



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

The sun is seen through smoky air as it sets Sunday behind the Narrows Bridge in Tacoma, Wash.

Smoke blots out mountains, poses health risks

Unhealthy air quality from fires

By SALLY HO and GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Smoke from wildfires clogged the sky across the West, blotting out mountains and city skylines from Oregon to Colorado, delaying flights and forcing authorities to tell even healthy adults in the Seattle area to stay indoors.

As large cities dealt with unhealthy air for a second summer in a row, experts warned that it could become more common as the West faces larger and more destructive wildfires because of heat and drought blamed on climate change. Officials also must prioritize resources during the longer firefighting season, so some blazes may be allowed to burn in unpopulated areas.

Seattle's Space Needle was swathed in haze, and it was impossible to see nearby

mountains. Portland residents who were up early saw a blood-red sun shrouded in smoke and huffed their way through another day of polluted air. Portland Public Schools suspended all outdoor sports practices.

Thick smoke in Denver blocked the view of some of Colorado's famous mountains and prompted an air quality health advisory for the northeastern quarter of the state.

The smoky pollution, even in Colorado, came from wildfires in British Columbia and the Northwest's Cascade Mountains, clouding a season that many spend outdoors.

Portland resident Zach Simon supervised a group of children in a summer biking camp who paused at a huge water fountain by the Willamette River, where gray, smoky haze obscured a view of Mount Hood.

Simon said he won't let the kids ride as far or take part in as many running games like tag while the air quality is bad.

"I went biking yesterday, and I really felt it in my lungs, and I was really headachy and

'Today, biking, you can see the whole city in haze and you can't see the skyline.'

Portland resident Zach Simon

like, lethargic," Simon said Monday. "Today, biking, you can see the whole city in haze and you can't see the skyline."

In Colorado, Sid Vaughn, who works at a Boulder shoe store called the Boulder Running Co., did his usual 9-mile run Monday despite the smoke.

"It didn't feel that great to my lungs," he said.

Forest fires are common, but typical Seattle-area weather pushes it out of the way quickly. The latest round of prolonged smoke happened as hot temperatures and high pressure collided, said Andrew Wineke, a spokesman for the Washington State Department of Ecology's air quality program.

It's a rare occurrence that also happened last year, raising concerns for many locals that

it may become normal during wildfire season. Wineke said climate change is expected to contribute to many more fires.

"The trend is clear. You see the number of forest fires increasing, and so there's going to be wildfires," Wineke said. "There's going to be smoke. It's going to be somewhere."

The Federal Aviation Administration said airplanes bound for the Sea-Tac International Airport, Seattle's main airport, may be delayed because of low visibility.

In Spokane, air quality slipped into the "hazardous" range. Thick haze hung over Washington's second-largest city, forcing vehicles to turn on their headlights during the morning commute.

The air quality was so bad that everyone, regardless of

physical condition or age, will likely be affected, according to the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency.

The haze caused Gonzaga and Eastern Washington universities to cancel soccer matches Sunday, and Spokane to delay some garbage service until Tuesday to protect workers.

In California, winds blew smoke from several wildfires into the San Francisco Bay Area, where hazy air blanketed the skies and authorities issued an air quality advisory through Tuesday.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District issued a "Spare the Air" alert, which recommends people don't drive to avoid adding more pollutants to the air and advises those with health problems to limit outdoor exposure because and stay in air-conditioned buildings.

Health officials say signs of smoke-related health symptoms include coughing, scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, headaches, stinging eyes and runny nose. Those with heart disease may experience chest pain, irregular heartbeats, shortness of breath and fatigue.

Patients at Denver's National Jewish Health, a respiratory hospital, were reporting worsening symptoms, hospital spokesman Adam Dormuth said.

In Portland, six tourists from Lincoln, Nebraska, posed for a photo in front of the Willamette River with the usual Mount Hood backdrop shrouded in haze. The group of siblings and friends rented an RV and drove in to visit a sister who recently moved to the area.

"We are disappointed that we can't see the mountains and the whole city, because our relatives live here and tell us how pretty it is, and we're missing it," Bev Harris said. "We're from tornado alley, and we don't have wildfires. It's a different experience."

Flaccus reported from Portland. Associated Press reporters Nicholas K. Geranios in Spokane, Dan Elliott in Denver and Olga Rodriguez in San Francisco contributed to this story.

Washington state judge blocks kill order on predatory wolves

Togo wolf pack poses a threat to ranchers

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — A judge in Washington state has issued an emergency order blocking the state from killing members of a wolf pack that have been preying on cattle.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife had announced Monday morning that it would immediately begin efforts to kill members of the wolf pack who had been preying on cattle in northeastern Ferry County, near the Canadian border.

Members of the Togo wolf pack have preyed on cattle three times in the past 30 days and six times in the past 10 months, which exceeds the state's threshold to take action, the agency said.

But two environmental groups filed a lawsuit challenging that decision, and a Thurston County Superior

'The evidence shows that nonlethal measures have not been successful, and the pack will continue preying on livestock unless we take action to change its behavior.'

Kelly Susewind
WDFW director

Court judge on Monday afternoon issued an order to temporarily block the hunt. A hearing on the matter was set for Aug. 31.

In a news release, agency director Kelly Susewind said the department planned to shoot the wolves from helicopters or on the ground. "The evidence shows that nonlethal measures have not been successful, and the pack will continue preying on livestock unless we take action to change its behavior," Susewind said.

The agency uses a policy of incremental removal, killing

one or a few wolves at a time.

The Center for Biological Diversity and Cascadia Wildlands immediately sued, contending the order to kill wolves failed to undergo an environmental analysis.

"It's outrageous that Washington wildlife officials want to kill more wolves from the state's small and recovering wolf population," said Amaroq Weiss of the Center for Bio-

logical Diversity.

"Washingtonians overwhelmingly want wolves recovered," she said. "This is not the Old West anymore."

Since 2012, the state has killed 18 wolves, eradicating three entire wolf packs, the environmental groups said.

In the case of the Togo pack, the attacks on cattle started last November, with an injured calf. The rancher took numerous steps to deter wolves, including using lights and range riders, the agency said.

But three dead cows and two more injured calves were discovered in the next 10 months, including an injured calf found Saturday on a U.S. Forest Service grazing allotment in Ferry County.

"The injured calf had bite lacerations and bite puncture wounds to the outside lower left hindquarter, the left hamstring, the inside of the left

hock and the groin area," the agency said. The wounds were consistent with a wolf attack, officials said.

The last estimate of Togo pack size was two adult wolves and an unknown number of pups, the agency said. The existence of the Togo pack, found near the U.S.-Canada border, was only confirmed in late 2017.

Wolves were wiped out in Washington early in the last century. They started to return from Canada and Idaho in the

past 20 years. Washington confirmed its first breeding pack in 2008.

The wolves are federally protected in the western two-thirds of the state and protected by law statewide.

The latest count of wolves, conducted last winter, found a minimum of 122 wolves in 22 packs, with 14 successful breeding pairs. Most packs are in northeastern Washington, where there have been numerous conflicts with cattle producers.

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