Along the way we stopped by spot fires that were right on the highway. A man came out and was obviously worried. He told me that he lived right down the road. I tried to ease his fears by telling him the firefighters were on it, but he knew this was different. Soon after Douglas County Sheriff John Hanlin and Commissioner Tim Freeman pulled up in a car to speak with firefighters. And that's when I knew this was serious. This all happened before noon.”*

Now, we all know that the North Umpqua Highway (Hwy 138) is no stranger to wildfire destruction, you can still see the burn scars and remnants of the Apple Creek and Susan Creek Fires that follow the Umpqua River through the canyon, but, the Archie Creek Fire was so very different. Not only did the fire ferociously burnup hundreds of acres of private, state and federally managed timber lands; it erased several favorite hiking spots, waterfall trails and picturesque views of the Umpqua River. It closed and damaged Hwy 138, and numerous side roads. It completely consumed 109 homes and 143 outbuildings. And ravaged over 170 properties and destroyed businesses in a matter of hours. When the fire was finally contained, 73 days later, it had burned an astonishing 131,542 acres of our county and an estimated 2 billion board feet of timber.

While several other fires over the years have endangered residents and homes, this fire showed no mercy. It was burning hot and traveling fast, and the Douglas County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) quickly mobilized their resources and immediately issued Level 1, 2 and 3 evacuation orders, closed roads and began the process of evacuating residents and animals. Due to the swift joint efforts of the DCSO, Douglas County Commissioners, Douglas County Search and Rescue (SAR), local firefighters and neighbors every door was knocked on and residents were escorted to safety. Thankfully, no lives were lost during the evacuation and rescue efforts. An estimated 3,000 people were displaced from the path of the wildfire as hundreds of firefighters, local contractors and county employees worked diligently to dig lines and try to save homes, animals and our forests.



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The Commissioners arranged for a temporary evacuation shelter to feed and house wildfire victims at the Douglas County Fairgrounds in Douglas Hall, in coordination with the American Red Cross and our local Salvation Army. They offered free camping space at the Fairgrounds RV Park and adjacent parking lot, and offered additional spots at other Douglas County Campgrounds. And, the Commissioners worked alongside DCSO Emergency Manager Wayne Stinson, and local businesses to help residents find hotels and other temporary housing. They opened up the livestock arenas, barns and the Floral Building at the Fairgrounds to temporarily rehouse dogs, goats, cows and donkeys. Meanwhile, Saving Grace Pet Adoption Center opened their doors to smaller animals like dogs, rabbits, cats and birds. Many local ranchers and horse stable owners offered their horse trailers, fields and barns for livestock hauling and boarding. The Fairgrounds staff, Douglas County Mounted Posse and other volunteers stepped up to feed, water and care for all the animals, as local businesses rushed to donate wood shavings, food, troughs, trailers, cages, pens and other supplies. DCSO Animal Control, Saving Grace, Strawberry Mountain Mustangs, Douglas County Public Works, Commissioner Kress, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and numerous local residents worked relentlessly in hazardous conditions to rescue and relocate stranded livestock, pets (including 30 cats from one residence) and over 600 brood stock fish from the Rock Creek Fish Hatchery. It truly was a no animal left behind effort.

The Commissioners also established a local resource hotline for Archie Creek Fire victims and volunteers. The hotline provided answers to frequently asked questions, evacuation information, road closures, housing information, animal resources and referrals to local resources. Numerous community members and businesses rallied support by organizing food and clothing drives, cooking and serving lunches and dinners, supplying free coffee, and by purchasing and delivering essential donations like toiletries, paper towels and soap to the victims. The Glide Community opened up several drop-in help centers at churches, schools and businesses to offer resources, clothing and vital information for the wildfire victims. For many, their power, water service and phone service were out for weeks and if not months. Hwy 138, side roads and driveways were destroyed or covered in debris or collapsed altogether. And, many waste treatment, sewer systems and water tanks were unsalvageable. With roads closed, evacuation orders in place, and the fire still raging, helpless residents anxiously awaited the news regarding the fate of their homes, treasures and properties. The Commissioners, DCSO, Fire Officials, Assessors Office, Building and Planning Departments, Red Cross, and other local service agencies jointly held private meetings for the wildfire survivors to release information and offer immediate resources. One-year later, the cause of the fire is still under investigation, but officials suspect it was largely fueled by a combination of high winds, extremely hot temperatures, drought conditions, and dry timber and grasslands.

