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Growing wildfire near Detroit closes Jefferson Park, Pacific Crest Trail

ZACH URNESS
STATESMAN JOURNAL

The Whitewater Fire burning east of Detroit has continued to grow, reaching 167 acres during the weekend in the Mount Jefferson Wilderness.

Officials responded by shutting down access to Jefferson Park, a popular hiking and backpacking destination, and an 11-mile segment of the Pacific Crest Trail, along with four other pathways that were already closed.

The closures officially began at 6 a.m. on Monday.

"We understand it is inconvenient but our priority is to protect public safety," Detroit District Ranger Grady McMahan said in a news release.

With the forecast calling for boiling hot weather, fire officials expect the fire to grow even larger during the week.

More than 125 firefighters are battling the blaze including three helicopters and three hand crews working steep and rugged terrain. A new fire camp has been established at the Hoodoo Ski Area as fire teams bring in heavy equipment to try and contain the blaze.

The fire comes at the worst possible time. Tens of thousands are expected to descend on Detroit and the Mount Jefferson area for the total solar eclipse on Aug. 21. Many had planned to view the event from Jefferson Park.

McMahan said previously the Forest Service would do everything in its power to have the area open by the eclipse.

"I would like to tell people that we'll have this trailhead and trails open for the eclipse, but at this point I can't tell if that will be possible," said Grady McMahan, district ranger for Willamette National Forest.

The cause of the fire is a month-old lightning strike in the Whitewater Creek area, officials said. It's not uncommon for lightning strikes to smolder in the forest before sparking a fire much later.

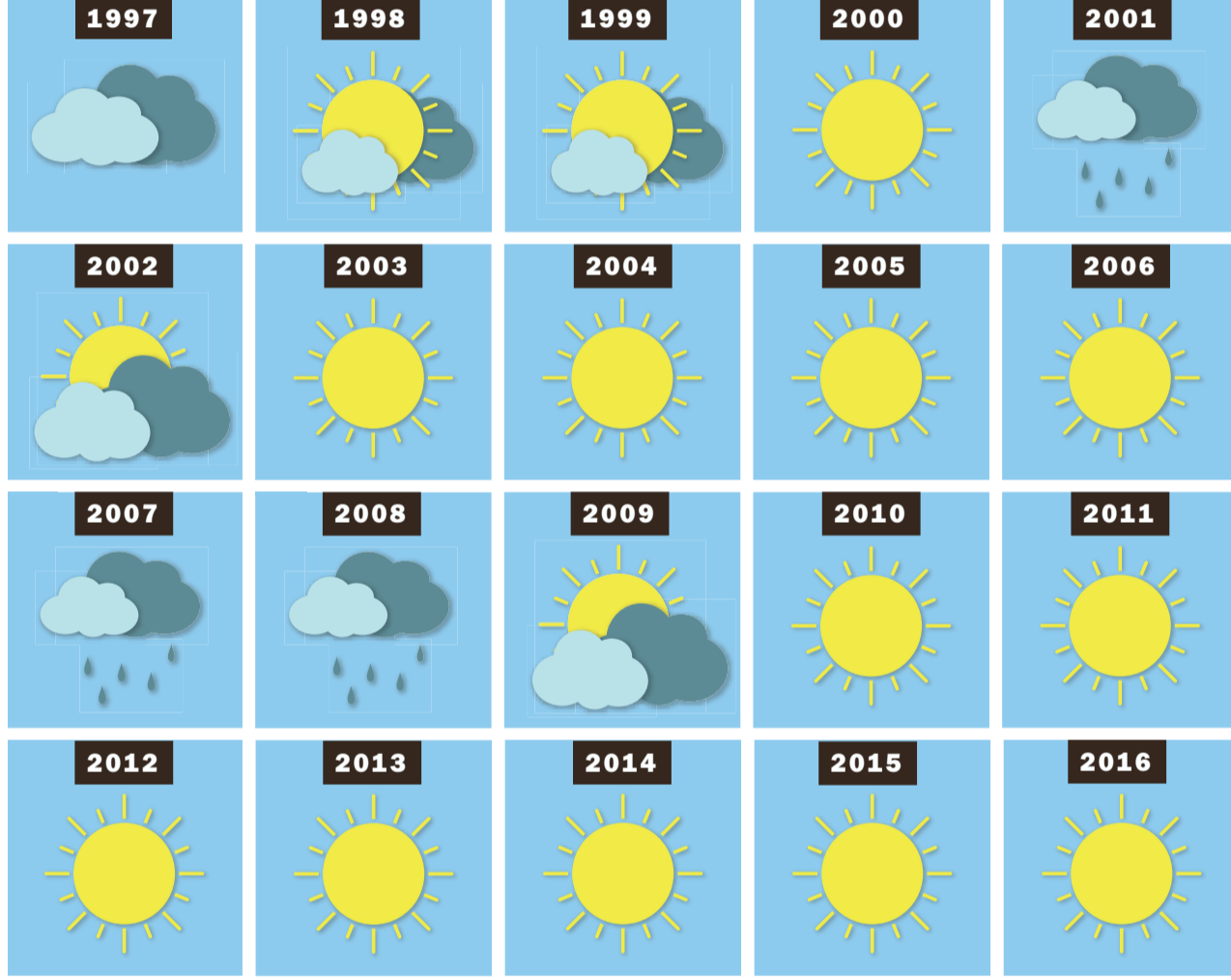
"It's often a surprise to the public, but it's not uncommon for fires to pop up a week or more after the storm," said Chris Donaldson, assistant fire management officer with Willamette National Forest, in a 2015 interview with the



