

Changes

Continued from P1

In Washington, the state fair is expected to return in September, though organizers continue to take their cues on reopening from Gov. Jay Inslee.

Idaho has not one but three state fairs, all of which are planning to welcome back visitors with a full lineup of events and entertainment.

Individual counties will decide whether to hold county fairs. Experts say most counties are planning fairs or have already hosted them, but some have been canceled. In Deschutes County, a modified fair and rodeo is likely to happen this summer.

Oregon

As of Tuesday, the Oregon State Fair in Salem is scheduled for Aug. 27 through Sept. 6, though an official announcement will be made in June.

How exactly the event will differ from past years, however, remains to be seen.

"We are following the state mandates and will augment any plans based on the Oregon Health Authority's recommendations," said Kim Grewe-Powell, CEO of the Oregon State Fair. "We are still assessing the needs, and will follow the OHA mandates."

While light on specific details, Grewe-Powell said they will increase cleaning and sanitation practices at the fair in 2021 and will follow other mandates as OHA recommends.

Attendance at the Oregon State Fair has been more than 250,000 people in recent years. The fair supports 883 jobs statewide — including 627 jobs in Marion County — and \$15.6 million in wages, salary and benefits.

"Like last year's All Oregon E-Fair, we are planning for contingencies," Grewe-Powell said.

California

Cal Expo, home of the California State Fair, announced May 5 the fairgrounds will remain a COVID-19 "vaccination super site" until at least the end of September. That means the state fair — originally set for July — will be postponed. Fair coordinators have not yet picked a date.

Board members say the fair will follow state safety guidelines and may be "slimmed down."

Despite changes, people say they're excited the fair will resume after being canceled in 2020.

"There's definitely a light at the end of the tunnel," said Rick Pickering, CEO of Cal Expo.

The pandemic was hard on Cal Expo, which receives no funding from the state, county or city. In March 2020, Pickering said, Cal Expo laid off 60% of its employees.

The fair's cancellation was hard on other groups, too. Lynn Schmitt-McQuitty, statewide 4-H director, said California saw a 40% drop in 4-H enrollment by Feb. 2021, probably attributable in part to canceled fairs.

"We're very excited fairs are reopening in 2021," she said.

Washington

The Washington State Fair plans to welcome people back Sept. 3-26.

Fair coordinators say they are closely monitoring state guidelines. Stacy Van Horne, spokeswoman for Washington State Fair Events Center, said every three weeks Gov. Jay Inslee looks at the latest COVID-19 statistics and makes reopening decisions.

Pre-COVID, the Washington fair in Puyallup was ranked among the 10 largest in the U.S.

Jesse Taylor, executive director of Washington FFA Foundation, said he's optimistic the state fair will begin to "resemble normalcy" again this fall.

A smaller annual event, called the Washington State Spring Fair, took place in April. Attendees from FFA and other groups said the event was fun, profitable and safe.

In 2021, Taylor said he believes there will be a renewed "thirst" for fairs and FFA programs.

4-H leaders also expect more enrollment.

Nancy Deringer, Washington state 4-H program leader,



Courtesy of Cal Expo

California State Fair pre-COVID. Though state fairs are returning, they will be different, organizers say.

said she's "definitely" seeing a spike in 4-H enrollments this spring.

"I think the kids are really excited," she said.

Idaho

Idaho is unique in that it does not have one single state fair but three state fairs divided by region — the Western Idaho Fair in Boise, Eastern Idaho State Fair in Blackfoot and North Idaho State Fair in Coeur d'Alene.

All three events plan to return in 2021.

Bob Batista, director of Expo Idaho and the Western Idaho Fair, said he has already finished booking entertainment for the 2021 fair, scheduled for Aug. 20-29.

"We're going to do everything we can to make this as safe and comfortable as we can, to some degree," Batista said.

In a normal year, Batista said the fair brings in 250,000 people over 10 days. To avoid overcrowding, he said organizers will spread out food and commercial vendors around the 247-acre fairgrounds.

Certain events like the pie-eating contest will also be canceled to avoid close interactions. Batista said he is not anticipating any limits on capacity.