“It is amazing how resilient and resourceful the citizens of Douglas County are, we come together in times of need and take care of our neighbors. It is one of the reasons I am so proud to call this my home,” commented Commissioner Tom Kress, who has worked tirelessly since September 2020, as a vital member of the Archie Creek Recovery effort. ***“A concerted effort was made from the very beginning of the Archie Creek wildfire with the coordination and support from the Douglas County Commissioners, DCSO, Emergency Management, Douglas County Search and Rescue, Douglas Forest Protection Association, Glide Rural Fire Protection District, Oregon Department of Forestry, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Oregon State Police. In the hours, days and months to follow, so many other agencies and county departments stepped up to help the wildfire victims including: Glide Strong, Glide Revitalization, Douglas County Public Works, Douglas County Parks Department, DCSO Animal Control, Douglas County Fairgrounds, Saving Grace Pet Adoption Center, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Douglas County Assessor’s Office, Strawberry Mountain Mustangs, Aviva Health, Mercy Medical Center, Douglas County Planning Department, Douglas County Building Department, Douglas County Parks Department, Douglas County Senior Services, Douglas County Human Resources, Greater Douglas United Way, Douglas Timber Operators, FEMA, Pacific Power, Oregon Army National Guard, Oregon Department of Transportation, numerous local businesses, local rural fire department and, local logging companies and so many more citizens from all over our county, state and country that are no less important, but too numerous to name.”***

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DCSO Emergency Manager Wayne Stinson, noted that the Archie Creek Fire Emergency is the largest ‘Individual Assistance’ event Douglas County has ever faced. *“Douglas County citizens have never experienced this level of personal loss before. The losses were tragic and horrific. We go through events like this, and try to assess procedures in real-time and the DCSO saw that an emergency of this magnitude necessitated a streamlining of how we conduct evacuation notifications, what works, what does not. We have since strengthened the evacuation process. Both the County and the State have learned from the Labor Day Emergencies and are coming out of this with better systems to help our citizens in the future.”* One of the newer systems put in place was a direct link to our Geographic Information System (GIS) map software that details the size, location and evacuation information for all local wildfires in real time. The map is currently available on the Douglas County Website in the Emergency Alert tab at the top of the page: <https://dcor.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c1c9e876f2ed4e1fbfb2eae280b7c57c>, and provides a footprint of the numerous wildfires currently burning in Douglas County.

Douglas County Archie Creek Wildfire Recovery At A Glance

It’s been a full year since the Archie Creek Fire, and while most of Douglas County was able to resume their lives, Glide residents and fire survivors are still living in the aftermath of the destruction. So, how is the recovery process going? Are families rebuilding? What follows is a look a look at the fire’s impact on Douglas County, and the concerted efforts to rescue, recover and rebuild the Glide community.

Long before the Archie Creek fire was listed as 100% contained on November 16, 2020, it was imperative that the Douglas County Commissioners quickly get a framework and systems in place to help expedite the recovery and cleanup process for property owners who lost their homes, businesses or structures in the wildfire. The first critical item in the process was to continue to ensure that displaced residents were safe, had a place to stay, and had the resources they needed to move forward. Commissioner Kress was appointed as the Liaison Commissioner for the Archie Creek Fire Recovery Effort and formed the Douglas County Recovery Team. Joining the team were DCSO Emergency Manager, Wayne Stinson, the newly appointed Recovery Coordinator, County Department Directors from Public Works, Planning, and Building and Allison Doty from Glide Revitalization.

