

Appeal Tribune

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Warm winter, low snowpack makes drought likely

Zach Urness
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

One of the warmest winters in Willamette Valley history could tilt Oregon toward drought next summer. Temperatures from November through January were the 12th warmest in Salem records stretching back to 1892.

The result has been most of the state's precipitation falling as rain instead of snow in the Cascade Range, where snowpack is an anemic 35 to 40 percent of normal.

"The lack of snowpack is concerning, and without a cool, wet spring drought development is likely in parts of the state," said Kathie Dello, climatologist with Oregon State University.

January's average temperature of 45.7 degrees was 4.5 degrees warmer than normal in Salem, officials at the National Weather Service said. November was also warmer than normal, while December was a half de-

gree cooler.

"We've had a high-pressure system over the West Coast or just off the coast for a good chunk of winter," National Weather Service meteorologist Colby Neuman said. "That's led to fewer storm systems than normal."

Neuman pointed out that Oregon just missed a few cold storm systems that have blanketed Washington, Montana and Idaho in normal or above-normal snow.

"If the direction of the storms coming from the Gulf of Alaska changed just a little bit, a lot could change in February and March," Neuman said.

But if things stay the way they are, a situation similar to 2014, '15 and '16 could play out, with summer drought conditions bringing issues for wildlife and forest health.

"Water managers will need to carefully evaluate water supplies this summer if snow and spring rains fail to bring relief," said Julie Koeberle, Snow Survey hy-

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Mount Hood is seen in 2014, a little short on snow.
ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Wildfires slow number of visitors to Oregon's outdoors in 2017



Onlookers watch the Eagle Creek Fire on September 4. U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Turns out, the only thing that will keep Oregonians from the outdoors are catastrophic wildfires.

The number of people visiting Oregon's outdoor destinations showed a slight dip during 2017, due largely to the state's active wildfire season, according to state and national parks officials.

Officials began 2017 expecting another record-shattering season, following four years of explosive growth. August's solar eclipse was expected to bring millions.

"There was a little bit of relief that we didn't continue on the same record-breaking pace," Oregon Parks and Recreation Department spokesman Chris Havel said. "It gives us a chance to catch our breath and catch up."

Oregon's state parks system had roughly 50.8 million visits in 2017, a slight drop-off from the previous year's record of 51.7 million.

The biggest declines were at parks in the Columbia River Gorge and Central Cascade Range, due mostly to wildfires, Havel said.

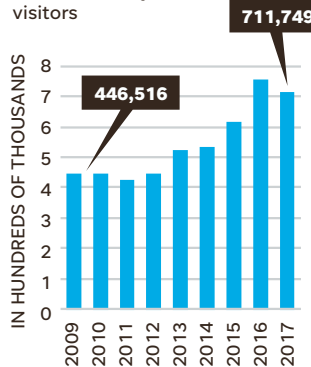
A similar trend was observed at many, but not all, national parks, monuments, national forests and wilderness areas across Oregon.

Crater Lake National Park had 711,749 visits in 2017, down from the

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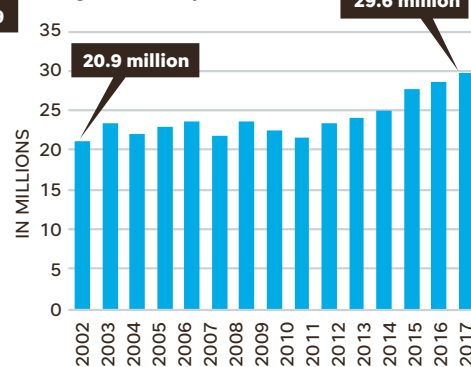
Area state park visitation

Crater Lake day-use visitors



SOURCE: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

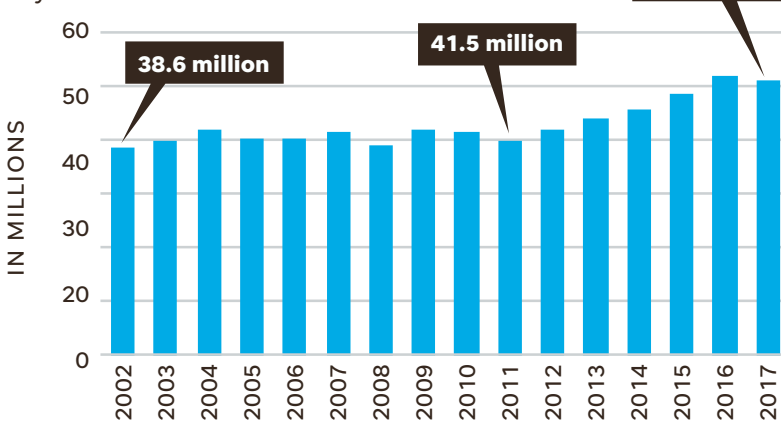
Oregon Coast day-use visitors



USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon state parks visitation

Day-use visitors



SOURCE: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

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Kevin Lierman

Chris Mayou

Justin Much

Silverton Progressives host 7-speaker potluck

Justin Much Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Silverton skies gave no hint of winter at midday Feb. 7, where some conversations at Live Local Coffee House took place outside on the deck perched over Silver Creek.

Brighter skies in a more figurative sense was the topic with **Chris Mayou** of the Silverton Progressives. The group formulated in recent years, primarily consisting of Bernie Sanders supporters. Following the 2016 election, it continued with a local focus, gaining momentum and members from a wider spectrum.

"Our membership is broader now than just people who supported Bernie," Mayou said. "But we are primarily liberal and progressive."

She said the grassroots element is vital to social change, and shared a recent OPB segment about women's suffrage as an example.

"That's where change always starts, because the people in power are comfortable where they are," Mayou said.

The group meets twice monthly; a 10:30 a.m. coffee meeting on the fourth Thursday of the month and a first Wednesday evening meeting. The meetings

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Sustainable energy being surveyed in Silverton

Justin Much Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Should Silverton be more proactive when it comes to handling its energy needs and usage?

Members of an emerging local advocacy group, "Sustainable Silverton," presented the idea to Silverton City Council on Monday, Feb. 5, and proposed a plan to study it.

The council was receptive.

"We would like to see Silverton jump on the chance to leverage the growing energy sector to our greatest advantage by actively selecting the strategies and tactics that we will employ to be prepared for and get the most from these opportunities," said Elyce Brown, one of Sustainable Silverton's members.

Brown said clean energy projects and their benefits are not new to Silverton, noting a solar park west of the city, water purification ponds above Pettit Lake and electric vehicle charging stations at Roth's. She said encouraging such projects empowers the city in making its own energy decisions rather than being pulled along by the tide.

She said the group also hoped the city would acknowledge that climate change and energy concerns are a valid concern.

"We are also asking the city to acknowledge that both the climate and the energy sector are changing; on the one hand, we are facing reduced snowpack,

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