

# Wildfires: Parts of the region are in extreme drought; snow is melting more quickly than years past

Continued from P1

"Continued drying trends are likely to persist if we don't get moisture," Zimmerlee said.

The Energy Release Component index, which is related to how hot a wildfire can burn, shows that Central Oregon reached approximately 50 on Friday, double the average level for this time of year.

The dry conditions come as Western Oregon is still cleaning up from devastating Labor Day wildfires that burned 400,000 acres of land, destroyed more than 700 homes and killed five people.

While Central Oregon avoided the direct impacts of the flames, smoke from the fires in Western Oregon drifted over the mountains, creating a pall of unhealthy air that lasted a week. The dry fuels this year are a recipe for another big fire incident.

Larry O'Neill, director of Oregon Climate Services at Oregon State University in Corvallis, said the dry conditions are a disappointment for some climatologists, who were expecting more precipitation from the La Nina effect this winter.

"La Nina didn't really materialize, consequently much of the state is in at least severe drought," said O'Neill. "We are already witnessing impacts on agriculture and wildfire risk that we usually do not see until July or August."

Parts of Klamath and Lake coun-



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Smoke billows into the air as a prescribed fire burns within the Phil's Trail area April 15.

ties to the south of Bend are in exceptional drought for the first time since the U.S. Drought Monitor started in 2000. The tri-counties (Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson) of Central Oregon are a mix of moderate, severe and extreme drought.

Central Oregon is also behind in

snowpack, which does not bode well for sufficient late-season runoff that can help cool vegetation and forests. The snowpack is 84% of normal and water year-to-date precipitation is just 83% of normal, as of Friday.

Scott Oviatt, the snow survey supervisor for Natural Resources

Conservation Service Oregon, says snowmelt is increasing because of unseasonably warm temperatures over the past week. High temperatures hovered at 60 degrees but hit 80 on April 18. "Snow is melting out more rapidly than melt rates observed over the last several years," said Oviatt.

"This will lead to less surface water and upper level soil moisture being available in the early summer for use in irrigation and less available for forest vegetation."

Central Oregon has already seen increased levels of fire in 2021. The Oregon Department of Forestry has responded to eight fires in the tri-counties this year, compared to an average of two fires for this time of year.

The Bull Springs Fire, which consumed 211 acres after a strong windstorm March 28, has been the largest blaze to date in Central Oregon this year. Stock said that wildfire was the result of dry fuels, high winds and low live fuel moisture levels.

Other parts of Oregon and Washington state have also seen early fire activity. The Ponina Fire in Klamath County was first reported on April 17 and grew to 1,641 acres before full containment.

The wild card, of course, is precipitation. Rain is expected in Central Oregon over the weekend but it may not be enough to soak fuels for long. If May and June see increased rains, it could help to reduce the dry conditions from building in the region.

"How fire season goes is dependent on the amount and timing of rain," said Stock. "If we keep getting this dry pattern, you know, we will definitely be in high fire danger really early."

Reporter: 541-617-7818, mkohn@bendbulletin.com

## River

Continued from P1

"Every Earth Day we do something special," said Keyser.

The group has grown in recent years since its founding in 2012 and now conducts a variety of environmental activities, including cleanups, graffiti removal, native plant restoration and trail maintenance. The group also leads guided hikes and maintains monarch butterfly way stations.

"This year we have moved our efforts to clean up land that has been abused by people who are driving illegally into areas of public land that have been designated as nonmotorized," said Keyser, a former Oregon deputy secretary of state. She is retired and has lived in Crooked River Ranch since 2000.

"There hasn't been adequate education, signage and control over the creation of illegal roads," she adds.

The Earth Day cleanup was just one phase of a larger effort to restore Steamboat Rock back to its natural condition. For years the area has been degraded not just with trash from illegal dumping and homeless camps, but also off-highway vehicles, which tear up the earth, ruining native grasses and plants that hold the soil in place.

The side of the road closer to the river is designated for nonmotorized use, but it's clear that plenty of vehicles enter the area. The Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area group is working with the Bureau of Land Management to post more signs and close off roads with fences and boulders to protect the fragile ecosystem.

"The major trouble is camps leaving garbage behind, the illegal dumping and the use of motor vehicles, which is not

authorized," said Nick Weber, outdoor recreation planner for the BLM. "Cutting off access to motorized (vehicles) will be the key to cleaning this area up."

That's important because just down the hill is a stretch of Deschutes River designated to protect it from degradation. Weber offered some advice to people who want to keep this land pristine.

"Take care of these areas. That is the message on Earth Day," said Weber. "Leave no trace, leave it better than you found it for future generations."

Further along the trail, Keyser points out abandoned campfires, trees with limbs cut off for firewood, and haphazard roads that cut through the area. Off in the distance, the Deschutes River rushes past with Mount Jefferson forming

a dramatic backdrop.

"This was part of the (camper) village. It's all weeds now," said Keyser, pointing out the spoiled land. "The trash was tossed off the rim, old mattresses, tents. It's going to take a long time to get it back, but you have to start somewhere."

Nearby, volunteer Susie Garland, a part-time Crooked River Ranch resident, was picking up trash amid the juniper trees with her husband, Jerry. Tires nearby had been collected in a pile.

"It's sad. We used to bike here, but then we stopped because it didn't look good. There was a lot of garbage, a lot of dead deer carcasses. It took away from the experience," said Garland. "But it's already looking better than it looked the last time."