In early October, Douglas County declared a [local state of emergency due to the wildfires](#) and notified residents of the planned two-phase process for safe property clean up. The County quickly established an [Archie Creek Wildfire Recovery webpage](#) with information on the [cleanup up process](#) and a [Wildfire Recovery Tool Kit](#), in coordination with Glide Revitalization to reach out to every affected homeowner. Additionally, the Douglas County Glide Transfer Site offered free disposal for all non-hazardous waste and wildfire related debris. To date, Douglas County Solid Waste has collected 8,339 tons of mixed debris from 65 private residential properties. The [Phase 1 Cleanup](#) (Household Hazardous Waste HHW, e.g. propane tanks, paint, chemicals) involved the coordination between our Public Works Department, the State of Oregon and the Environmental Protection Agency. The process was free to all homeowners affected by the Archie Creek fire. A right of entry (ROE) form was required in order for the Phase 1 process to begin. Public Works set out with a goal of getting 75% of the forms returned and achieved an 85% return. Once ROE forms were collected the process of clearing HHW began, and that process was completed in December 2020. [Phase 2 Cleanup](#) (Ash and Debris Removal), also free, started in January 2021, and was a coordinated effort with Douglas County Public Works, the State of Oregon and ODOT. Today, contractors are still in the process of removing hazard trees, as well as ash and debris from roads, shoulders, and properties, with completion expected between now and February 2022. The project was funded by the State of Oregon and to date FEMA has issued \$2,036,091 in funding for the Phase 1 and Phase 2 cleanup efforts in Douglas County. Additionally, the Commissioners have helped landowners, businesses and community service groups, like Glide Revitalization, secure numerous grants and funds for the rebuilding and recovery process.



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While we can read through all the data regarding homes lost, board feet of timber damaged and tons of debris still left to remove, it doesn't even begin to illustrate the very personal nature of grief and loss suffered by Archie Creek Fire victims. The Commissioners made it very clear that the highest priority was taking care of the community members impacted by the fire. Within days of the start of the fire, the Board hired a Douglas County Community Recovery Coordinator. Both Jenny Boyle and Dan Carr worked in that role and were critical in coordinating efficient short-term and long-term recovery efforts, ensuring that local residents were getting access to resources and that their immediate needs were being met.

"We wanted to do the right thing. We help our people first," said Kress about the initial emergency response. *"With the State of Oregon shut down due to COVID-19 and other counties dealing with wildfire destruction of their own, we wanted to make absolutely sure that we had everything ready for Oregon and FEMA to begin their Phase I efforts. Commissioners Boice, Freeman and I wanted survivors of this wildfire to get fast-tracked, and whenever possible, make sure that those landowners who wanted to rebuild were prioritized, and not impeded by today's zoning processes and building permits. We were grateful that the state worked with us and helped to loosen the restrictions for temporary housing. We did not want anything standing in the way of someone getting their home rebuilt. If they had a home before, they'd be getting a home again."*

It was all hands-on deck at the County and in our community, in order to facilitate the Commissioners' directives to prioritize the wildfire survivors first. Heather Coffel, the Douglas County Assessor and her staff, went to meetings and community events to offer information and resources to help reduce the burden for property taxes. Several members of the Douglas County Parks Department volunteered to take shifts at the Glide Revitalization Center established at old Glide Middle School. Scott Adams, Director of the Douglas County Public Works Department deployed road crews, initially removed hazard trees, and cut roads open, so that our Commissioners, State Agencies and other members from the community could get access to fire damaged areas. Joshua Shaklee, Director of the Douglas County Planning Department and Bill Clemens, Director of the Douglas County Building Department were instructed by Commissioner Kress to prioritize the Archie Creek Fire survivors, and to streamline their departmental processes so that there were no delays on the part of the County that would adversely impacting property owners from getting work done and starting the rebuilding process. Many other County Departments have also stepped up to help displaced residents, including Douglas County Senior Services Department, Douglas County Solid Waste, Douglas County Operations and Maintenance, Douglas County Human Resources and the Douglas County IT Department. All told, 17 Douglas County Departments and Divisions were involved the Archie Creek Recovery process.