COURTESY OF THE WILLAMETTE NATIONAL FOREST
The Whitewater fire is burning the Mount Jefferson Wilderness area.

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Will eclipse day be sunny or cloudy?



Here's what recent history tells us about Aug. 21

ZACH URNESS
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Here's the good news: For each of the last seven years, a person in the Mid-Valley would have had a great view of the upcoming total solar eclipse.

Satellite data show that Aug. 21 has been clear and sunny around 10 a.m. each morning going back to 2010.

That's a positive sign for the hundreds of thousands of people expected to arrive in Oregon specifically for the two minutes — starting at 10:17 a.m. — when the moon blocks the sun and darkness covers a 73-mile-wide path that will stretch across the country.

Satellite data show that Aug. 21 has been clear and sunny around 10 a.m. each morning going back to 2010.

Unfortunately, said meteorologist Colby Neuman, the past few years are a poor predictor of this coming Aug. 21.

"We've had warmer weather and fewer clouds the last few summers, but you really can't say much about the future based on that short a time period," Neuman said. "The long-term average will beat it every time."

And the long-term average — in terms of whether it's going to be cloudy or sunny — is a mixed bag.

The National Weather Service reports that overall, people in the Salem area have a 67 percent chance of being able to view the eclipse this year.

When you take a longer look back — at the last 20 years — there are a lot more clouds on Aug. 21.

Between 2001 and 2009, for example, five of the nine mornings around 10 a.m. had moderate to significant cloud coverage, according to satellite data.

Neuman said clouds in the Salem area would be fueled by marine weather patterns that typically come from northwest, southwest and south.

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STEM classes take root in Silverton

CHRISTENA BROOKS
SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

STEM is popping up all over Silverton, most recently at Camp Invention late last month.

Teaching science, technology, engineering and mathematics — STEM — to kids is a full-flowered academic trend in many places. It's budding here too, with the school district's first Family STEM Night in May, a middle school camp earlier this summer, and now this camp for elementary kids.

Eighty-one children attended a full week of Camp Invention July 17-21 where they took things apart, learned circuitry, built, brainstormed, marketed and invented together.

"The best thing is that kids from all over the district, from all different schools, got to work together," said high school science teacher Clarissa Bay, who led the camp. "You get that in sports, but you don't often get that in science."

Bay had hoped 30 kids would sign up for the camp, created by National Inventor's Hall of Fame and localized by herself and teachers Donna Becker, Paula Cross, Patricia Hooker and Theresa Stadel. She was "blown away" by the high turnout, especially considering the cost was \$200 per child.

Community sponsors and volunteer helpers, many of them students themselves, helped keep costs from going higher.

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MADDY TRAVER / SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE
Cole Ulven at Camp Invention.

Willamette Valley faces heat watch

LAUREN E HERNANDEZ
STATESMAN JOURNAL

The National Weather Service has issued an excessive heat watch days before record-breaking triple-digit temperatures are expected to descend on the Willamette Valley.

Salem area will likely reach record 106-degree temperatures for Wednesday and Thursday, according to National Weather Service meteorologist Matthew Cullen.

"It's certainly not unprecedented, but it's worth noting that we'll be seeing these triple-digit temperatures for at least two days in a row," Cullen said.

The last time Salem reached 106 degree temperatures was in late July 2009. Cullen said Salem recorded a record high of 108 degrees on August 9, 1981.

He said the temperatures are a result of a low-pressure weather system developing over the valley. A thermal trough, or a heat low,

will sit above the region and cause excessively hot and dry conditions.

"The days we have triple digits tend to happen in mid-July to mid-August, but this isn't an every year type of heat," Cullen said.

The heat watch will be in effect through 11 p.m. Friday. The watch covers the Willamette Valley, Coast Range, Cascade Foothills, Cascades, Columbia River Gorge

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	#1-Joe & Dana Giegerich 503-931-7824 Amazing View! Scotts Mills MLS#715417 \$795,000	
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