

Volcanic scientists to survey Mt. Rainier

SEATTLE (AP) — Federal scientists fly to Mount Rainier this week to begin a study of what makes the volcano tick.

The 14,410-foot mountain hasn't blown since the 1840s but it is classified as an "active" volcano, with the potential to erupt.

U.S. Geological Survey scientists plan to gather rock and gas samples from some large unstudied areas near the summit. The samples will be sent to USGS laboratories in Menlo Park, Calif., and Vancouver, Wash., for analysis.

Researchers have studied and mapped the lower flanks of the mountain in the past, but areas above the 5,000-foot level have received little scientific attention.

The six-week project is part of a 10-year United Nations program to study 14 volcanoes throughout the world that might erupt or

collapse and kill people or damage property.

"Our work up there during the next few weeks will help us identify unstable areas that might collapse in the future and give us a more complete history of the eruptions that have formed this volcano," said USGS geologist Tom Sisson, chief of the Rainier project.

There's no indication an eruption is imminent, said Mount Rainier National Park spokesman Glenn Baker.

"It could go off at a time of its own choosing or it could behave like Mount St. Helens did and give us gobs of warning," Baker said, referring to the deadly May 1980 eruption of that peak south of Mount Rainier.

"Myself, I live in the park. If it goes off without warning, that's it for me. But it's been over 150

years since any significant eruption and there's nothing to indicate it's getting ready to go off."

What scientists learn will be communicated to the 2.5 million people who live in the mountain's western shadow, Sisson said.

The first phase of the study begins Tuesday. Army Reserve pilots will fly scientists and their gear in Chinook helicopters to a base camp on the Mowich Face on the northwestern side of the mountain for a one-week stay.

The scientists will return for two additional one-week camps, scheduled about Aug. 8 at Liberty Ridge on the north side of the mountain, and Aug. 29 at Curtis Ridge on the north side of the summit.

In addition to the summer trips, the Army Reserve in late

September will fly teams of four to six USGS scientists to locations near the summit and into summit craters for high-elevation mapping and sampling.

Volcanic gases will be collected and remote-sensing equipment will be left on the summit for future monitoring.

The project is a good example of civil-military cooperation, said Maj. Mark Silverstein, commander of the 6th Battalion/158th Aviation Regiment of the 124th Army Reserve Command.

"Our pilots and crew will gain valuable experience for operating on the highest and most difficult volcano in the Cascade Range. This experience will be invaluable in the event of volcanic or other emergencies at Mount Rainier or any other Cascades volcano," Silverstein said.

Fire crews combat Oregon's lightning-sparked blazes

PORTLAND (AP) — Firefighters battled a new series of blazes in southwestern Oregon Monday.

Twenty-four lightning-caused fires, known as the Mendenhall series, were burning in the Siskiyou National Forest about 25 miles northeast of Grants Pass. The three largest had blown out of control Sunday night, burning 1,800 acres of timber on steep and rocky terrain.

About 600 firefighters were attempting to encircle them Monday evening.

Fire officials were concerned that, if the wind changes direction, more than 100 homes near Cave Junction could be threatened, said Forest Service spokesman Greg Stahl.

The fires were two to three miles from any structures Monday, and the wind was blowing the fire in the other direction.

"It's a pretty good distance, and we're trying to maintain that distance," Stahl said.

He also said 23 fire crews were building lines around the largest of the fires but that weather could create more difficulties.

"Our winds are picking up again and I wouldn't be surprised if we get some problems," Stahl said.

Also Monday, smokejumpers were attacking a new 20-acre fire near John Day.

"Our smokejumpers are being tapped out," Stahl said. "There's a lot of demand on our resources."

Meanwhile, other fires around the state are in various stages of containment and control.

The Four Corners fire near Crane Prairie Reservoir is expected to be contained by Tuesday, perhaps earlier. That fire has

burned about 1,400 acres.

The Grand View Fire in the Ochoco National Forest has burned 800 acres and was nearing containment. Five hundred firefighters were working there Monday afternoon.

Fires in the Rogue River Forest, collectively called the Applegate Complex Fires, are out, said Roberta Hilbruner of the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center in Portland. A total of 29 fires burned 164 acres there. Crews are being released and heading to other hot spots in Oregon and Washington.

Between Sunday and Monday, Hilbruner said 3,500 lightning strikes sparked 373 new fires over 2800 acres in the two states.

"So far they're not a problem," she said.

