

A year of record-breaking weather in Oregon

By **KALE WILLIAMS**
The Oregonian

SALEM — Oregon saw a number of weather records fall in 2021, and none of them were good.

There was an ice storm in February that caused the biggest power outage the state has ever seen. There was a fire season that started early and saw one of the biggest blazes in Oregon history. There was an unprecedented heat dome that shattered temperature records around the state and killed hundreds of people across the Pacific Northwest.

And through it all, there was drought, which dried up wells, spawned conflict over water rights and shortened growing seasons in some of the state's key agricultural regions.

Larry O'Neill, Oregon's State Climatologist, said this year's bouts of extreme weather might feel like outliers, but they signaled shifts in the climate that we might have to get used to.

"Looking at historical records, what we see is that these events are occurring more often than they have in the past," O'Neill told The Oregonian. "The climate has changed and it will change some more. We can see it in the data records and we're highly confident that it's because of human activities."

Valentine's weekend freeze

Anytime there is snow in the forecast for the lowest elevations in Northwestern Oregon, there is cause for concern.

Residents of the Portland metro area have not exactly



InciWeb/Contributed Photo, File
Flames from the enormous Bootleg Fire in Klamath and Lake counties silhouette a firefighter in July 2021. It was one of the country's largest fires this year.

shown great resiliency in the face of moderate snowfalls of just a few inches. Still, no one was quite ready for the freeze that settled over the area in mid-February.

Temperatures dropped to 28 degrees on Feb. 11 and wouldn't rise above freezing for four days. Somewhere between 4 inches and a foot of snow fell in the Willamette Valley, depending on your location, but on Feb. 14 the snow turned to ice.

Up to 2.5 inches accumulated on roadways, trees and powerlines across the region. First hundreds, then thousands, then hundreds of thousands of people all across Northwestern Oregon lost power.

At the peak, roughly 300,000 customers were without electricity, the largest outage in state history, and Gov. Kate Brown quickly declared a state of emergency. While some customers had their power restored relatively quickly, others waited days or longer for the lights and heat to

come back on.

Among the worst-hit areas was rural Clackamas County, where some residents went without electricity for more than a week. Hotels in and around Portland went from nearly empty, because of the COVID pandemic, to completely booked, and the governor warned against price gouging as thousands of desperate people looked for a warm place to stay.

For most, the extended outage was an inconvenience, albeit a major one. For others, it was a serious impact to life and safety.

Oregon Health & Science University said the Oregon Poison Center got nearly 20 calls about carbon monoxide exposure during the three-day ice storm, up from about one call per week. Most were related to portable generators being used improperly and people trying to burn wood or coal indoors to heat their homes.

In Gladstone, six people were treated for carbon

monoxide poisoning after running a generator too close to their home. Two of them ended up in critical condition, but ultimately survived. Others weren't so lucky. At least four people and a dog died in separate incidents of carbon monoxide poisoning in Clackamas County, according to the sheriff's office.

Long and hot wildfire season

While 2021 did not pack the widespread destruction or death toll of 2020's catastrophic fire storms, many fire districts in Oregon saw their earliest and longest fire season on record.

The state's first named wildfire started in April with a lightning-sparked blaze in Klamath County and, unlike the massive infernos of Labor Day 2020, which laid waste to entire communities, the season would be marked by smaller fires, with one notable exception.

The Bootleg Fire started on July 6 in the Fremont-Winema National Forest, about 15 miles northwest of the town of Beatty, also in Klamath County. Six days later, the Log Fire started, and by July 20 the two fires had merged into one and soon became the largest wildfire burning in the nation.

By the time the fire was contained, 39 days later, 413,000 acres were scorched along with 382 vehicles and more than 400 structures in the rugged hills north and east of Klamath Falls. It was the third-largest fire in Oregon since 1900, when the Oregon Department of Forestry's records begin. At least 20 people were injured, but no one was killed.

OBITUARIES

Patricia M. (Westrich) Prell

1937-2021
Formerly of Union

Patricia "Patty" Mary Prell, 84, of Bullhead City, Arizona, and formerly of Union, died Nov. 27, 2021. A celebration of life will be held at a later date in honor of both Patricia and her husband, Gerald Prell.

Also known as Patty, she was born Nov. 2, 1937, in Medford, Wisconsin, to Herbert Westrich and Mary Westrich. She moved to Oregon in 1978 for her work in the U.S. Forest Service, living in Union and working out of La Grande. Her husband, Gerald "Jerry" Prell, was a supervisor at the La Grande Bi-Mart. Patty retired from the Forest Service in 1999, and in 2005 she and Jerry moved to Bullhead City, Arizona.

