



Columbia Basin
Herald

LOCAL NEWS
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Garred Road Fire sees no growth, two other local fires contained

By JOEL MARTIN and NANCE BESTON Staff Writers

COULEE CITY — Fire crews are still working on containing the Garred Road Fire, near Coulee City, which has seen very little growth, remaining at nearly 3,400 acres and is around 61 percent contained as of Thursday afternoon. According to the Southeast Washington Interagency Incident Management Team, crews are continuing to work on mop up Thursday. A Red Flag Warning is in effect for a large portion

of Washington until 9 p.m. tonight, with winds expected. "Safety of crews, residents and protection or property remain top priorities," Southeast Washington Incident Management Team wrote in a statement. "Please use caution while traveling in the fire area, specifically Highway 17. Crews will continue working and traveling on that roadway throughout the day." At around 3:30 p.m., Grant County Fire District 12 was dispatched to the Black Rock Fire near Wilson

Creek and Odessa, which burned around 350 acres. GCFD 12 requested state assistance with the blaze at around 6 p.m. Wednesday, according to the Washington State Fire Marshal. A strike and supervision team were sent to East Grant County Wednesday night. The fire was fully contained as of 4 a.m. Thursday morning, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Then, at about 3:45 p.m., Wednesday, Adams County Fire District 2 firefighters were dispatched to a fire, the

Schrag Fire, at a farm residence on Schrag Road at milepost 194 of the eastbound lanes of I-90, GCFD 5 Battalion Chief Travis Svilar said. As of 6:30 p.m., the fire had grown to 120 acres. ACFD 2 called for mutual aid from neighboring departments and for air support, Svilar said. Two scooper planes and two helicopters were on the scene. The fire's forward progress to the east was stopped by 6 p.m., Svilar said. The freeway remained open the entire time.



JOEL MARTIN/COLUMBIA BASIN HERALD
A helicopter drops retardant on a fire along I-90 east of Moses Lake Wednesday. The Schrag Fire had grown to 120 acres by 6 p.m. Wednesday. The fire is now contained.

See FIRE, A2

Shannon Falstad appointed as Grant County Auditor

By NANCE BESTON Staff Writer

MOSES LAKE — The Grant County Board of County Commissioners has appointed Shannon Falstad as the county's next auditor, selecting a longtime county employee with decades of experience in both the auditor's and clerk's offices



Falstad to replace outgoing Auditor Michele Jaderlund, who is retiring at the end of June.

County officials announced Thursday that Falstad will assume the role effective July 1. The appointment follows a selection process that included public interviews.

Falstad will serve as auditor through the remainder of the year unless elected to continue in the position. She is running against two other candidates, Darci Homesley and Andrew Koeppen. The deadline for the primary election is Aug. 4, with ballots anticipated to be mailed out on July 15, according to the Grant County Elections Office.

Falstad has worked in Grant County government for approximately 30 years,

including 20 years in the auditor's office and a decade in her current role as an accounting deputy in the Grant County Clerk's Office.

In her current position, Falstad manages departmental tills and deposits, reconciles bank accounts, supervises cashiers, processes payroll and helps maintain compliance with financial protocols. Her earlier tenure in the auditor's office included serving as recording and licensing lead deputy, where she oversaw licensing and recording operations, processed daily deposits and maintained compliance with county and state requirements.

Falstad said her broad background across the office's functions, including experience supporting elections and managing financial processes, motivated her to apply for the appointment and seek election to the position. "The auditor's office is unique in that it oversees four completely different departments," Falstad said. "It's important that whoever steps into the role has a well-rounded understanding of all of them."

The county auditor's office is responsible for a range of duties,

including recording land documents such as deeds and surveys, issuing marriage licenses, overseeing vehicle licensing through a contract with the state, administering elections and managing the county's financial reporting and accounting systems.

Falstad said she views the role as both an opportunity and a challenge. "It's exciting and a little intimidating," she said. "I'm a perfectionist and take a lot of pride in my work, so I want to do the best job I can."

Her immediate priorities include ensuring a smooth leadership transition, maintaining continuity in the elections process, and supporting the implementation of a new accounting system currently underway within the county. She also emphasized retaining staff and maintaining stability across departments as key goals.

"Creating an environment where people enjoy coming to work and take pride in their jobs is really important," Falstad said. "There's been some turnover, and I want to focus on supporting our team

See FALSTAD, A4

Hansen Road overpass demolition starts July 7

By CHERYL SCHWEIZER Staff Writer

MOSES LAKE — Demolition will begin July 7 on the overpass at Hansen Road in Moses Lake. Washington Department of Transportation officials will release a list of recommended detours on July 1.

The overpass was closed in mid-January when an inspection uncovered significant damage, not only to the road surface but also

to the bridge structure. It's been closed since. Department of Transportation officials opted to replace it rather than repair the existing bridge.

Chris Keifenheim, North Central Region administrator, estimated earlier the replacement cost at \$15 to \$17 million. Construction is projected to be completed by late December or early January.

Summer Derrey, public information

officer for the WSDOT South Central region, told the Columbia Basin Herald in an earlier interview that the design of the new bridge would be different than the old.

"The existing bridge sits on spread footing foundations, and is a four-span bridge, meaning there are three sets of columns and both bridge ends," Derrey said. "The new bridge is anticipated to have

See DEMOLITION, A2



CALEB PEREZ/COLUMBIA BASIN HERALD
Demolition begins July 7 on the Hansen Road overpass. The Washington Department of Transportation will announce detour routes next week.

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