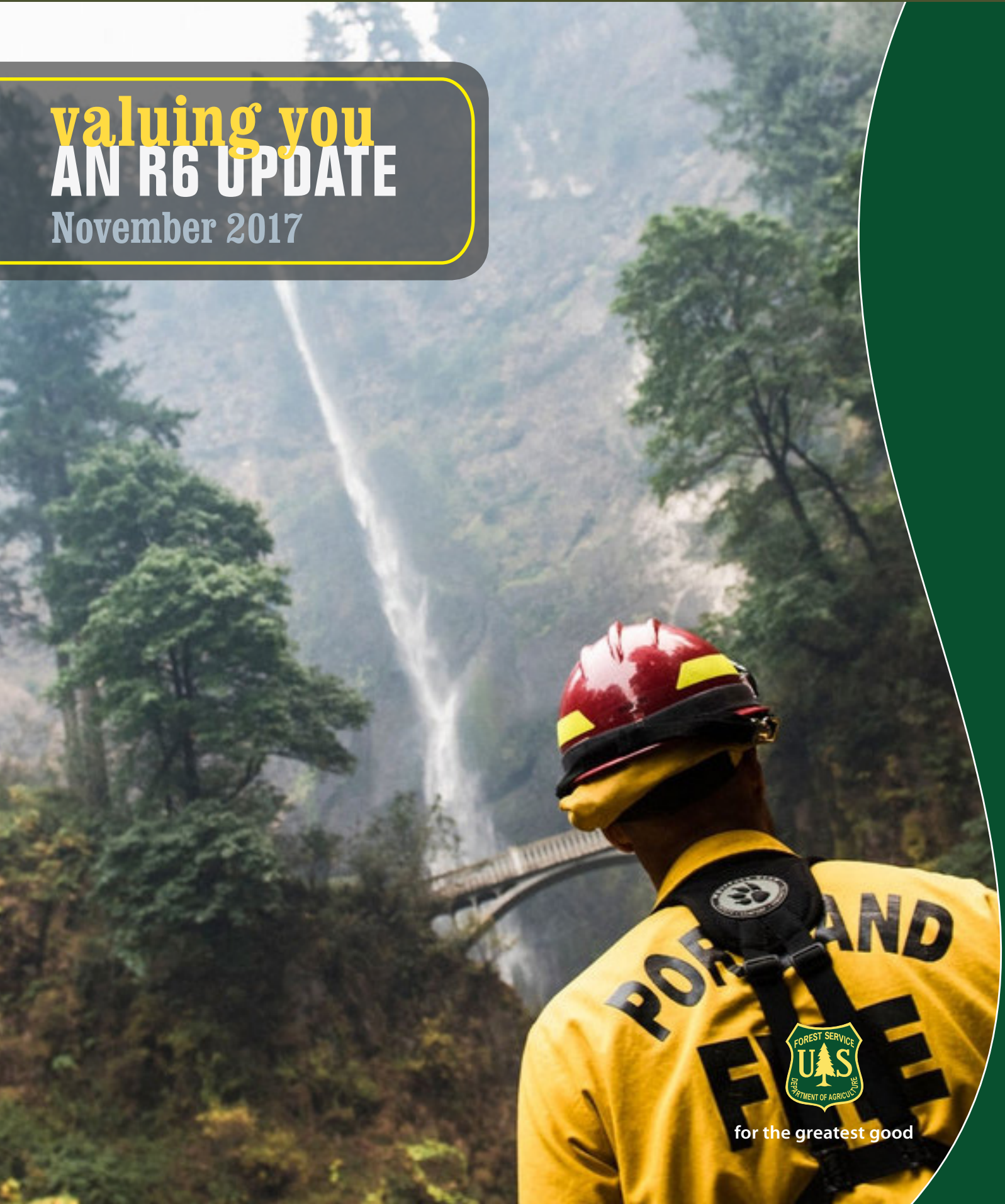




United States Department of Agriculture

valuing you AN R6 UPDATE November 2017



for the greatest good

the rescue AT EAGLE CREEK

On Saturday, September 2nd a group of teenagers playing with fireworks started the Eagle Creek Fire.

With its close proximity to Portland and its 2.5 million inhabitants, the Eagle Creek Trail is the most popular and heavily used trail in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Once part of the original Pacific Crest Trail, the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration built and developed the Eagle Creek Trail during construction of what is now the Historic Columbia River Highway in the 1930's.