**One solution for oxygen at home, away, and for travel**  
Introducing the INOGEN ONE - It's oxygen therapy on your terms

No more tanks to refill. No more deliveries. No more hassles with travel. The INOGEN ONE portable oxygen concentrator is designed to provide unparalleled freedom for oxygen therapy users. It's small, lightweight, clinically proven for stationary and portable use, during the day and at night, and can go virtually anywhere — even on most airlines. Inogen accepts Medicare and many private insurances!

Call Inogen Today To Request Your FREE Info Kit  
**1-855-839-0752**

Reclaim Your Freedom And Independence NOW!

© 2020 Inogen, Inc. All rights reserved. MKT-PO108

**State Farm**

**Joe A Lochner Insurance Agency Inc.**  
Joe Lochner, Agent  
123 SW 5th Street  
Redmond, OR 97756  
Bus: 541-548-6023  
joe.lochner.h5mi@statefarm.com  
Fax: (541) 548-6024

State Farm, Bloomington, IL  
1211999

The efforts by Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area on Earth Day resulted in dozens of trash bags hauled away, plus the removal of larger items, including tires, a vacuum cleaner, a satellite dish, a microwave oven, a barbecue and wooden palettes. The volunteers also found a couch in a cave and buckets filled with human excrement.

"It's a shame that people treat our environment this way," said volunteer Mary Zabalski, a Redmond resident who volunteers every Earth Day. "You come to enjoy it, but how can you enjoy it when there is broken glass everywhere?"

Another volunteer, David Dalton, was blunter when

asked how he felt about the condition of the area.

"Disgusted, angry," he said. "It's not too bad right here, but at times I have seen huge dumps."

A nearby sign that warns of a \$100,000 fine and one year in prison for dumping has largely been ignored.

Near the end of one of the trash runs, a truck pulled up along the side of the road and out jumped local resident Rob Windlinx, clad in a flannel shirt and wide-brimmed hat. Windlinx, one of the original founders of the group, had earlier cleaned out the nearby cave, emptying it of the couch, a barbecue, and tires.

"There was a young osprey watching us. That made it en-

joyable," said Windlinx. "We're bringing back the beauty of Central Oregon."

By the end of the day, the volunteers had loaded up enough garbage to fill up two transport trucks, said Jeff Scheetz, one of the organizers.

For the volunteers who put in the long hours in the sun, it was a chance to give back to their community and restore lands they and others want to enjoy while hiking, biking and horse riding.

"We like to use these lands and keep them clean," said Garland. "We didn't realize it was Earth Day, we just wanted to help clean up."

Reporter: 541-617-7818, mkohn@bendbulletin.com

*A Champion for Student Success*

**Jill CUMMINGS**

FOR REDMOND SCHOOL BOARD POSITION 3

As a school board director, I will focus on the most critical challenges currently facing our youth, families, community and district.

**Enrollment**

**Learning Loss**

**Academic Integrity**

**Communication, Advocacy, Transparency & Accountability**

• **Knowledgeable.** I have been in the local banking industry since 2002. I have been through the local housing boom, the great recession and the pandemic. I have successfully led teams, managed internal policy, federal and state regulations, produced exemplary audits and I have advised on multi-million dollar budgets. I come from a family of entrepreneurs and followed in their footsteps, having owned my own small business.

• **Experience.** I grew up in Central Oregon. As a parent, I have experienced the entire K-12 Redmond School District experience. My eldest recently graduating early and my youngest is in 8th grade. I have been involved in the Redmond School District since 2002, as a SMART volunteer and Junior Achievement student instructor, teaching Financial Literacy to students.

• **Commitment to Community.** I am deeply passionate about our youth and community. I act as an Advisory Board Member for Rimrock Trails Treatment Services, offering mental health counseling and substance use treatment services to individuals and families. I support Family Access Network and am a long-time table captain for their Redmond annual luncheon. I am a Redmond Executive Association member. I volunteer for Wake the World, providing water-sport opportunities to abandoned, abused and neglected children as well as for the handicapped and our wounded warriors. I have served on the board and executive board of the Redmond Chamber of Commerce. I was honored to be a recipient of the Cascade Business News 2019 Accomplished Under 40 award.

**LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DESCHUTES COUNTY

**CITY CLUB** OF CENTRAL OREGON  
Constitutional. Civic. Community.

City Club of Central Oregon and the League of Women Voters of Deschutes County have partnered to bring you candidate forums. Video production by Connect Central Oregon.

These virtual forums are **FREE** to the public. Forums are pre-recorded.

**SUBMIT QUESTIONS!**

We encourage you to send questions for the candidates to [info@lwvdeschutes.org](mailto:info@lwvdeschutes.org)

**NEW!**

Redmond and Bend-Lapine School Districts Forums will have English to Spanish translation!

**WATCH!**

LWV of Deschutes home page: [LWVDeschutes.org/](http://LWVDeschutes.org/)

City Club C.O. YouTube: [youtube.com/c/CityClubofCentralOregon](https://www.youtube.com/c/CityClubofCentralOregon)

Find more information here: LWVDC calendar: <https://lwvdeschutes.org/events/>

**VOTE 411**  
ELECTION INFORMATION YOU NEED

Create your own voter pamphlet at [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org)

**G5**

**BR** Brooks Resources Corporation

**Miller Lumber**  
"Since 1911"

LOUIS CAPOZZI

**SKJERSAA GROUP**

DESCHUTES PUBLIC LIBRARY