

## IN BRIEF

## Seaside signs agreement with new city manager

SEASIDE — The City Council has approved an employment agreement with Spencer Kyle, the new city manager.

Kyle replaces Mark Winstanley, who had held the city manager job since 2001.

Kyle will receive \$150,000 a year, plus a car allowance, relocation reimbursement, temporary housing allowance and additional health and vacation benefits.

With Winstanley's retirement last week, city councilors unanimously appointed Assistant City Manager Jon Rahl interim city manager until Kyle's start on or before Aug. 1.

Kyle and his family are relocating from South Jordan, Utah, where as director of administrative services, he helped manage 16 departments, including emergency management, parks and recreation and IT facilities.

— *The Astorian*

## State report calls for more oversight, accountability on school spending and performance

It's been three years since the Oregon Legislature passed the Student Success Act, a law creating a new tax to support K-12 education in the state.

With hundreds of millions of dollars going to Oregon schools from the tax, a new report from the Secretary of State's Office and the audits division released last week outlines five risk areas that could undermine those spending efforts and jeopardize student achievement going forward.

The report is not an audit, but an advisory directed toward elected officials — including the governor and legislators — who can then work with the Department of Education.

"I ordered this new style of report to provide proactive support to state leaders," Secretary of State Shemia Fagan said at a press conference on June 28.

"While most audits look at the past, for past performance, this systemic risks analysis and report is designed to head off problems before they occur."

Fagan said by naming these risks, the goal is for Student Success Act funds to lead to real improvement for students across the state.

"We need to not see a gap for students of color, we need to not see a gap for students who don't speak English as a first language, we need to not see a gap for students who are in high poverty schools or high poverty communities," Fagan said.

## Scientists discover 'smoke taint' compounds affecting wine flavor

Wine made from grapes exposed to wildfire smoke can taste like ash.

A research team of scientists in Oregon, Washington state and California have discovered a class of compounds that contribute to that ashy taste — often called "smoke taint" — in wine and grapes.

Tom Collins is an assistant professor of wine and grape chemistry at Washington State University who works on the project. Collins said now that the research team has identified the compounds, they're going to study how they end up in fruit and wine, and how to remove them.

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

## Ecologists say federal wildfire plans are dangerously out of step with climate change

By ERIC WESTERVELT  
*National Public Radio*

The federal Government Accountability Office is launching an investigation after U.S. Forest Service-controlled burns that escaped caused the largest wildfire ever recorded in New Mexico.

The GAO is examining controlled burn policies at the Forest Service and other federal land agencies.

On May 20, Forest Service Chief Randy Moore halted all so-called prescribed fires on its land for a 90-day safety review. The New Mexico fire has burned more than 340,000 acres and is still not fully contained.

But many fire ecologists and forestry experts are concerned that this pause is only worsening the wildfire risk. Critics say it's merely masking the agency's dangerously incremental, outdated and problematic approach to intentional burns and fire mitigation, a policy that has failed to adapt to climate change and megadrought.

"A lot of the planning tools that fire managers rely upon for planning prescribed burns were built under a climate that no longer exists," says biologist and professor Matthew Hurteau, who studies the intersection of climate change, wildfire and forest ecosystems at the University of New Mexico. "That's a systemic problem," he says.

Controlled burns are seen by forest ecologists as perhaps the most essential tool for reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire and helping to undo a century of fire suppression policy that has worsened wildfire conditions that now annually wreak havoc across large swaths of the West.

Hurteau and others are concerned that the Forest Service — and other fire agencies — continue to fail to put climate change at the fore of decision making, despite mounting scientific evidence



Mario Tama/Getty Images

**A scorched structure and vehicles stand on a property mostly destroyed in June by the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fire in New Mexico.**

and the agency's own stated goals about reducing dangerously high levels of built-up fuel in forests.

"We've seen pretty substantial changes to the climatic conditions, particularly here in the Southwest, but across much of the Western U.S. And we need to address that by developing new tools that account for the fact that we've got these persistent drying trends in a much warmer and much drier atmosphere," Hurteau says.

