

Progress made against U.S. fires

The Associated Press

BLY — Firefighters in Oregon reported good progress in the battle against the nation's largest wildfire, while authorities canceled evacuation orders near a major blaze in Northern California and another on Hawaii's Big Island.

Containment of the Bootleg Fire in remote Southern Oregon was up to 84% late Sunday, Aug. 1. It was 56% contained a day earlier.

"That reflects several good days of work on the ground where crews have been able to reinforce and build additional containment lines," fire spokesman Al Nash said.

The blaze has scorched more than 646 square miles since being sparked by lightning July 6 in the Fremont-Winema National Forest.

California's Dixie Fire covered nearly 388 square miles in mountains where 42 homes and other buildings have been destroyed.

The fire was 33% contained Aug. 1, and evacuation orders and warnings had earlier been lifted for several areas of Butte and Plumas counties.

The cause of the blaze was still under investigation.

Authorities warned that with unpredictable winds and extremely dry fuels, the risk of flare-ups remained high.

In recent days, lightning sparked two wildfires that threatened remote homes in California's Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Evacuation warnings remained in place Sunday for communities along the Trinity River.

In Montana, a wind-driven wildfire destroyed more than a dozen homes, outbuildings and other structures, authorities said Aug. 1. Evacuations were ordered after flames jumped a highway and moved toward communities near Flathead Lake in the northwestern part of the state.

Crews also battled major blazes in Northeastern Washington and Northern Idaho.

Nearly 22,000 fire-fighters and support personnel were battling 91 large, active wildfires covering 2,813 square miles in mostly western states, the National Interagency Fire Center said.

A historic drought and recent heat waves tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight in the American West. Scientists say climate change has made the region much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

The U.S. Drought Monitor reported last week that while a monsoon has delivered rainfall to the Southwest, critically dry conditions persist across Northern California and the Northwest, where there has been an expansion of "exceptional drought," the worst category.

Dry conditions and winds made for dangerous fire conditions in Hawaii. A wind advisory was issued Sunday for portions of Lanai, Maui and the Big Island. A fast-moving wildfire on Hawaii's Big Island grew to 62.5 square miles, prompting mandatory evacuation orders. Those orders — which forced thousands of residents out of their homes — were lifted Sunday evening. However, authorities told residents to remain alert.

"County officials ask all residents of the affected areas to only return home if absolutely necessary," Hawaii County spokesperson Cyrus Johnsen said.

Gov. Kate Brown plans to veto two bills

By ANNA GRIFFIN

Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown intends to veto two bills approved during the recent Oregon Legislature session.

Brown's office announced Sunday, Aug. 1, that she will reject Senate Bill 721, which would change the way members are selected for a consumer advisory council that helps the Oregon Health Authority deal with mental health and substance abuse.

The bill would allow members of the advisory council to select future members and refines its advisory role in an attempt to ensure consumers have a voice in how mental health and



The Associated Press, File
Oregon Gov. Kate Brown intends to veto bills, one relating to committee appointments and another to age restrictions to buy kratom.

substance abuse policies are crafted and enforced.

The governor's office says the legislation is well intentioned, but contradicts federal law, which prohibits the Oregon Health Authority from delegating its responsi-

bility over implementing Medicaid policies.

Sponsors plan to submit a revised bill.

The governor also plans to veto House Bill 2646. That legislation would bar Oregonians younger

than 21 from purchasing kratom. That's a plant grown in Southeast Asian countries that can be used like an opiate to fight pain and addiction.

Brown says she wants to prevent young people

from obtaining the herbal supplement. But she worries about wording in the House bill that puts the Oregon Department of Agriculture, rather than the federal government, in charge of regulating it.

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