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Wildfire smoke could impact lakes, scientists say

Amy Alonzo

Reno Gazette Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The effects of the West's increasingly frequent and sizeable wildfires and accompanying smoke plumes could have negative impacts on mountain lakes throughout the country, according to scientists studying the topic.

"Wildfire can modify ecosystems hundreds of miles away from locations that are burning, and the impacts from smoke remain well after the smoke disappears," said University of Nevada, Reno post-doctoral researcher Facundo Scordo, one of several researchers across the nation studying the issue.

"We want to understand how fires in one region connect across the continent," said Sudeep Chandra, associate professor at UNR and director of the Global Water Center and Castle Lake Environmental Research Program. "People are interconnected, whether in the northeastern United States or the West. We are

all going to be impacted by the fires here or in Australia or in the rainforest."

After California's 2013 Rim Fire, which burned more than 257,000 acres, UC Davis researcher Steve Sadro started questioning the "telekinetic effect of smoke. The smoke plume from the Rim Fire went straight up to Tahoe."

Sadro also began noticing the pervasiveness of wildfire smoke.

"It wasn't just one fire. There were multiple fires. The smoke was around persistently for weeks and weeks," he said.

He is partnering with scientists from UNR, Ohio and New York to study the impacts of wildfire smoke emissions on aquatic ecosystems.

Sadro and his team have 25 sites they are measuring, from Oregon's Crater Lake in the North to Sequoia National Park in the South.

One of those lakes is 100-foot-deep Castle Lake, just west of Mt. Shasta. In 2018, a thick cloud of wildfire smoke from six major wildfires descended on Castle

Lake, causing smoke and ash to linger at the site for nearly two months.

In its 64th year of monitoring, Castle Lake offers scientists the longest consecutive series of data for mountain lakes in North and South America. Scientists have sensors in the lake, measuring anything they can – light, plankton, fish. Some sensors monitor information every minute – others monitor data every week or month.

When technicians at the lake had a hard time breathing due to the heavy smoke and ash brought about by the 2018 fires, Scordo and the other scientists wondered, "If that happens to people, what happens to the lake?"

What they found was that the smoke and ash plume reduced the amount of light reaching the lake. Since the fires were burning during the summer, they were impacting the lake's most critical season in terms of productivity, according to Scordo.

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Carly Blue Myers of Silverton puts together a charcuterie board and other items, part of the activities involved in her event catering business, **The Blue Pomegranate**. GEOFF PARKS/SPECIAL FOR THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Silverton caterer brings the world to her customers

Geoff Parks

Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Carly Blue Myers has drawn from a world of first-hand cultural and culinary experiences in making the transition from restaurant employee to self-employed caterer.

After being downsized from a local restaurant due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she decided in November to leverage her extensive travels around the world and immersion into other countries' food customs to start her own business, **The Blue Pomegranate Catering**.

Explaining those experiences, she starts out her unorthodox life story in a matter-of-fact way: "Well, I was born in Sacramento, then moved to Kenya."

Myers, now 27, was whisked to that rural African country as an infant, courtesy of her father's job as a church missionary. With that first overseas living experience, which lasted two years, a peripatetic travel schedule of new countries, cultures and food experiences began.

Sudan, Dubai, England and, later in her life, Mexico, Peru, Cambodia, Austria and Turkey welcomed

with their diverse and complex customs, leaving her with a deep appreciation of the foods of each region.

"Turkey is where my food influences mostly are, and that's why I call my business **The Blue Pomegranate**, partly for my name and then partly for the fact that the pomegranate is so much a staple of Middle Eastern food," she said.

Myers was working at **Gather** in downtown Silverton when they closed in March 2020 and she was left to contemplate a challenging future.

"I kind of pooled all of the things I love, from travel to cooking, but hospitality is my favorite thing to do; it makes me the happiest to have people in my home," she said. She set up a few dinner nights for friends, neighbors and acquaintances to gather and enjoy each others' company — and her hospitality.

Later, those people told her, "You know, we would pay to have this done for us."

