

## Bovee Fire Burns Over 15,000 Acres

Marcia Hora

A massive wildfire that began in the Nebraska National Forest has left a volunteer fireman dead, the 4-H camp lodge, camper cabins, the Scott Lookout Tower destroyed, and Sandhills ranchers without winter pasture and feed.

Region 26 Emergency Management reported Mike Moody, assistant chief of the Purdum Volunteer Fire Department succumbed to a medical emergency while fighting the fire. Moody was among those first responding to the Bovee Fire which was reported just after 1:30 p.m. Sunday, October 2. More than 100 firemen had joined in the fight by Monday.

The fire quickly grew from just a few hundred acres to over 18,000 acres as federal, state, and local firefighters attacked the fire that ignited three miles south of the Bessey Ranger District office.

Gusty south winds and dry rangeland pushed the fire and aggressive structure protection efforts by the Forest Service and local firefighters successfully defended the historic Bessey Nursery and CCC Campground.

An all-terrain vehicle that caught fire on a recreational trail sparked the Bovee Fire. The Nebraska National Forest & Grassland Service said the fire investigation continues, but officials at a community meeting in Halsey said it appeared there was no negligence on the part of the five people believed to be riding

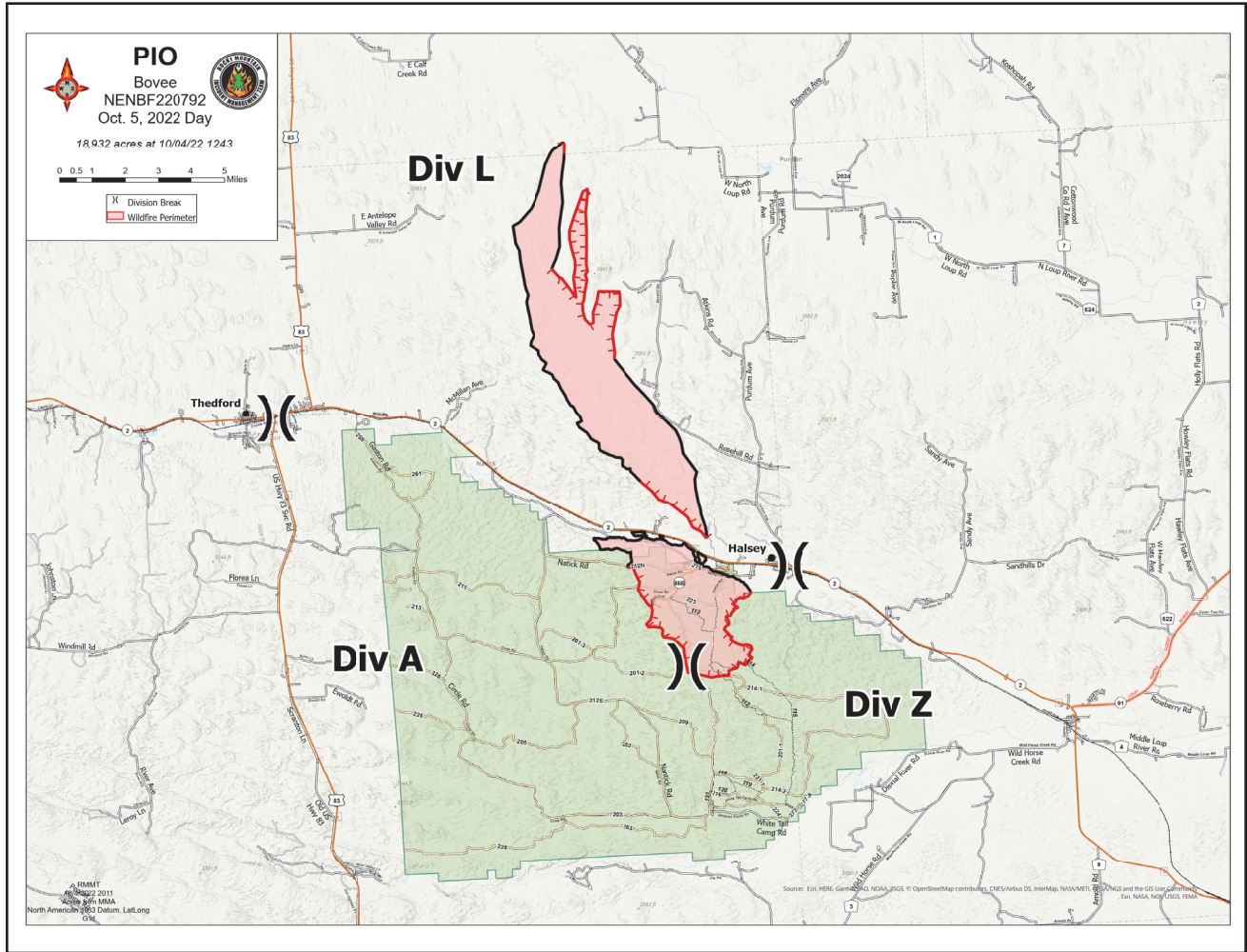
ing the Polaris RZR on the trail used extensively by ATV enthusiasts.

