



The Observer

The readerboard at the La Grande Mobil, 408 Adams Ave., shows the price of gasoline at \$4.73 per gallon on Thursday, May 12, 2022.

Gas prices reach new record highs across Oregon

By ELLIOT NIUS

The Oregonian

PORTLAND — Gas prices across Oregon set new records Tuesday, May 10, following a surge in the price of oil.

After several weeks hovering near record highs set in March, the average price for a gallon of regular in Oregon jumped to \$4.85, according to AAA, up 16 cents from the week prior.

Average prices in Union County are up to \$4.70, up from \$4.67 last week. Wallowa County saw an increase to \$4.87, up 5 cents from a week ago.

Drivers in the Portland area were paying even more — \$4.92 a gallon, up 15 cents from a week ago. The national average was \$4.37, up 17 cents.

Price have spiked along with the cost of a barrel of crude oil, now \$110. The price of crude accounts for more than half the cost of filling up a tank with gas or diesel, said AAA Oregon/Idaho spokesperson Marie Dodds. The other biggest factors are refining the oil into fuel, distribution, marketing and taxes.

“Unfortunately, these high pump prices are not likely to ease anytime soon,” she said.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has pushed oil prices higher. The United States and several other nation banned the import of Russian oil as punishment for the war, though Russian imports accounted for only a small fraction of the U.S. fuel supply.

New restrictions from the European Union, which is most dependent on Russia for oil and fuel,

may ratchet up pressure on Moscow. But it will also squeeze the global oil supply, keeping prices at the pump high.

The United States is the world’s leading oil producer, but production plummeted early in the pandemic and has been slow to rebound. That’s in part, executives have said, because oil companies are reluctant to ramp up costly new operations to meet what could be a temporary surge in demand. In the meantime, the largest U.S. oil companies are enjoying record profits.

Rising fuel costs are hitting consumers directly in the pocketbook, but the sustained upward trend is pushing up other everyday costs, including the price of groceries and other goods. At a time when unemployment is low and wages are climbing, gas prices and other inflationary pressures are contributing to a sense of economic angst.

Oregon gas remains the fifth priciest among U.S. states behind California, Hawaii, Nevada and Washington. Oregon’s 16-cent jump in the price per gallon was the highest on the West Coast this week.

Prior to this year, Oregon gas prices had peaked in the summer of 2008 at \$4.29 a gallon, which would be about \$5.65 today after accounting for inflation. The previous nationwide high-water mark, also set in 2008, was \$4.27, or \$5.63 in today’s dollars.

The state’s most expensive gas is in Curry County (\$5.07 a gallon), Harney County (\$5.06) and Josephine County (\$5.04).

Oregon wildfires are worsening

Fire prevention doesn’t look like a top priority for governor candidates

By APRIL EHRlich

Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — A massive wildfire in Oregon last summer burned across hundreds of thousands of acres in what became the country’s largest wildfire at the time. The year before that, thousands of homes were decimated by multiple wildfires across the state over Labor Day Weekend.

Oregon wildfires have become increasingly catastrophic every year, and scientists say they’re only going to get worse.

But you wouldn’t know it by following the state’s gubernatorial primary.

Few governor candidates list wildfires among their top priorities. Even former House Republican Leader Christine Drazan, one of the more prominent GOP candidates, doesn’t mention wildfires among a long list of issues she’d tackle if elected. Drazan grew up in Klamath County, where the 410,000 acre Bootleg Fire destroyed more than 160 homes last year.

OPB invited governor candidates to answer a questionnaire laying out where they stand on the issues voters say are most important to them. Of the responses, just Curry County Commissioner Court Boice made a point of discussing wildfires. Among what he considers the state’s top challenges, the Republican writes only: “CATASTROPHIC FIRE DANGER — RISKS.” But he doesn’t consider himself a serious contender.

Democratic candidates Tina Kotek and Tobias Read list wildfires among their overarching concerns about climate change, which both say they plan to address through investments in renewable energy — a key appeal to voters in metropolitan areas.

But wildfires appear to be a specific



Chris Tuite/Contributed Photo, File

Talent Mobile Estates 81 was gutted during the Almeda Fire and sprayed with colorful fire retardant.

concern to Oregon voters. OPB commissioned DHM Research to survey potential Oregon voters about the issues they are most concerned about. Of the 600 people surveyed, 61% said they believed forest fires were a “very serious” issue.

How serious an issue are forest fires in Oregon?

Source: DHM Research survey of Oregonians commissioned by OPB, overall margin of error 4%

For Rep. Pam Marsh, a Democrat in Ashland (who isn’t running for governor), the topic of wildfires is all-encompassing. Her region has suffered through year after year of choking wildfire smoke, to the extent that its tourism economy now adapts its peak summer schedule to when the air is safe to breathe.

In 2020, the massive Almeda Fire decimated about 2,600 homes across the Rogue Valley overnight, triggering a national disaster declaration. Many of those homes belonged to low-income families, some of whom are still living in disaster trailers and struggling through a complex bureaucratic

process for getting federal aid.

Marsh said that unless you’re living with the risk of wildfire and the reality of fire impacts, it’s difficult to have a deep understanding of the issue.

“If you haven’t been immersed in that world, likely you’re still thinking about this as a single-dimensional problem and not understanding all the parts that have to be addressed in order to keep communities as protected as possible,” Marsh said.

How much do you think forest management practices have contributed to severe wildfires in Oregon?

For her and most wildfire experts, the key to addressing dangerous wildfires is through evidence-based forest management practices. That could include thinning forests, encouraging a diverse ecosystem to thrive, and even using fire as a tool to manage overgrowth.

“Where a whole lot of the solid science comes down to is, making sure that forests that are overgrown have some thinning and that we really take care of the undergrowth using prescriptive burning,” Marsh said. “It’s pretty clear that one or the other isn’t good enough.”

HIV isn’t just a big city issue.

More than half of Oregonians with HIV live outside of Portland, often in suburbs and small towns like this one.

Good neighbors chip in to get the job done. And we’ve got work to do on HIV prevention. People in rural Oregon are more likely to get a late-stage diagnosis, and a lack of HIV treatment may harm your health, or your partner’s. Detected early, HIV is more easily managed and you can live a long, healthy life. Getting tested is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Learn more and find free testing at endhivoregon.org



State labor officials offer nearly \$19 million for workforce training grants

By LYNNE TERRY

Oregon Capital Chronicle

SALEM — State officials have nearly \$19 million to spend on training Oregonians to work in construction, health care and manufacturing.

Earlier this month, the state Bureau of Labor and Industries opened the bidding process for training and apprenticeship programs for underserved communities, including women, people of color, rural residents, low-income residents, people with disabilities, tribal communities and veterans.

The money is part of Gov. Kate Brown’s \$100 million Future Ready Oregon plan that was passed by the state Legislature in February and aims to stem Oregon’s workforce shortage and bolster the economy while training residents for careers.

Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle said the money will be used for training and apprenticeship programs in manufacturing and health care and to expand training

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and support in the construction industry to help participants become certified in a trade.

The Bureau of Labor and Industries will approve applications worth up to \$1.25 million as part of its large grant program. Those will be limited to \$6 million in this first round. Grants up to \$10,000 are open to community organizations, tribal communities, organizations that serve underserved populations and existing programs. Applicants have until June 2 at 5 p.m. to submit their proposals in this first round. Two other rounds will be held later in the year.

The Oregon State Apprenticeship and Training Council will approve the program elements and will announce the awards during a public meeting, according to Amanda Kraus, an agency spokeswoman said.