Patty's interests were varied. She loved spending time with her large family and enjoyed keeping up with current events, singing and attending shows.

Patty was a loving and intelligent woman, a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother who will be deeply missed and affectionately remembered.

Survivors include her sons and daughters-in-laws, Mark and Debra Prell of Oregon and Kent and Debra Prell of Virginia; daughters and sons-in-law,

Debra and Dan Warnock of Oregon, DeAnne and Dale Young of Virginia, and Jeryl Prell of Oregon; brother; Kenneth Westrich of Minnesota; 11 grandchildren; and 25 great-grandchildren, with another on the way in April 2022.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Gerald, in 2017, and a daughter, Barbara.

Arrangements are by Dimond & Sons Silver Bell Chapel, Bullhead City, Arizona.



Prell

Teresa 'Terri' E. (Fisher) Hocker

1951-2021
La Grande

Teresa "Terri" Elaine Hocker, 70, of La Grande, died Dec. 13, 2021. A funeral service will be held Jan. 7, 2022, at 2:30 p.m.

at the Wallowa Christian Church. Burial will be at the Wallowa Cemetery, and a reception will follow at the church.

Also known as Terri, she was born Feb. 10, 1951, in Enterprise, to Leon

Norman "Bill" Fisher and Macel Mae (Moys) Fisher. She attended school in Wallowa, graduating in 1969. She also attended college at what is now Eastern Oregon University in La Grande. Terri married Gayle Hocker on Sept. 4, 1970.

Terri spent her life as a businesswoman, showing her two daughters a strong work ethic until she was forced to retire due to medical reasons. Her priority was family, celebrating every

occasion possible with all. She loved spending time with her husband, children, grandchildren and great-granddaughter.

Terri enjoyed fishing, riding four-wheelers, mushrooming, practice shooting, listening to music and going to Wildhorse Casino with family members.

Survivors include her husband of 51 years, Gayle Hocker; daughters and sons-in-law, Danyelle and Josh Glendenning and Kari and Cody Ford; sister, Patty Atkinson; brother and sister-in-law, Charles and Mardell Fisher; four grandchildren; one great-granddaughter; and numerous nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister, Larae Hocker; and brother, Michael Fisher.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the ALS foundation.



Hocker

Fishtrap plans writers workshops for January

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Fishtrap has two writers who focus on the West scheduled for workshops in January.

Corinna Cook will present a workshop called "Writer as Mapmaker" on four Tuesdays beginning Jan. 4 from 6-8 p.m.

Cook's workshop focuses on how maps, like literature, tell us where we are and where we might go. Literature, like a good map, tells us what's adjacent though just out of sight, what lies underfoot, where the firm boundaries lie and where they give way. The contemporary creative nonfiction essay serves as this workshop's lens.

Participants in the workshop will sample essays that treat maps as art, essays that expand maps into metaphor and essays that make maps out of language. Participants will compile a class resource bank of chosen maps, engage with them via writing



Cook



Daly

prompts and discussion, and develop an original piece of writing that dialogues with a map of their choice. This workshop is suitable for published authors, practicing students, writers who simply dabble and all thinkers interested in exploring nonfiction's literary-cartographic lay of the land.

Cook is the author of "Leavetakings," a lyric essay collection (University of Alaska Press, 2020). She is a former Fulbright Fellow, an Alaska Literary Award recipient and a Rasmuson Foundation awardee. She holds a PhD in English and creative writing from the University of Missouri. Her next book project explores Alaska-Yukon art, ecology and history.

Registration for the month-long workshop is \$240, or \$215 for Fishtrappers. Register at www.fishtrap.org.

On four consecutive Saturdays beginning Jan. 8, Matt Daly will lead a virtual workshop titled "The Lean Season: Winter Writing with Space and Stillness." The workshops run from 10-11:30 a.m.

The course invites participants to consider spareness, quiet and the power of individual objects and actions to punctuate a snowy expanse. Participating writers will get outside and take their time to notice how cold, low light and snow still the noise and the bustle of perception. From a quieter place, they will engage in writing activities that honor the expanse of the open page and place words and phrases with quiet attention across that expanse.

The weekly online gatherings will allow the sharing

of reflections and writing from the week, to explore writing that navigates stillness skillfully and to practice the craft of quiet composition together.

