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## WELL SAID NEWSLETTER

Available on the web at OWRD home page, under Agency Spotlight >

Well Said Newsletter.

Please share with others at your organization.

Well Said is a production of the OWRD Well Construction & Compliance Section and is designed to inform the drilling industry and the public about program activities and other items of interest.

Questions or suggestions about this newsletter may be directed to Kristopher Byrd at (503) 986-0851 or email at [Kristopher.R.Byrd@oregon.gov](mailto:Kristopher.R.Byrd@oregon.gov)



Serving the public by practicing and promoting responsible water management.

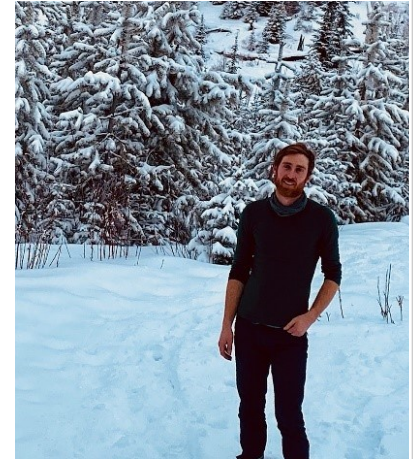
## MEET SCOTT PROSE

Scott Prose, a Regional Assistant Watermaster and Hemp Specialist, began working for the Oregon Water Resources Department (WRD) in February 2020. Funding for Scott's position at WRD is provided by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). His role focuses on auditing ODA registered hemp sites for legal water use and investigating hemp-related water-use complaints in the southwest region of the state.

Scott grew up in the Rogue Valley and recently moved back for the WRD position and to help with his parent's farm. Before joining WRD, he worked primarily for the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration doing economics and anthropology work on Alaskan Fishing Communities.

In his spare time, Scott is a gardener, backpacker, river explorer, and lover of swimming holes. He is currently working on a book about Oregon swimming areas and is always looking for recommendations on the subject. He also enjoys his work, especially with the humor and encouragement of his coworkers.

Scott's request to *Well Said* readers is to please clean or sanitize your boots after site visits, as this prevents the spread of noxious weeds and soil-based diseases. For questions, please reach out to Scott at (971) 701-1400 or [Scott.O.Prose@Oregon.gov](mailto:Scott.O.Prose@Oregon.gov).



## MAINTAINING WELLS AFTER WILDFIRE

Following a wildfire it is important to assess—or have a professional assess—damage to water well systems as a number of potential issues may arise. These issues include:

- **Electrical Hazards:** Fix damaged or exposed wires and other electrical components prior to restoring power to the site, attempting well repair, or touching the well or wiring. This is due to the fact that there is the potential for an electrical short to the metal casing or other infrastructure at the wellhead.
- **Dug Wells:** Older, hand-dug wells may present falling and drowning hazards. Well covers can be damaged by fire, leaving people and animals vulnerable to being trapped or injured by walking on a weakened well cover that collapses. Even more dangerous, some people may not even realize they have a dug well on their property, as these hand-dug wells are often long-forgotten as property gets bought and sold over the years.



Photo courtesy of Heath Cokeley, OAWU Circuit Rider

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## After Wildfire, cont'd



- **Drilled Wells:** Besides the potential damage to the visible casing located above ground, pipes, PVC liners, and/or rubber gaskets may melt or be damaged within the well. If the seal is damaged by fire this could allow contaminants to flow into the groundwater. Well houses, pipes, pressure tanks and storage tanks should also be inspected for damage.
- **Water Treatment System Damage:** Filters, tanks or the whole system might be damaged. Contact a water treatment professional to inspect and repair the system.
- **Contaminated Pipes:** If the pipes are damaged this could compromise the sanitary seal, allowing hazardous contaminants to seep into the groundwater. In some instances, chemicals may become a problem when the system is depressurized. Visit the Oregon Health Authority's website for more information on potential contaminants: <https://go.usa.gov/xGueZ>
- **Post-Fire Damage:** Even if a well is not physically damaged by fire, it can be damaged later during debris cleanup and construction. This may be prevented by clearly identifying and flagging the well on the property, and by informing contractors of the well location when they come on site.