Adams said the GIS mapping technology housed in the Public Works Department – Engineering and Construction Division, was also pivotal in determining where to focus recovery operations and in assessing the magnitude of the disaster. ESRI (Environment Rating Scales Institute, whom Douglas County contracts with for the GIS program), "flew" the Archie Creek Fire, and Mason, Bruce & Girard and Douglas Timber Operators developed a haunting before and after footprint of the fire devastation. [Click here to see the time lapse video.](#) *"Douglas County strives to get out in front of disasters to lessen the impact to the communities"* said Scott Adams, Douglas County Public Works Director. *"DCSO's immediate emergency response at the brink of the fire, to the joint efforts of multiple County resources, including the Douglas County Commissioners, Public Works, DCSO, our Recovery Coordinator, plus the strategic collaboration with Glide Revitalization, paved the way to a very forward-thinking preparedness plan. And, when the State of Oregon and FEMA stepped in, we were ready and had everything in place to help make the most resources available for the folks that were affected by the fire."*

According to Douglas County Planning Director, Joshua Shaklee, of those 170 impacted properties, the Planning Department has issued 45 Planning Clearance Worksheets since the fire, and 11 On-site Waste Water Management

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permits for septic systems as of August 11, 2021. County fees for those permits were ALL waived under the direction of the Douglas County Commissioners. *“As a county, we have been very proactive. The direction of the Commissioners was to remove as many barriers as possible for residents to return to their properties and start to rebuild. The priority has always been to get people back into their homes.”* Shaklee also noted that the Planning Department is standing by to assist affected landowners. They will be fast-tracked, and in many cases, worksheets can be approved within 30 minutes for replacement dwellings and other structures. Worksheets can then be submitted to the Building Department to apply for a building permit. The Douglas County Building Department noted that of the 45 planning worksheets issued to landowners, approximately 18 were for replacement dwellings, 16 single family dwellings (stick built), 3 manufactured homes and 13 accessory structures (pole barns, shops, carports, garages). In addition to the structures that are in the process of being rebuilt, there are several electrical permits submitted by property owners to get power to properties that haven’t yet begun the rebuilding process. This is one of the first permits applied for after the land use worksheet from planning is reestablished. Again, all fees for this process were waived by the Douglas County Commissioners for wildfire victims.

There’s no doubt of the amount of devastation incurred by the fires, but it’s important to recognize that a lot was learned in the process of both managing the emergency response to the crisis and in managing our recovery efforts. *“Moving forward, preparedness is one of the key strengths coming out of the process of our emergency response management, both at the County level and as a cooperative recovery effort for the Archie Creek Fire,”* stated Recovery Coordinator Dan Carr. *“We know we’ll have another disaster of some sort in the future, and we want to be able to pivot as necessary to mobilize quicker, especially in providing emergent support and immediate care to victims. From here on out, we’ve got the organizational skills and teams in place to tackle the challenges these disasters bring.”*

