

Fire District 3

Fire Marshal

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To: Sabrina Carey
From: John Patterson, Fire Marshal
Date: March 8, 2021

Re: Firefighting water supplies, ponds and resources

Southern Oregon experienced two major fires simultaneously in September 2020. These disastrous events would come to be recognized as the *Obenchain* and *Almeda* fires. They would also come to emphasize the limits of our resources and dependence on strategic placement of firefighting water supplies.

Crews from Fire District 3 (FD3) responded to both emergencies with structural firefighting engines as well as wildland response units and water tenders. Access to water is a crucial factor in our decisions when assessing the defensibility of property and homes. Hauling water great distances and setting up temporary portable “ponds” takes time and resources that we may not have. While it would be difficult to know exactly which ponds or streams were utilized, it’s easy to understand that if water was close to a fire it was used.

FD3 budgets specific money every fiscal year to help improve our strategic water supply infrastructure throughout the 167 square miles we’re charged with protecting. Anything property owners can do to help themselves in this regard is imperative to successful suppression efforts.

There are times when political differences and special interest seem at odds with fire safety. The Almeda fire is an example of the devastation that can occur when fire safety takes a back seat to priorities of other Agencies. FD3 will continue to support common sense efforts to help ease restrictions for property owners to store water for firefighting use.

We are happy to discuss options for property owners to become more resilient in terms of fire apparatus access and rural water supply efforts.
