



Help Spot Wildfires

Crowdsourcing wildfire prevention.

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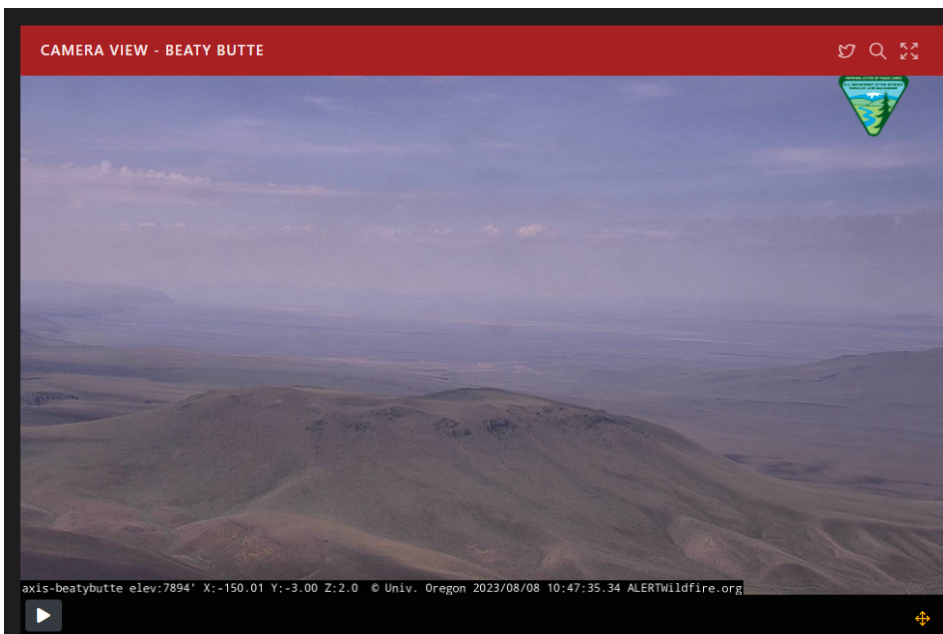
By Scott Barton and Lauren Brown

Like much of the American West, Harney County finds itself in the height of wildfire season. Daytime temperatures are hot, and the moisture that saturated the ground in the spring after a wet winter is all but gone. We're in the midst of wildfire season and what is the best way to fight fires that have the potential to threaten homes, property and lives?

There are multiple tools in the wildfire tool box, including Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs). Harney County has several, making it possible for rancher participation in fire suppression on private, state and federal rangelands. The all-volunteer crews of ranchers receive training and can function as first responders when wildland fires do appear. RFPAs are often the initial force on the scene when a fire starts. That early detection and rapid response can be vital in helping to keep fires small and manageable. Watch this [short video](#) to learn more and see some of the training the RFPAs receive..

An important tool in Harney County's wildfire tool chest is the Harney County Wildfire Collaborative providing a forum for people to work together toward building a wildfire resilient landscape. Jeff Rose, Burns District Bureau of Land Management Manager, said that it's important to have a diverse group of stakeholders established and communicating before a catastrophic wildfire happens so those relationships are already in place. "It sets us up to be successful," he said. "It's always hard to talk when smoke is in the air."

As far as actual tools used to help fight a fire, BLM Burns District Manager Rose says everything is on the table when faced with a potential wildfire. "We use any tool we can," he said. "The key is always people on the ground." Tankers and helicopters can be very effective, and while it's important to have access to tools that can assist from the ground and the air, people are the most important factor. "Really, the fire gets put out by the firefighter at the end of the nozzle," Rose said. Tankers can buy time while fighting a fire, but the BLM's goal is getting trained personnel on the fire line in a safe manner.



ALERT Wildfire

While actual firefighters are key to managing wildfires, wildfire response groups and their personnel are reaping the benefits of modern technology in the realm of early wildfire detection. [ALERT Wildfire](#) is a consortium of the University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada Seismological Laboratory, and the University of Oregon that utilizes cameras to detect wildfires and inform response and evacuation decisions accordingly.

Pictured: A view from the ALERT Wildfire Beaty Butte camera looking southwest taken August 8.

More Than Just a Camera

On the surface, Alert Wildfire cameras seem pretty basic in their function. They're installed in fire lookouts and at strategic high points to send alerts to the appropriate channels when wildfires ignite. These channels include local interagency fire zone groups and other local, state, and federal agencies.



However, there's a lot more to the story. Not only can these cameras discover, locate, and confirm wildfires, they can strategically scale resources, monitor fire behavior during the containment process, provide enhanced situational awareness to help responders strategize evacuation and containment strategies, and monitor fires for flare ups after they've been put out.

Pictured: A view from the ALERT Wildfire Wagontire Lookout camera looking north taken August 8.

Alert Wildfire cameras aren't just your run-of-the-mill cameras. They've been designed specifically to locate wildfires, track their movements, and provide real-time information. Much of this is made possible by their Pan-Tilt-Zoom technology which allows them to provide clear imaging in even the undulating, inhospitable terrain. What's even better, is that anyone with an internet connection can view live footage of any camera in the network via the [ALERT Wildfire website](#). This is especially useful in rural locations, like here in Harney County, where resources are spread out.

Early detection and rapid response are key when it comes to wildfire management and like the ability of RFPAs to respond quickly, ALERT Wildfire cameras aid with early detection. Many fires spotted through ALERT Wildfire have already been reported and a response is happening but that isn't always the case. If you're watching ALERT Wildfire cameras here are a few [tips](#) if you've found an unreported fire.

This article is provided by High Desert Partnership; a Harney County nonprofit convening and supporting six collaboratives including the Harney County Wildlife Collaborative.