There are several beautiful waterfalls along Eagle Creek, and with the hot and dry holiday weekend the trail was bustling with activity. While there were other fires burning nearby, the Punch Bowl Falls area was open and ready for business as visitors from around the world poured in to enjoy the cool waters and soothing scenery of one of the Gorge's most treasured places.

And then everything changed.



Cover: A Portland Fire Fighter watches over Multnomah Falls during the Eagle Creek Fire.

Photo Credit: Thomas Teal/Willamette Week

This Page: The Eagle Creek Fire roars to life. Photo Credit: hutchinson15/Reddit.com



There are a lot of stories in this story. Unfortunately we can not cover them all here today.

A group of teenagers are going to have to live with decisions that will probably haunt them for the rest of their lives. A landscape loved by millions and host to visitors from around the world is going to look different. There's going to be a lot of recovery work to be done.

But those are stories for a different day.

Today we celebrate a rescue.

Approximately 150 people were on the Eagle Creek Trail when the fire erupted. Dressed in tank tops, flip flops, shorts and swimsuits people were caught unprepared and no one expected to have to spend the night outside. Many people were involved in the planning and implementation of their rescue, but it was Sharon Steriti, Trail Crew Leader from the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument who kept everybody calm, cool and collected by hiking in and spending the night with the stranded visitors.

Thanks to people like Sharon everyone was able to make it out ok, but the group would have to make it through the night before they would make it home safely in time for dinner...

the rescue AT EAGLE CREEK



A helicopter watching overhead dropped a message with a change of plans. Photo Credit: Noah Brown/The Salem Statesman Journal

With a bang the Eagle Creek Fire sent up a column of smoke and people knew that it was quickly time to leave. Dozens and dozens of hikers began to congregate at Punch Bowl Falls as they began to weigh their options and to decide what to do next.

Overhead a helicopter dropped a canister to the group that contained two notes. The first said the fire was growing fast and that everybody needed to start heading down toward the Columbia River.

The second said to ignore the first message; that we can see you and to stay put. The second note said DANGER.

For a fleeting moment one of the hikers was able to get through to 911. With the rapidly growing fire now blocking their path to the trailhead, it was decided that the best course of action would be for the group to head further up the trail to meet up with rescue personnel who could then escort them out to safety.

It would end up being the last time the group would make contact with the outside world before being rescued.



On the way to safety. Photo Credit: Noah Brown/The Salem Statesman Journal



All of a sudden a simple day hike turned into an overnight experience. Photo Credit: Noah Brown/The Salem Statesman Journal

With flames quickly approaching and a helicopter watching overhead, the group hiked further and further up the trail as they pushed on into the wilderness.

Eventually the light gave way to darkness. But help was on its way, and after hiking 11 miles Sharon Steriti was the first person to reach the group.

Dressed in her Forest Service uniform, she was a welcome sight for the weary group where she set about to instantly put them at ease by handing out food and supplies. "You could see my patch and my badge," Sharon said. "It made a difference."

Guided by the glow of smartphones, headlamps and flashlights, Sharon led the group of 143 people and two dogs just past Tunnel Falls, where they would stop to rest for the night.

"I told them they probably wouldn't be the most comfortable..." Sharon explained. "But I reassured them that they'd be off of the trail by lunch and back home in time for dinner."



Photo Credit: Noah Brown/The Salem Statesman Journal



Hikers gather near the water during the early moments of the fire. Photo Credit: Noah Brown/The Salem Statesman Journal

the rescue AT EAGLE CREEK



Doing what it takes to get everyone home safely and in time for dinner. Photo Credit: David Midtyng/Spokane Spokesman-Review

Later in the night another group of rescuers would arrive, and with extra food and emergency supplies the group was ready to get moving with the first light of dawn.

Their destination was 7.5 miles up the trail at Wahtum Lake, where school buses and rescue personnel were waiting for them. Sharon and the other rescue personnel stayed with the group, and together they completed what is one of the most breathtaking hikes in the Forest Service system. By mid afternoon everyone had successfully walked out to the trailhead, and almost everybody was able to make it home in time for dinner.

What started for many as a two mile day hike ended up a 13 mile overnight adventure that 143 people are sure to never forget. Some people hiked farther than they ever thought would be possible. Other people stood up when needed, and everybody looked out for each other in the end.