Please direct your questions regarding wells and wildfires to Travis Kelly, Well Construction Program Coordinator, at (503) 986-0852 or [Travis.N.Kelly@oregon.gov](mailto:Travis.N.Kelly@oregon.gov).

## OWRD OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19

On March 23, 2020, Governor Brown issued Executive Order 20-12, "Stay Home, Save Lives," which includes requirements for state agencies to maximize teleworking and limit walk-in services to prevent the spread of COVID-19. OWRD is working hard to maintain agency services while also encouraging staff and customers to limit unnecessary foot traffic and virus exposure in our offices.

Department staff continue to work, although many are teleworking and some may have different schedules and hours. As such, email is the best way to reach staff. WRD is striving to provide excellent customer service during this time; however, we anticipate that there may be delayed response times in certain situations.

Consistent with the Executive Order, until further notice the Department is not providing walk-in services. If it is determined that an in-person meeting is necessary, an appointment may be setup with staff and proper social distancing practices will be implemented. In addition, please note that many of our field offices are in county offices, and access may be limited in accordance with county policies. For your convenience, here is the link to the WRD phone directory: <http://www.oregon.gov/OWRD/aboutus/contactus/Pages/default.aspx>

Please email [WRD\\_DL\\_customerservice@oregon.gov](mailto:WRD_DL_customerservice@oregon.gov) if you have any questions, or call the WRD main line at 503-986-0900.

## WELL DRILLERS AND WATER RIGHTS

Well drillers play an important part in the development of a water right permit. It is important that the well be constructed in both the location authorized and manner specified in the permit or transfer. Because of this, the Department encourages the applicant to wait until after the permit or transfer has been issued to construct the well. Constructing the well before a permit has been issued may result in a denial of a permit application because the construction does not meet the necessary seal depth or location for that site. Failure of the well construction to meet the location or construction conditions of an existing permit may result in the permit being cancelled. This can be avoided by asking the person contracting for well construction services if the well is being drilled for a water right, whether the water right has been issued, and whether well construction conditions have been placed on the permit.

Here is a list of some of the conditions that you need to be aware of:

**Well Location for Water Right Permits** - Permits contain specific coordinates for each authorized well. It is important that the well be drilled as close to the authorized location as possible. It may be helpful for the landowner to hire a surveyor or Certified Water Right Examiner (CWRE) to establish the point on the ground based on the authorized coordinates. If the well cannot be drilled in the authorized location, or if the permit holder wishes to establish additional wells not previously authorized under the permit, they should request and receive a permit amendment to obtain authorization for the new or additional wells before well construction.

**Well Location for Water Right Transfers** – Transfers also contain specific coordinates for each authorized well. Again, it is important that the well be drilled as close to the authorized location as possible. In order to ensure this, it may be helpful for the landowner to hire a surveyor or CWRE to establish the point on the ground based on the authorized coordinates. Transfers differ from permits in that there is not a process to change or add additional wells once the transfer final order is issued. Because of this, it is very important that the well be drilled in the authorized location.

**Specific Well Construction Standards** – Permits and transfers may require that the well be constructed beyond minimum construction standards. These special well construction standards may include casing and sealing to specific depths or into specific geologic formations. In addition, there may be requirements that limit the production of water to a specific water bearing zone.

**Installation of a Measuring Tube** – Many permits now require the installation of a measuring tube. Well construction plans should take this requirement into account.

If you have any questions, contact Gerry Clark, Certificate Section Program Analyst, at: [Gerald.E.Clark@oregon.gov](mailto:Gerald.E.Clark@oregon.gov) or (503) 986-0811.