Daly is the author of the book-length collection "Between Here and Home and the Chapbook Red State." He is the recipient of a Neltje Blanchan Award for writing inspired by the natural world and a Creative Writing Fellowship in Poetry from the Wyoming Arts Council. His poems have appeared in various publications. Daly teaches reflective and creative writing in a variety of settings and with a range of audiences. He is the co-founder of Write to Thrive, a business that brings writing practices to individuals and professional groups to cultivate creativity and well-being.

Registration is \$180, or \$160 for Fishtrappers, for the month-long workshop. Register at www.fishtrap.org.

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

MEETINGS

• UNION — The VFW High Valley Post 4060, of Union, meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. The next meeting is slated for Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022, at the VFW Hall, 518 Main St.

BRIEFS

Help children cope with divorce, separation

LA GRANDE — The next session of "Helping Children Cope with Divorce and Separation," the court's mandatory parent education course, will be offered virtually via Zoom

Thursday, Jan. 13, 2022, from 6-9 p.m. The class is led by Mary Lu Pierce and sponsored by the Union County Family Law Advisory Committee. The class is free but pre-registration is required. To sign up, email teala.sunderman@ojd.state.or.us including your name, mailing address, phone number and the date of the class. Call Teala at 541-962-9500, ext. 42, for more information.

Union County Senior Center lunch menu

Dine-in meals: Served from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; use front entrance and observe social distancing.
Takeout meals: Pick up from noon to 1 p.m. at kitchen's back door.

Cost: Age 60+, \$3 suggested donation; all others, \$6.

JAN. 3-7

Monday: pork fried rice, spring rolls, oriental salad, fortune cookie.

Tuesday: beef curry with vegetables over rice, salad greens, baked bread, fruit, dessert.

Wednesday: Reuben sandwich, potato salad, fresh fruit, cabbage slaw, cookie.

Thursday: meatloaf, mashed potatoes with gravy, salad greens, baked rolls, dessert.

Friday: bacon and Swiss tartlets, country potato casserole, fresh fruit, yogurt.

— The Observer

PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 29

7:20 a.m. — La Grande police responded to the 2300 block of Q Avenue on a report of a disturbance and resolved the situation.

11:29 a.m. — The Union County Sheriff's Office received a report of a sex crime that occurred in the county jail, La Grande.

12:14 p.m. — La Grande police responded to the first block of Depot Street on a report of a disturbance and cited a 57-year-old woman for trespassing.

12:45 p.m. — A resident at Clover Glen Apartments, 2212 Cove Ave., La Grande,

reported harassment. An officer responded, took information and tried to find the other party.

1:24 p.m. — La Grande police responded to the Longbranch Bar & Eats, 208 Depot St., on a report of a female causing a disturbance. Officers trespassed one person.

6:25 p.m. — A caller reported malfunctioning railroad arms at Highway 203 and Pierce Road, La Grande.

7:09 p.m. — A caller reported gunshots on the 400 block of South Bellwood Street, Union. A Union County sheriff's deputy

checked the area but did not find anything suspicious.

THURSDAY, DEC. 30

12:02 a.m. — A Union County sheriff's deputy responded to the area of Momiji, 11627 Island Ave., Island City, on a report of a fight. The deputy found people were only arguing.

2:12 a.m. — A caller reported a suspicious female was in front of The Local, 508 Adams Ave., La Grande. The situation was resolved before police responded.

UPCOMING LOCAL SERVICES



Please follow guidelines regarding face coverings and social distancing at all gatherings.

Dec. 31 — BILLY DOTY: 10 a.m. viewing, Bollman Funeral Home, Enterprise; burial follows at Prairie Creek Cemetery, Joseph.

Jan. 5-6, 2022 — MICHELLE CREPEAU: Wednesday, 5-7 p.m. viewing; Thursday, 2 p.m. funeral; both at Loveland Funeral Chapel, La Grande.

Jan. 6-7, 2022 — BRIAN SPENCER: Thursday, 1 p.m. Mass of Christian Burial, Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church, La Grande; Friday, 1 p.m. graveside service, Burns Cemetery.

Jan. 7, 2022 — TERRI HOCKER: 2:30 p.m. funeral, Wallowa Christian Church; burial follows at the Wallowa Cemetery, then a reception at the church.

Jan. 15, 2022 — JIM LUNDY: 2 p.m. memorial service, Gilbert Center, Eastern Oregon University, La Grande. — calendar courtesy of Loveland Funeral Chapel

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