We would be remiss if we did not mention the efforts of [Glide Revitalization](#). The County’s efforts have been facilitated expeditiously in concert with Glide Revitalization. From day one, Glide Revitalization, led by Allison Doty, mobilized to serve as the all-encompassing hub for resources for the wildfire survivors. Originally founded to encourage economic development in the community, Glide Revitalization is now the trusted liaison for both community members, volunteers and government agencies. From helping survivors with their intake assessment to distribution of needed resources, to compiling crucial real-time data that would be utilized by all agencies (County, State and Federal) for widespread Recovery efforts, Alison has been at ground zero in the Glide community. Both Commissioner Kress and Scott Adams commented that her work throughout the entire process has been crucial. Adams described Glide Revitalization as the muscle behind the administrative arm of FEMA, noting that because of Doty’s efforts, our community members were receiving access/assistance to state and federal resources without the delays some of the other communities had been experiencing. With Glide Revitalization on the front lines doing intakes, the information she collected evolved into the shared database that all of our agencies were using. This database was utilized in conjunction with information supplied by the Assessor’s Office, which was then compared to information DSCO had gathered in rescue efforts, and then compared to properties and dwellings identified on the GIS to give a cumulative picture of the magnitude of this disaster. As part of the Recovery Team, Glide Revitalization was managing/coordinating the crisis response as the hub of it all, with 287 total cases opened and one year later, 166 cases still active. With that Phase I and II cleanup nearing completion, the focus now, one year later, is on rebuilding. Doty says the scope of Glide Revitalization’s current efforts include ensuring families have a warm place for the winter, and building necessary modifications to temporary dwellings such as ADA ramps, decks, and building sheds so that homeowners can lock up their tools.

According to Doty, the greatest need for the Rebuilding Effort is VOLUNTEERS. *“We have the materials and supplies, but we need help building these separate projects: replanting; building sheds and decks; people to help with ADA ramps; help clearing properties; a wood chipper to feed branches through and stump removal needs done by hand or by a small tractor.”* Doty said that some survivors have 1-2 acres, some have 360 acres, so the focus is on the

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properties with smaller acreage and then expand from there. For a complete list of ways to help, visit their website or [Facebook page](#). Other ways to help include: clerical work in the office, event planning/coordination, fundraising, handing out fliers. Glide Revitalization will be rebooting their “**MEET THE CHALLENGE**” challenge which rallies groups of people from a business, bank, or organization to work with Glide Revitalization on a build project for fire survivors, then turn around and offer a friendly challenge to another business. *“It’s a great way to help the community with teamwork and positive energy. It feels good to do good.”*

Speaking of good, Doty praised the work of the Douglas County Commissioners in their tireless efforts to serve their community as needed. *“Tom Kress is just the kind of person who cares about our people and our community, and wants them to thrive. Wayne and Tom have gone over and above with resources to help with the municipality. They’ve spent a lot of time with the organizations and they’re spending a lot of time fighting for their county. Scott Adams, Wayne Stinson, Dan Carr, and Commissioner Kress came to Glide Revitalization asking, ‘What do you need to do the work you need to do to provide for these families?’ and they did what they could to make it all happen. We are very fortunate to have the support of the Commissioners and Douglas County; other counties weren’t as fortunate as us.”*

Most of the fire-scorched land will gradually regenerate as the seasons pass, and someday be filled with lush green vegetation, towering trees and vivid wildflowers. We’ll witness the return of wildlife and woodland creatures, and the communities surrounding Glide will be bustling with new homes and shops again. However, the trauma endured by those who saw ashes and rubble where their homes and treasures once stood, will remain for a lifetime. Our community has had more than our fair share of days to remember over the last few years, and yet, it has not dampened our resolve, our fighting spirit, or our generous ways of taking care of each other. In fact, the hardships brought about by large-scale emergencies has only strengthened our incredible resilience. Our community has once again shown our strength in crisis with the Archie Creek Fire. We are tenacious, unshakably resolute and steadfastly determined to help our neighbors in need.

“As we reflect on the past year, and looking ahead to all that’s left to do, we are proud to say that the Archie Creek Wildfire Recovery has been a huge community wide effort, and not just from folks that are paid to do the work. We have had men and women with resources, and equipment show up to do anything and everything without being asked. People have moved animals, salvaged people’s livelihoods, saved fish from the Hatchery, all without asking anything in return. There are contractors donating time & building materials and even entire homes. These aren’t folks who get recognized for doing what they’re doing, and often don’t want to be recognized. But we want to thank them anyway. To all who have donated time, food, money, clothing, equipment, transportation, temporary housing, and more, we thank you. Let’s keep rallying as a community!” stated Commissioner Kress, on behalf of the entire Douglas County Board of Commissioners.

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