## PLEASE HELP INCREASE WELL INSPECTIONS!



Up to 20% of new wells visited by inspectors are not inspected due to lack of access to the property where the well is being constructed. Well drillers can help facilitate the inspection process by providing as much information as possible on Start Cards that they submit. Although not all of the following information is required in statute or rule, it is often very valuable when staff are trying to enter a well site for an inspection. Please ensure Start Cards have:

- Address and phone number of the landowner.
- Any information or codes needed to access the site or the well.
- Street address of property where the well is located or driving directions if no address is available.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and helps ensure the protection of the groundwater resource and the efficiency of the well inspection program.

If you have questions, please contact Travis Kelly, Well Construction Program Coordinator, at (503) 986-0852 or [Travis.N.Kelly@oregon.gov](mailto:Travis.N.Kelly@oregon.gov)

## WELL ID LABELS



The well identification statutes require that all wells drilled, altered, or converted have a well label attached to the well head by the well constructor within 30 days of the completion of work. The intent of the well ID is to provide one unique number to link all future work on the well to the original well report.

Only one well label should be assigned to any well. If there is already a label on a well, then it should be re-secured when work on the well is complete. The number should also be reflected on the well report submitted to OWRD for the work that was performed.

If after searching the area around a well for an existing well label and one is not found, a well report search should also be performed to verify that the label is not simply missing. If a well ID number is not found during either search, then a new label should be attached to the well head. If a well ID number is on file, but the label is missing, damaged, or unreadable, then attach a new one and note the change in the comments box on your submitted well report.

For questions about the Well ID Program, or for help locating original well reports, contact Ladeena Ashley, Well ID Program Coordinator, at (503) 986-0854 or [Ladeena.K.Ashley@oregon.gov](mailto:Ladeena.K.Ashley@oregon.gov).

## WELL PLACEMENT CAUTION



The Well Construction & Compliance Section would like to caution well constructors to be alert to possible property line discrepancies when drilling close to a neighboring boundary. One benefit to being cautious is avoiding future issues in the event of a possible property-line dispute. Experience has shown that it is not uncommon for a landowner to be unaware of their tax lot number, tax map number, or location of lot lines. It is far easier to consult the latest tax lot maps, or the local county assessor's office, for the correct location rather than have to abandon and re-drill a well.

For questions related to well placement and setback requirements, contact Travis Kelly, Well Construction Program Coordinator, at (503) 986-0852 or [Travis.N.Kelly@oregon.gov](mailto:Travis.N.Kelly@oregon.gov)

## OSU RECEIVES GRANT TO ENCOURAGE PRIVATE WELL WATER TESTING

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) has awarded \$1.2 million in grant money to Oregon State University to develop and test a well water safety program for private well owners in Jackson County, where toxins have been detected in private well drinking water, and roughly 27,000 homes have a domestic well. Because private wells lack the regulation that is required of public water systems, owners are not required to conduct regular testing on their water for toxic chemicals. Furthermore, there are no systems in place to tell owners what to do if their water tests positive for toxins.

Researchers will learn what types of barriers well owners encounter regarding water testing and well repairs in the event that their well tests positive for toxins. They plan to work closely with well owners to develop materials that will help guide them through the testing and mitigation process. Once materials have been developed, the researchers will spend the last three years of the grant-cycle conducting a randomized control trial, testing the wells of about 4,000 households in Jackson County.

Owners of all the wells tested will receive their results; however, only those whose water tests positive for toxic chemicals will be invited to participate in the next randomized control trial. It is estimated that about 215 well owners will be a part of the second trial. Researchers would ultimately like private well owners to think of well water testing like they would for any other test recommended for their health, such as an annual physical or cancer screening.

(Rosbach, M. (2020) 'OSU Receives \$1.2M grant for program to encourage private well-water testing in Oregon' MyCentralOregon.com)



# ***SPECIAL PHOTO SECTION: 2020 WILDFIRES***



View of smoke from inside WRD office in Salem



Smoky sky over a well in NW Oregon



Drilling during wildfires in NW Oregon





# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD: POST-FIRE



Fire damaged well in Southern Oregon

**WILDFIRE  
DAMAGE**

A fire-damaged well in Southern Oregon



Fire damaged well in SW Oregon



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## WELL SAID NEWSLETTER - Oregon Water Resources Dept

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