"And it's really just what I was doing, but for free," Myers said. "So I came up with the idea for my business last November, wrote out a business plan, got certified (as a caterer) and launched it in May."

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The **Covanta Marion facility in Brooks**. DAVID DAVIS AND KELLY JORDAN / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Paint, oil, plastic. What is Covanta burning?

Tracy Loew

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Four tons of HVAC filters from **Air Filters Northwest** in Portland. Eighty-five tons of toner waste from **ECycle Solutions**, an electronics recycler in Ontario, Canada. A hundred and fifty tons of oily solids from **Waste Management** in Portland.

Marion County garbage haulers are required to take trash to **Covanta Marion**. Their fees, as well as the revenue from generating electricity, paid off the bonds Marion County issued to build the facility in 1986.

But the municipal waste incinerator in Brooks burns more than just the county's garbage.

Documents the Statesman Journal obtained through a public records request show that Marion County also has allowed **Covanta** to dispose of industrial waste, some containing plastic, which is trucked in from all over the western U.S. and Canada.

The incinerator has been taking industrial waste since the facility opened, and it's allowed under its state pollution permits. But county officials have never explicitly disclosed what materials are being incinerated, or where they come from.

Neighbors and environmental groups have said for years the public doesn't know enough about what **Covanta** is burning and what is coming out of its smokestack.

That concern intensified in 2016 when the county amended its contract with **Covanta** to allow it to truck in 25,000 tons per year of medical waste, containing plastic, from out of state and Canada. Plastics can create dioxins, particulate matter and other harmful pollutants when burned.

County officials call the shipments of industrial waste "supplemental waste," which they define as non-medical waste that requires special handling. This waste makes up about 3% of what is burned each year at **Covanta**.

Waste burned in recent years has included polyurethane foam peanuts, paint, rubber and pharmaceutical waste, according to the documents the Statesman Journal reviewed.

That waste came from companies including **American Petroleum**, **Boeing**, **Epson**, **Fujifilm**, **Hewlett-Packard** and **Xerox**, and from environmental disposal services including **Clean Harbors**, **Sonoco Recycling** and **Whitecap Environmental**. Those companies are located outside Marion County.

Covanta spokesman **James Regan** said processing supplemental waste with plastic, as well as municipal waste that also could include plastic, does not impact the facility's ability to comply with its air pollution permit.

"In fact, there has always been unrecyclable plastic material in the waste stream and the facility has been able to safely process that material for energy recovery."

But health and environmental activists said they were alarmed by the information the Statesman Journal obtained.

"It makes the Willamette Valley a dumping ground for other people's waste products," said **Lisa Arkin**, executive director of Eugene-based **Beyond Toxics**,

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State fair tickets and concerts on sale

Capi Lynn

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Tickets for the 2021 Oregon State Fair are now on sale.

Event officials made the announcement in an email with the headline: "At long last, we can make it official: It's on!"

The state fair, which was canceled last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, will return Aug. 27 through Sept. 6 with the theme: "Fun Makes A Comeback!"

Tickets for admission, carnival rides, concerts, the fair lift and a wine-tasting event will be available for purchase through the fair's website at oregonstatefair.org.

Pre-sale for admission, which ends Aug. 26 according to the fair website, are \$6 for an adult, \$5 for a child

6 and older, \$1 for a senior 65 and older, and free for children 5 and younger.

Ticket prices are not listed online for the concert series, which will feature nine shows:

- Friday, Aug. 27: Chicago
- Saturday, Aug. 28: Seether
- Monday, Aug. 30: Jon Pardi
- Tuesday, Aug. 31: Pat Benatar & Neil Giraldo
- Wednesday, Sept. 1: Zach Williams
- Thursday, Sept. 2: Flo Rida
- Friday, Sept. 3: Granger Smith, featuring Earl Dribbles Jr.
- Saturday, Sept. 4: Collective Soul
- Monday, Sept. 6: Ezra Ray Hart with Mark McGrath of Sugar Ray, Kevin Griffin of Better than Ezra, and Emerson Hart of Tonic

Contact reporter **Capi Lynn** at clynn@statesman-journal.com or 503-399-6710.

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