As of 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, October 5, the Bovee Fire was at 18,932 acres and was 56% contained. Continued cool and moist weather on Tuesday allowed firefighters to make additional progress on completing containment lines. Over the next few days work will gradually shift from fire line construction to line reinforcement mop up, patrol, and hazard litigation. Structure protection forces would remain in place to complete damage assessments and finish hazard mitigation around structures within the fire area. The night shifts will continue patrolling to insure structures and fire lines are secure said Incident Commander Dan Dallas of the Rocky Mountain Complex Incident Management Team.

On scene were two Type I Interagency Hotshot Crews, 10 engines, a dozer, and a fire suppression module. Air tankers were used to drop retardant and slow the fire's spread. Colorado's Multi-mission Aircraft was scheduled to fly the fire and provided detailed infrared mapping of the fire perimeter.

Engines and crews from 10 communities, including Bassett over 120 miles to the north, fought the fire and with determination held the line to save the home and shop of Randy and Roberta Barnes that sits on the Middle Loup River.

Wind gusts of 40 mile an hour whipped the fire over pine and spruce



COURTESY

Pictured above is the map of the Bovee Fire as provided by the Rocky Mountain Complex Incident Management Team 1. The fire was 56% contained as of Wednesday morning, October 5 at 9:00 a.m.

trees and native grass that had regrown since the May 5, 1965 lightning strike fire that devastated the Nebraska National Forest. That fire was fanned by 50 mph winds and burned 30,000 acres in the largest hand-planted forest in the western hemisphere.

The State 4-H Camp Eppley Lodge was saved by valiant efforts of its builder, Gene Horst and

his wife, Eleanor, the first camp director, along with others in 1965. This time only the chimney remains. The only building remaining on camp is the staff house approximately 50 yards from the lodge. The Scott Look-Out Tower, the last functioning fire tower in the state, was lost.

After jumping the Middle Loup River and Highway 2, approximately one and a half miles west of the forest turn-off, the fire spread northwest across an estimated 13,181 acres of privately owned rangeland. No structures were reported to have been lost, but winter range and

feed and shelterbelts were destroyed. Those known to have lost grass were Hoffman Ranch, Lloyd McIntosh, Greg Schaeffer, 7J Ranch, John Seeley, Wayne Rodocker, Hall & Hall, and Lemoyne Dailey. Highway 2 and BNSF Railroad were closed and did not reopen until Tuesday. Sandhills High School at Dunning and elementary school at Halsey closed on Monday and served as a distribution point for supplies and provided meals for firefighters.

The Village of Halsey was evacuated when the fire broke out.

To protect public and

safety, the Nebraska National Forest has closed the entire Bessey Ranger District to the public during the Bovee Fire. Closure details will be posted and information may be found on the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/nebraska/alerts-notices>.

Services for Michael Lee Moody, 59, of Purdum, who died after a medical emergency while in the line of duty fighting the fire, were held Friday, October 7, at the Sandhills

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## Blood Drive A Success



JAMIE TAYLOR PHOTOS

The American Red Cross Blood Drive was held at Thedford High School on Wednesday, September 21. A total of 39 donors gave and Dayle Haake was the lone first time donor. The students want to thank the community, staff and other students for taking the time out of their day to donate.

The next Red Cross Blood Drive will be held Tuesday, December 6, 2022 from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m. at Thedford High School.

Pictured above are some of the student helpers, back row, l-r: Skyler Andersen and Winter Benscoter. Front row: Zach Eggert and Makayla Osienger. The Thedford High School senior class organized the event.



Winter Benscoter, pictured at left, is giving the gift of life at the American Red Cross Blood Drive held at Thedford High School.

At right is Thedford Band Teacher, Mr. Albertus as he gives blood at the Thedford High School student blood drive held September 21 at the High School.



## Tribute To Mike Moody



LaCAYLLA RITTER FINK PHOTO

Mike Moody was a big part of the after school excitement for the kids that rode the Purdum and Elsmere bus route. Kids were so excited to stop and get snacks and a drink at Harsh Mercantile. When the kids would come in, Mike would said "this is a highlight of my day." The students didn't have school on Monday, October 3, so they decided to get together and pay tribute to Mike. Pictured above are the children of the community with the posters they made in memory of Mike. Youth that were there to help decorate were: Josie and Lilly Morrow; Shylee, Birdlelyn and Dally Gonzales; Holt, Carter and Waylon Jensen; Cesar Chavez; Charlie, William and Josie Smith; Bristol, Brayden and Braylee Fink.

## Former Thedford Resident Killed In Texas

A Vernon, Texas man was killed in a motorcycle accident Saturday evening, September 3, in Wilbarger County. According to Texas DPS Sgt. Dan Buesing, shortly before

5:30 p.m., a motorcycle traveling northbound on US 287 near Oklaunion failed to stay in the lane in a curve and entered the median.

The motorcycle struck a

cable barrier, ejecting the rider, 56-year-old James Robert Mills. He was pronounced dead on the scene. Sgt. Buesing said Mills was wearing a helmet.