

Oregon considers renewing wildfire insurance

Associated Press

SALEM — Oregon is considering another year of insurance coverage to help pay for catastrophic wildfire seasons. British insurance giant Lloyd's of London is offering the state another year of coverage despite three consecutive years of expensive, drought-fueled wildfires. The policy could protect the state from financial problems if this year is another

expensive year for firefighting, reported The Bulletin. "We think that a policy makes good financial sense for Oregon, (and) we ought to keep purchasing it. That's what our recommendation is," said Tim Keith, who administers the state's forest protection fund. The policy would also be available to private landowners. Oregon fire officials and landowners would share the

\$3.5 million premium and up to \$50 million deductible before Lloyd's contributes up to \$25 million. The premium is down \$300,000 from last year. Last year, the state nearly lost its coverage for the first time in four decades after maxing out its policy in 2013 and 2014. Last year, Oregon's fire season was bad enough to trigger federal reimbursements that covered the cost for most severe fires. Oregon still needs to pay off

\$10 million in fire costs from last season. State lawmakers have expressed interest in creating a fund for firefighting and finding money for it. It could hold as much as \$60 million. State Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, says he'd sponsor a bill proposing such a trust fund, but he wants to see if there's a way to protect the fund from being used on other programs when money is tight.



Submitted Photo
A small plane drops retardant over an Oregon wildfire.

Washington approves April clamming dates

EO Media Group

OLYMPIA, Wash. — State shellfish managers have approved the first half of clamming dates that should provide recreational digs on the Long Beach Peninsula for most of the month.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife approved the early-April digs after marine toxin tests showed the clams are safe to eat on the peninsula and two other outer coast beaches. The Twin Harbors digging area between Willapa Bay and Westport remains closed due to higher-than-allowable domoic acid levels in clams just north of the Willapa entrance.

Diggers should be aware that the opening switches from evening to morning tides beginning today, said Dan Ayres, a state coastal shellfish manager.

Ayres also noted that razor clam diggers age 15 or older need to have a 2016-17 fishing license to participate in the upcoming dig, since the new license year began April 1. New licenses are available online (<https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/>) and from license dealers throughout the state.

The dig began Sunday and Wednesday and continues on the following days:

- Today, 7:07 a.m.; -0.6 feet; Long Beach, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Friday, 7:54 a.m.; -1.1 feet; Long Beach, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Saturday, 8:42 a.m.; -1.3 feet; Long Beach, Copalis
- Sunday, 9:32 a.m.; -1.2 feet; Long Beach, Mocrocks



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More clamming this month on the Long Beach Peninsula.

- Monday, 10:23 a.m.; -0.9 feet; Long Beach
- Tuesday, 11:19 a.m.; -0.4 feet; Long Beach

Under state law, diggers are required to keep the first 15 clams they dig. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container. The dig coincides with the annual Long Beach razor clam festival, scheduled Saturday and Sunday. Digging at Long Beach will be limited only to the days listed. The beach had been open daily in February and March.

"After a late start to the season, we have tried to provide as much digging as possible while still conserving our razor clam populations," Ayres said.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife delayed the razor clam season due to elevated levels

of domoic acid, a natural toxin produced by certain types of marine algae.

"Razor clams at Twin Harbors had the highest levels of domoic acid during the peak of the harmful algae bloom in 2015," Ayres said. "It is taking longer for clams there to rid themselves of the toxin."

It's uncertain whether Twin Harbors will open this spring for razor clam digging, Ayres said. The state continues to monitor toxin levels on all Washington beaches and will announce openings on the department's razor clam webpage at tinyurl.com/WARazorClams.

During all upcoming digs, state wildlife managers urge clam diggers to avoid disturbing snowy plovers and streaked horned larks by observing

posted vehicle speed limits and avoiding nest sites. Both species nest in the soft, dry sand at Leadbetter Point on the Long Beach Peninsula.

The snowy plover is a small bird with gray wings and a white breast. The lark is a small bird with a pale yellow breast and brown back. Male larks have a black mask, breast band and "horns." Both species are listed as "endangered" in the state and as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Port of Vancouver against oil terminal contract changes

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, Wash. — The Port of Vancouver delivered a blow Wednesday to a proposed rail-to-marine oil transfer terminal, coming out against a contract renegotiation requested by Vancouver Energy.

The staff recommendation to deny the request increases the likelihood that port commissioners will follow suit, leaving a contract in place that ramps up costs for the energy company starting this summer.

Tesoro Corp. and Savage Cos., operating as Vancouver Energy, seek to delay for two years an Aug. 1 rent increase. Energy officials say they made the request because the project remains in the state approval phase and the increase was put in place assuming the terminal would be operational or close to it by that time.

Port staff is recommending the board decline the request "but continue working in good faith with

Vancouver Energy to pursue necessary approvals."

The modification will be debated at a public hearing Tuesday at Clark College and likely will be voted on by the three-member commission at a meeting next Friday.

The proposal includes building a terminal along the Columbia River that can handle an average 360,000 barrels of crude oil per day. The oil would be temporarily stored on site and then loaded onto ships for transport to West Coast refineries.

Opponents have said the project is unsafe and environmentally hazardous and have urged commissioners to cancel the lease and abandon the venture.

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