



Noah Berger/For The Associated Press
A horse grazes in a pasture as the McKinney Fire burns in Klamath National Forest, Calif., Saturday, July 30, 2022.

State facing poor air quality

Oregon sees year's first unhealthy air day, as research tracks dramatic rise in wildfire smoke

By ADRIANNA GUTIERREZ
The Oregonian

SALEM — Wildfires in Oregon have been burning more acres than usual in recent years, causing longer stretches of poor air quality in the state, new research finds.

The study by Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality, which operates air-monitoring stations around the state, found that central and southern Oregon cities such as Bend, Klamath Falls and Medford neared or broke records in 2021 for the number of smoky days considered "unhealthy for sensitive groups," such as the elderly, pregnant women, young children and people with lung or respiratory disease.

Klamath Falls, for example, had 38 days last year in the unhealthy range, tying the 2018 record for the city. Over the past half-dozen years, Klamath Falls has averaged 16.7 unhealthy smoke days per year, up from an average of just 1.4 days per year between 1989 and 2014, the study states.

DEQ began tracking air quality in Oregon in 1985.

Right now, Jacksonville and Malin are the only Oregon cities in the state that fall into the unhealthy category, caused by smoke from the McKinney Fire burning in Northern California, according to DEQ spokesperson Laura Gleim.

The air quality in surrounding southern Oregon cities — such as Medford, Ashland and Shady Cove — have moderate air-quality index (AQI) scores as of Tuesday, Aug. 2.

Two fires are burning in Southern Oregon's Umpqua National Forest — the Potter and Windigo fires. Officials at Northwest Interagency Coordination Center, which oversees fires in Oregon and Washington, expect these fires to send smoke into communities east of Hills Creek Reservoir, Oregon Highway 58, Crescent Lake and other areas north of the fire area.

"What we're seeing so far this year is that we have a later season, whereas last year we were already seeing unhealthy air-quality days in central Oregon and southern Oregon," Gleim said. "So far it's a more mild and later season but we still have a good stretch of summer to go. This past weekend was the first (unhealthy) day we've seen down in southern Oregon, and we still haven't seen any in Central Oregon."

The size of the fires, coupled with the location and wind patterns, ultimately will determine the impact of smoke across the state as fire season continues, Gleim said. The Potter and Windigo fires are still at 0% containment. That is also the case for the much larger McKinney Fire, which currently is burning more than 56,000 acres.

Kristof returning to New York Times after failed campaign

By JULIA SHUMWAY
Oregon Capital Chronicle

PORTLAND — Columnist Nick Kristof is headed back to the New York Times less than a year after he quit to begin an ill-fated campaign for governor of Oregon.

Kristof, who grew up in Yamhill County, previously wrote for the Times from 1984 to October 2021. He then began running for governor as a Democrat, but his campaign ended months before the primary after the Oregon Supreme Court upheld Secretary of State Shemia Fagan's decision that he hadn't lived in the state long enough to meet a constitutional requirement for running for office.

Candidates for governor this fall needed to establish residency by November 2019. Kristof voted in New York in November 2020 and



Sara Cline/The Associated Press, File
Columnist Nick Kristof is headed back to the New York Times less than a year after he quit to begin an ill-fated campaign for governor of Oregon.

didn't register to vote in Oregon until December 2020.

He maintained that he had always been an Oregon resident, and that maintaining a home in New York didn't mean he gave up

his family's farm in rural Yamhill County. He didn't provide documents, such as tax returns, to prove his residency in Oregon, and he repeatedly ignored requests from the Oregon Capital Chronicle for those documents.

Since his political campaign ended, Kristof has continued a Substack blog, launched a new hard cider with apples from his family's farm and worked on a memoir. The Times announced his return on Monday, Aug. 1, saying he'll resume publishing columns later this fall after completing his book.

"In his 'farewell' column before running for governor of Oregon, Nick Kristof mentioned that when William Safire was asked if he would give up his Times column to be secretary of state, he replied, 'Why take a step down?'" wrote the paper's opinion editor, Kathleen

Kingsbury. "Now Nick is stepping up, resuming his opinion column and once again interpreting the world's depth and complexity for Times readers."

Kristof still has nearly \$1 million in his campaign bank account after giving tens of thousands to Democratic state and local candidates, including gubernatorial nominee Tina Kotek. The Times' ethics policy prohibits employees from giving money to or raising money for political candidates or causes.

He told the Capital Chronicle via email that he intends for the remainder of his campaign money to go toward a "pay-it-forward" job-training program run through Future Ready Oregon, the \$200 million workforce training investment the Oregon Legislature passed this year.

Draft rules released to govern police conduct in Oregon

The Associated Press

SALEM — A proposed set of conduct and discipline standards applicable to all law enforcement agencies in Oregon were published Monday, Aug. 1.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reports in several instances, the commission charged with establishing the new rules left room for officers found to have committed serious, often illegal offenses to keep their jobs.

For example, officers who commit sexual assault or intentional physical assault may not be fired if

there are mitigating factors.

"The butt is considered a sexual part of the body," said Mark Makler, a former prosecutor who represents police unions and officers, at a meeting on June 30. "So grabbing somebody's butt in jest or horseplay could be considered a sexual assault."

Makler and seven other commissioners who were present at that meeting voted against making sexual assault an offense for automatic termination.

"There are things like state of mind or absence of intent that could come into play. Or degree of harm,"

Portland Police Association attorney Anil Karia said. "There are nuances in this."

The commission was formed with the passage of House Bill 2930 in 2021, one of several pieces of legislation passed last year tackling police accountability and reform.

"The goal was to have clarity," bill sponsor Rep. Janelle Bynum, D-Clackamas said in an interview with OPB. "Officers like to have clarity, some level of certainty about what the standards are."

By having one statewide set of guidelines, Bynum

explained, officers who have discipline problems in one local department can't transfer to a different agency that has lower standards.

The commission has 13 voting members and two nonvoting members.

Members include a representative from the Oregon Department of Justice, two police chiefs, a sheriff, two lawyers who represent police unions, a defense attorney who also represents police, the former president of the Salem-Keizer NAACP, the president of the Oregon District Attorneys Association, and

a civil rights investigator at Oregon State University.

Over the course of 13 meetings since early March, the group hammered out standards on a range of issues from unjustified use of force to assault on targeting someone based solely on their race, gender or other protected status.

The commission will hold a series of public hearings throughout August and ending Sept. 16.

Commissioners will then consider the public's comment and make any changes before the rules take effect on Oct. 1.

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