"My biggest concern this year is going to be finding enough help," he said. "Employment is huge."

The North Idaho State Fair, held at the Kootenai County Fairgrounds, is also scheduled for Aug. 20-29. General Man-

ager Alexcia Jordan said they are expanding from five to 10 days, in part to avoid larger crowds.

Planning this year's fair has been difficult, Jordan said, as circumstances surrounding the pandemic change from day to day. The event does have a COVID-19 action plan, which was designed to be fluid so they can adapt when necessary.

For example, the action plan limits seating capacity in the grandstands to 50% for events like the rodeo, demolition derby and concerts. But Jordan said she expects local restrictions will loosen further by August.

"We're very excited to bring some sense of normalcy back to our community," she said. "We're just trying to make sure it's done well and safely."

According to its website, the Eastern Idaho State Fair will be Sept. 3-11. A daily schedule of events will be published in June.

Last year's state fairs in Idaho were limited gatherings, dedicated solely to 4-H and FFA shows and livestock sales.

Allen Taggart, 4-H extension specialist for Ada County, said the feeling was "eerie," being in the mostly empty fairgrounds without friends and family.

Taggart said he is looking forward to having state fairs back in 2021, providing that signature showcase for kids and their projects.

"It's all about building those leadership skills and those communication skills," he said.

Supermoon total lunar eclipse to be visible over the Northwest this month

By Jamie Hale The Oregonian

A lunar eclipse this month will be a little more special than usual, occurring as the moon makes one of its closest approaches to the Earth all year.

The supermoon total lunar eclipse will take place in the early morning hours of May 26, and most of the event will be visible from the Pacific Northwest, according to astronomers.

A total lunar eclipse takes place when the Earth lines up directly between the sun and the moon, with the Earth's shadow completely covering the moon. During a lunar eclipse the moon turns a vivid shade of red — an effect of refracted sunlight — before darkening completely.

This year's total lunar eclipse will officially begin at 1:47 a.m. May 26 as viewed from Bend, according to Time and Date, with the total eclipse beginning around 4:18 a.m. Totality is expected to last about 14 minutes before the shadow begins to gradually fade.

Those watching the event



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin file

A supermoon begins its descent April 8, 2020, behind Mount Bachelor. This supermoon was the brightest and largest for all of 2020.

may notice the moon appear to be slightly larger than normal. In fact, this will be the closest a full moon will get to the Earth all year, coming within 222,023 miles of our planet. A full moon that close is often called a "supermoon," as it looks a little bigger and brighter than normal.

Stargazers hoping to watch the supermoon total lunar eclipse this month will need to first check the forecast to make sure it will be visible at all, as cloudy skies would block it from view. If visible,

you'll want to find a place with a good, unobstructed view of the sky and look for the moon over the south to southwest horizon.

There's no need to use binoculars or a telescope to see the eclipse, but it could be a fun way to watch the moon up close as the Earth's shadow falls across it.

The eclipse will be visible across most of the Western U.S., though viewing will be the best for Hawaii, the South Pacific and Australia, according to NASA.

County Fair

Continued from P1

"I look at it as an opportunity to give our citizens a celebration," said board member Arron Curtis. "It's an opportunity to commit to our vendor partners and give them an opportunity to survive. Quite frankly, it's to bring back some level of economic impact to the county."

Hinds told the board Thursday it will be impossible to host a fair like previous years, but he hopes to incor-

porate traditional experiences such as fair food, livestock and music.

"It won't look like any fair we've ever done," Hinds said. "It won't be the same, but I think it's possible to do something that is certainly a modified version."

Hinds said the board will have to stay flexible as state COVID-19 restrictions change leading up to the fair, which is scheduled to begin July 28.

The number of people allowed at the fairgrounds will

determine parking, ticketing and how to lay out the event, Hinds said.

The fair is usually the largest county fair in the state, drawing more than 290,000 each year. While it won't have all the same offerings, this summer's fair will still be an enjoyable experience, Hinds said.

"I think the community is ready for entertainment," Hinds said. "The community needs entertainment."

■ Reporter: 541-617-7820, kspurr@bendbulletin.com

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