Thanks to the hard work, dedication and professionalism of Sharon Steriti and others just like her, this story, the story of the rescue at Eagle Creek, would indeed have the happiest of endings.

By: Josh Dawson, *Editor-at-Large*



The women and men who made the Eagle Creek Rescue possible.



A young couple in a long embrace in the aftermath of the Eagle Creek Fire Rescue. Photo Credit: Oregon Public Broadcasting

going batty at THE OREGON ZOO



Ari Tabibzadeh Nuri and Kathy Sheehan talk to a young bee about bats.

It was a great week for bats and the people who love them recently when thousands of trick-or-treaters from Portland and beyond stopped by the bat week event at the Oregon Zoo.

In partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Oregon Zoo, staff from the Regional Office, PNW Research Station and Mt. Hood NF chipped in to help teach people of all ages about pollination, pest control and other benefits bats provide for us daily basis.

"It was especially fun seeing all of the kids' faces light up when we talked about how bats support some of their favorite foods like chocolate," said Regional Resource Assistant Ari Tabibzadeh Nuri.

"Even more fun was to see how the parents reacted when making the link between bats and coffee. Their faces would light up even more than the children!" Ari exclaimed.

Between the 9,000 people who attended the zoo on the first day of the event and the thousands more who came the next day, the Conservation Education Center was truly a batty place to be.

By: Ari Tabibzadeh Nuri, Resource Assistant, R6



Brenna White poses next to her bat selfie picture frame at the Oregon Zoo.



a batacular time ON THE DESCHUTES



Gary Meyer talks about bats and the different sizes of their wingspans at "Batacluar". (Photo Credit Jarod Opperman/The Bend Bulletin)

On October 28th the Deschutes NF and the non-profit group Discover Your Northwest hosted "Batacluar," a day of fund bat centric activities for kids and adults where participants learned about bats through numerous games, crafts and activities.

With participation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management and a local museum, over 200 people were able to celebrate the day at the Deschutes NF Supervisor's Office in Bend, Oregon.

Kids and adults enjoyed bat trivia, learned about echo location and ventured into a small tent "bat cave" to fill out datasheets with biologists. They suited up in Tyvek suits and rubber gloves to take plush, toy bats out of a net to weigh and measure them, and even ate mealworms and crickets... just like bats!

In it's third year, this highly successful annual event is a culmination of activities surrounding National Bat Week which started on October 24th and ended on Halloween.

For more information

Discover Your Northwest: <http://www.discovernw.org>

Bat Week: <http://www.batweek.org>

By: *Kassidy Kern*, Public Affairs Specialist, Deschutes NF



Getting hands on with some crafty batters on the Deschutes NF.

digger BEAR



A very special thanks to **Jimmye Turner**, Fire Prevention Specialist, Walla Walla RD, Umatilla NF

where in the region ANSWER

Last month's *Where in the Region* photo was of Oregon's **Lost Lake**, located near the summit of Santiam Pass just off of Highway 20 on the **Willamette National Forest**.

The result of an open lava tube, the six foot diameter hole that continuously drains Lost Lake has been there as long as anyone can remember. During the wet winter months the water flowing into the lake exceeds the water draining out, but in the warmer and drier summer months the lake gives way to meadow and can dry up completely.

<https://go.usa.gov/xnjZM>



Lost Lake, Willamette National Forest

contact us R6UPDATE STAFF

Contributor Guidelines

Valuing You: An *R6 Update* is the monthly publication by and for U.S. Forest Service Employees in the Pacific Northwest Region.

With an emphasis on people, we're always looking for striking photographs and compelling stories to share with our readers. For more information on how we can help tell your story, please contact us at R6Update@fs.fed.us.

Director of Communications and Community Engagement

Shoshona Pilip-Florea

smpilipflorea@fs.fed.us

503.808.2240

Managing Editor

Margaret Petersen

mpetersen02@fs.fed.us

503.808.2414

Editor-at-Large

Josh Dawson

jdawson@fs.fed.us

503.808.2241

where IN THE REGION

Win a prize for the most correct answers this quarter!
Using the following haiku,
try to figure out the location of the photo.

Send your guess to r6update@fs.fed.us.

With Lewis and Clark,
this Confluence Project blind
is more than for birds