Endangered Species Act sparks debate over grizzly bears

RONAN, Mont. (AP) — Noted bear biologist John Craighead said Saturday that grizzly bears probably would not have survived in Montana if the federal Endangered Species Act hadn't been passed in 1974.

But Craighead told Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., that the government needs more "political will" to protect grizzly habitat and thus ensure the species' future.

"We must do better," Craighead said, even though he said the grizzly seems to be doing well in other locations.

Craighead was one of several speakers at a hearing in Ronan conducted by Baucus, chairman of the Senate Public Works and Environment subcommittee that is overseeing reauthorization of the act.

Baucus is proposing changes to the act he says would provide for outside scientific review of decisions to list endangered species, increase state involvement in management decisions and give incentives to landowners to improve private habitat.

About 500 people attended the

hearing, and many complained that federal wildlife officials are already too zealous in enforcing the act.

But Craighead called the act "truly visionary."

Environmentalists and opponents of the act held separate rallies on opposite sides of Ronan High School.

About 300 people wore yellow logging ribbons, while those in the other group of about 100 wore green crepe paper.

Those on both sides wore T-shirts expressing their views and passed out news releases.

The self-proclaimed "victims," organized by Montanans for Multiple Use and Putting People First, said the real endangered species are workers in the natural resource industries.

Bruce Vincent of Libby, representing the logging industry, said the Kootenai National Forest is being unfairly subjected to the rigors of grizzly bear recovery.

"Why doesn't California have to do it? The bear is on their flag," he said.

Vincent said the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service doesn't listen to Montanans because Montana is

a politically weak state.

"We've got news for them, we're not disposable," he said.

But Adam Ruben, representing an organization called Wild Forever, said Montana lures tourists with a chance to hear a wolf howl, watch eagles or share the woods with grizzlies. All three are threatened or endangered species.

Other speakers included:

- John Bloomquist, attorney for the Montana Stock Growers, who said the act is too inflexible for livestock growers trying to protect their herds.

- Keith Olson of the Montana Logging Association, who said environmentalists use the act to stop Forest Service logging.

- Gary Langley of the Montana Mining Association, who said the Endangered Species Act is the "pit bull" of environmental laws because it's being used for political purposes to stop economic and recreational activity.

- Mike Roy of the National Wildlife Federation, who said the government should consider paying landowners to protect habitat, much like the national Conservation Reserve Program

pays farmers not to plow sensitive soils.

• Jim Baker of Save Our Wild Salmon, who said altering dam operations to help Columbia River salmon would be less expensive than hurting the fishing industry and the cost of potential lawsuits by Native American tribes.

Sen. Conrad Burns, R-Mont., submitted a written statement saying the Endangered Species Act "is out of kilter and continues to threaten the future of Montanans who depend on natural-resource based jobs to support their families and communities."

He said 1,500 jobs have been lost in Montana as a result of mine and mill closings since 1990.

"Our ability to protect many of those jobs will depend on our success in making meaningful changes in the Endangered Species Act," Burns said, "a law that sometimes depends upon questionable science to justify drastic approaches to protecting species at any cost, regardless of the consequences."

Smith proposes selling bonds to expand salmon hatcheries

SALEM (AP) — Governor candidate Denny Smith proposed on Monday that the state restore salmon runs by selling bonds to expand coastal hatchery programs.

The Republican nominee, announcing his plan at campaign stops along the coast, said some of the bonds would be priced so school children could afford to buy them.

The money would be used to acquire or refurbish coastal hatcheries.

His Democratic opponent, John Kitzhaber, said Smith's plan is an inefficient and costly proposal that would do nothing to deal with other fishery needs like stream restoration.

Smith compared his plan with state bond sales in the 1940s that financed reforestation of the area ravaged by the Tillamook Burn, where school children helped plant trees.

"Today, the Tillamook Burn is almost ready to repay Oregonians with a commercial harvest of timber," Smith said. "Oregonians will have the chance to invest in the future of our salmon. Under my plan, salmon runs can be restored for our children and grandchildren."

Smith said his proposal would pay off the bonds with revenue from \$1 of the \$9.50 annual state fee for a salmon tag.

Kitzhaber said the plan is Smith's third

major spending program so far, counting prison expansion and adding hundreds of state police to the force.

"This is the most fiscally irresponsible of the three," he said.

Kitzhaber said by tapping into the salmon tag revenue, Smith's plan would take money from a source already used to operate hatcheries. He said Smith's plan includes no revenue to operate the new hatcheries once they are built.

"This isn't going to do anything to restore streams and salmon and jobs they support," he said. "What it's going to do is put the state into debt."

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