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Dave Evans in 2020 gets his boat on the water with his two dogs at Mongold Boat Ramp at Detroit Lake.
ZACH URNESS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Water levels are up

Detroit Lake reaches 'full pool' for first time since 2020

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

Detroit Lake reached its "full pool" water level last week for the first time in two years, although it's slightly less water than people will remember from previous years. • The popular reservoir east of Salem was 1,560 feet above sea level as of Friday, which is just above the water level that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers now considers "full" or "full pool." • The mark is good news for those who love recreation at Detroit Lake, which stayed well below normal levels during last year's drought-plagued spring and summer and hasn't been considered "full" since the summer of 2020. • With above-average snowpack in the mountains and a rainy pattern projected through May, Detroit Lake should stay in good shape throughout the summer, Corps officials said.

"As it stands right now, all of the boat ramps will be accessible going into Memorial Day and for most of the summer," Corps spokesman Chris Gaylord said. "We should stay fairly full. We'll face some uncertainty going into Labor Day as to whether boat ramps will all be accessible."

"May will give us a better picture."

The reservoir will have less water overall following measures taken by the Corps last year to reduce pressure on Detroit Dam's spillway gates in the event of a large Cascadia or local earthquake.

Previously, each spring, Detroit Lake was managed to reach a "full pool" level of 1,563.5 feet above sea level. Under the new plan, the reservoir will be filled and kept at 1,558.5 feet.

The likelihood of the type of earthquake that could damage Detroit Dam to the point of an "uncontrolled release" is small — maybe 1 in 10,000 — but the potential calamity meant an adjustment was needed.

"The chances of a breach right now is very, very

low. Around 0.01 percent," said Ross Hiner, dam safety program manager for the Corps, who said the Detroit decision followed a recently-completed safety assessment. "But we want to move it even lower."

Five feet might not seem like much of a difference, but it's enough to reduce stress on dam spillway gates and reduce the chances of a breach by 10 percent during an extremely large Cascadia or local earthquake, Hiner said.

The lower water level is likely to stay in place for two to five years while the Corps studies the risks further and evaluates long-term measures.

By starting at a "full pool" that is lower than in the past, the lake can drop below dock levels sooner in the season than previously. Research has shown that low water years can bring up to \$11 million in negative economic impact to Detroit and the Santiam Canyon, according to a study by Oregon State University. And

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New rules still let electric companies decide when to kill power

Claire Withycombe
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

In Oregon, power companies will still decide whether to shut off power if there's a high risk of wildfires.

But new state rules will now require large utilities owned by investors to publicize certain details in advance about a shutoff, like when it will start and how long it's expected to last, and to provide status updates every 24 hours.

Oregon's Public Utility Commission issued new rules saying power companies have to inform "critical facilities" like communications facilities and local public safety "partners" like local emergency managers of the day, time and estimated length of a shutoff.

The utilities also have to inform customers about shutoffs through "multiple media platforms to maximize customer outreach" and have prominent links on their websites to information about the shutoff and the area where the shutoff is happening.

The utilities can contact customers through phone or email if it doesn't disrupt emergency alerts and through those messages should convey when the shutoff will start, how long it will last and a way for customers to contact the company 24 hours a day.

The issue was amplified during the Labor Day wildfires of 2020 when about a million acres of Oregon were torched, including in the Santiam Canyon east of Salem.

Some utilities, including Portland General Electric, Lane Electric and Consumers Power, chose to shut off power as winds kicked up, but others, like Pacific Power, did not.

A massive lawsuit has been filed against PacifiCorp and Pacific Power, which is owned by PacifiCorp, for \$1.6 billion, alleging the companies left the power lines energized despite knowing a massive wind event was forecast for Labor Day weekend, in the context of a dry year, and that the wind could cause trees and other debris to hit power lines and start fires.

"This devastation could have been avoided if Defendants had turned off the power surging through their power lines," the lawsuit states. "Instead, PacifiCorp and Pacific Power prioritized dollars over livelihoods and lives."

Oregon's Public Utility Commission, which regulates large power companies that are owned by investors, isn't involved in decisions about whether to shut off power. And that is unlikely to change.

"The utilities know their system, they have the data on their system and they make the determination based on the data they have," Kandi Young, a spokes-

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Indian boarding schools left painful legacy, report says

Debra Utacia Krol and Dianne Lugo
Arizona Republic | USA TODAY NETWORK

The languages, cultures and history of Native American tribes were "targeted for destruction" by federal Indian boarding schools, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland said Wednesday, and some of the children who attended those schools never made it home.

Haaland, whose grandparents were taken to boarding schools at the age of 8, said her agency had begun the work of chronicling the worst of the abuses and trying to find out what happened to the students who were lost in the system, an attempt to "honor our trust obligations to Indigenous communities."

The secretary made her remarks as the Interior Department released its first report on Indian boarding schools and their impacts on Native peoples throughout the United States.

Chemawa Indian School in Salem is one of the four off-reservation boarding schools the federal government currently runs. At more than 140 years old, it is the oldest continuously operated and federally run Indian boarding school in the United States. Today, Chemawa has more than 300 students enrolled but



Students in an art class at Phoenix Indian School, June 1900. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

at least 30,000 children attended the school in Chemawa's first 96 years alone.

The report is the first step in the Federal Indian

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Oregon rules to protect outdoor workers from heat, wildfire smoke

Virginia Barreda
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon's workplace safety agency Oregon OSHA has adopted new rules to protect workers from excessive heat and wildfire smoke.

The agency's heat rule requires employers provide workers access to shade, cool water, breaks and training. It kicks in when the heat index passes 80 degrees and adds additional oversights when the heat index reaches 90 degrees. The wildfire smoke rule commands employees to address workers' exposure to smoke and unhealthy air by monitoring air quality and providing training to employees.

The heat rules take effect June 15; the wildfire rules July 1. Both rules are the most protective of their kind in the country, OSHA officials said in a release Monday, and reflect the need to strengthen protections in the workplace while "focusing on the needs of Oregon's most vulnerable communities."

Both rules encompass initial protective measures for workers who rely on employer-provided housing, including as part of farm operations.

The rules were proposed in February following a development process that included worker and community stakeholder listening sessions, input rule advisory committees, and employer and labor stakeholders, OSHA officials said.

They build on temporary emergency requirements that were adopted last year following a historic heat wave and the death of one agricultural worker.

"With these new rules from Oregon OSHA, I am proud that Oregon will be a national model for heat and wildfire smoke protections for all workers, regardless of income level, occupation, or immigration status," Gov. Kate Brown said in a statement.

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