The Forest Service's recently released internal review of the New Mexico burn only magnifies those criticisms, as it amounts to a stunning admission by the agency that it essentially failed to take climate change into account when conducting an intentional burn during a historic drought.

Numerous sections of the report underscore that point, including noting that prescribed fire officials failed to realize it was set "under much drier conditions than were recognized." And it notes that a better understanding "of long-term drought and climate factors versus short-term weather events" would have helped.

"Seems astounding," fire ecologist Timothy Ingalsbee told National Public Radio. "Never again should we have the excuse that we failed to include climate conditions

and climate data in our fire management actions. That's just the era we live in," says the former Forest Service wildland firefighter who now directs the group Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology. "I can understand why people are upset. It sounds like the 'dog ate my homework' kind of excuse," he says.

Human-caused climate change is driving ever drier conditions, extreme weather and megadrought. That's turning live vegetation into fuel even faster and making the forests' old built-up fuel more explosive.

Ingalsbee and other experts in the field say the pace and scale at which the Forest Service is implementing intentional fire is dangerously insufficient. He hopes the agency uses this 90-day burn pause to start to make good on its stated goal of making a fundamental shift away from prioritizing wildfire suppression.

"If we were to shift those resources and funding into prescribed burning, have as many crews as possible to manage prescribed burning, that would be a big help," he said.

## Funding to prevent fires

Leading politicians, too, are frustrated.

In a letter, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Demo-

crat, recently chastised the U.S. secretaries of Interior and Agriculture for not moving fast enough to hire more firefighters amid a staffing crisis and to boost pay. And he implored them to answer basic questions about wildfire mitigation strategy and spending despite a record infusion of new federal money. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, passed last November, provides some \$8 billion for states to help mitigate wildfire risk and \$600 million to raise firefighter pay.

"Your departments received this much-needed support. Now, more than six months after being given this new flexibility, we are past time for action," Wyden wrote.

The people who fight wildfires are often the same ones doing the controlled burns. So there are growing calls for the Forest Service to do more to help develop a dedicated, prescribed fire workforce with training academies and recruiting. Experts have long called for creation of a professional corps dedicated to expanding prescribed fire — experts who can move swiftly across geographic and political boundaries the same way wildfires always do.

"What we need to do as a society is make a fairly substantial investment in training and developing a professionalized fire management workforce," says the University of New Mexico's Hurteau. "And, you know, that's going to take some structural changes to our federal land management agencies."

"For the United States Forest Service to say they followed their policies and procedures does not take into account that those policies and procedures themselves were flawed," says U.S. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez, a New Mexico Democrat who pushed for the Government Accountability Office investigation. Large parts of her district were devastated by the historic fire.

## MEMORIALS

## Saturday, July 9

McGAULEY, Harold William — Celebration of life at 2 p.m., 91786 Akerstadt Road in Svensen. Food and beverages will be provided, but those wishing to can bring a favorite dish to share. For questions, or directions, call James and

Carly Lemire at 503-338-8826 or Vicki McGauley 503-741-0975.

## Monday, July 11

McGAULEY, Harold William — Military service and interment at 1:30 p.m., Fort Stevens National Cemetery, 1090-1140 Russell Drive in Hammond.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

## TUESDAY

**Seaside Community Center Commission**, 10 a.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A.

**Port of Astoria Commission**, 4 p.m., 10 Pier 1, Suite 209.

**Seaside Library Board**, 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway.

**Cannon Beach City Council**, 5 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower Ave.

**Clatsop County Fair Board**, 5:30 p.m., 92937 Walluski Loop.

**Miles Crossing Sanitary Sewer District Board**, 6 p.m., 34583 U.S. Highway 101 Business.

**Seaside Planning Commission**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Astoria City Council**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

## WEDNESDAY

**Clatsop County Board of Commissioners**, 10 a.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

**Cannon Beach Planning Commission**, 6 p.m., special meeting, City Hall, 163 E. Gower Ave.

**Seaside Improvement Commission**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Gearhart City Council**, 7 p.m., (electronic meeting).

## THURSDAY

**Cannon Beach City Council**, 6 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower Ave.

**Seaside Parks Advisory Committee**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

## Study claims dam proposal puts region behind on goals of 'decarbonizing' electrical grid

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
*Capital Press*

The Pacific Northwest region is behind on its goals to "decarbonize" electrical generation, and replacing the lower Snake River dams would cause further costs and delays and carbon dioxide, according to a recent study from Northwest RiverPartners.

"For farmers, this is a huge issue," said Kurt Miller, the executive director of the not-for-profit organization, which represents regional community-owned utilities. "Tens of thousands of acres of irrigated farmland will be lost if the dams are breached. Additionally, electricity is a major expense for farmers, especially for those who use pumps for irrigation. Electricity rates could jump by 25% or more if the dams are lost."

Environmental groups and a handful of politicians want to breach the lower Snake River dams, but the electricity they generate would need to be replaced.

"Decarbonizing" the power grid refers to eliminating the use of coal, oil and natural gas to generate electricity. Dams are a carbon dioxide-free resource, Miller said.

The study found it would cost \$142 billion to meet Oregon and Washington state laws that aim to achieve decarbonization by 2040 and 2045.

Removing the dams would add at least \$15 billion



Associated Press

**The Ice Harbor Dam on the lower Snake River.**

to the total cost.

The study, conducted by Energy GPS Consulting, considered the historic paces in developing renewable resources for the Western Power Pool, California and Texas, and doubled them.

The study finds the capacity required to achieve base case requirements while maintaining the dams would not be achieved until 2057 in a best-case scenario, and 2076 in a worst-case scenario.

"It's showing how far behind the region is in achieving its decarbonization requirements under those laws," Miller said. "It is genuinely shocking once you see what it takes to get there."

Miller thinks the extra \$15 billion cost of removing the dams, "even in today's age, is still a lot of money." He notes that's just the cost of the power supply, at current values, so it's likely to increase.

"Right now, it's public power customers who would

be stuck with the bill if they were removed," he said. "For them, the rate impact would be tremendous."

Northwest RiverPartners presented the study's findings to consultants working on Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray's federal-state assessment on dam breaching. Murray and Inslee are slated to make their final recommendation this summer.

"As the governor and senator noted when the draft consultant report was released, they take public feedback very seriously," said Jaime Smith, a spokesperson for Inslee's office. "The governor will be considering that feedback when he makes his recommendations."

Miller said the organization will present the study to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council and other groups.

Northwest RiverPartners' membership is primarily made up of electric utilities, he said.

"They are experts in this space, and I think this will be eye-opening even for them," he said. "I think this is going to change the discussion."

Stakeholders need to understand the importance of

hydropower to clean energy, and find ways to get more production from them if possible, Miller said.

Miller called the study a "wake-up call" and "major warning" to people concerned about carbon reduction.

"It shows we really can't get there, especially without the lower Snake River dams remaining in place," he said.

According to the study:

- Existing state laws to decarbonize the electric system require 160,000 megawatts of new generation and batteries.

- An additional 14,900 megawatts of new generation and batteries will be required to make up for the loss of the lower Snake River dams in a zero-carbon future.

- More than 7,600 megawatts of renewable and battery storage additions is needed every year from 2023 to 2045 to meet the state laws and replace the capacity of the lower Snake River dams. This significantly exceeds the average build of 1,500 megawatts per year from 2007 to 2021 in the Western Power Pool, putting achievement of state policy goals at risk.

- Even if the Western Power Pool region doubles its historic pace of renewable build, it is unlikely that state goals would be met before 2076, and emissions in the region are likely to increase by 132 million metric tons.

- The additional 14,900 megawatts of resources needed to replace the existing carbon-free capacity of the lower Snake River dams puts further stress on the ability to achieve state policy goals, potentially adding an additional 5 million to 8.5 million metric tons of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere in the Pacific Northwest.

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