

BRIEFLY

Feds say Southwest, Northwest could see catastrophic fires



DENVER (AP) — Despite a wet spring over much of the nation, the Obama administration is warning of potentially catastrophic wildfires this summer, especially in the Southwest and Northwest.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Interior Secretary Sally Jewell discussed wildfire threats and fire outlook Tuesday in Denver.

Jewell says drought and climate change are increasing wildfire danger.

Federal fire managers say heavy precipitation in May reduced the likelihood of wildfires this month across much of the nation, but the danger will increase from July through September.

The Agriculture and Interior departments say federal firefighting costs are expected to range from \$1.1 billion to \$2.1 billion. The high end would exceed their combined firefighting budget of about \$1.4 billion.

If that happens, they would have to transfer money from programs meant to reduce long-term fire danger.

U.S. finds peeling back the Iran sanctions onion no easy task

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration may have to backtrack on its promise that it will suspend only nuclear-related economic sanctions on Iran as part of an emerging nuclear agreement, officials and others involved in the process tell The Associated Press.

The problem derives from what was once a strong point of the broad U.S. sanctions effort that many credit with bringing Iran to the negotiating table in the first place.

Administration officials vehemently reject that any backtracking is taking place, but they are lumping sanctions together differently from the way members of Congress and critics of the negotiations separate them.

Under the sanctions developed over decades, hundreds of companies and individuals have been penalized not only for their role in the country’s nuclear program but also for ballistic missile research, terrorism, human rights violations and money laundering.

Now the administration is wending its way through that briar patch of interwoven economic sanctions.

Court ruling against gay marriage could lead to legal ‘chaos’ for same-sex couples

WASHINGTON (AP) — Gay and lesbian couples could face legal chaos if the Supreme Court rules against same-sex marriage in the next few weeks.

Same-sex weddings could come to a halt in many states, depending on a confusing mix of lower-court decisions and the sometimes-contradictory views of state and local officials.

Among the 36 states in which same-sex couples can now marry are 20 in which federal judges invoked the Constitution to strike down marriage bans.

Those rulings would be in conflict with the nation’s highest court if the justices uphold the power of states to limit marriage to heterosexual couples. A decision is expected by late June in cases from Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Tennessee.

Top officials in some states, including California, seem determined to allow gay and lesbian couples to continue to marry no matter how the court decision comes out. But some county clerks, who actually issue marriage licenses, might not go along, experts said.

Court upholds key parts of Texas abortion law, could close most clinics

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A federal appeals court on Tuesday upheld Texas’ strict abortion restrictions that could soon leave only seven abortion clinics open in a state of 27 million people.

The decision by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals allows Texas to enforce Republican-backed restrictions that require abortion clinics to meet hospital-level operating standards, a checklist that includes rules on minimum room sizes, staffing levels and air ventilation systems. The restrictions, approved in 2013, are among the toughest in the nation.

Owners of traditional abortion clinics, which resemble doctor’s offices more than hospitals, say they would be forced to close because the new rules demand millions of dollars in upgrades they can’t afford. That would mark the second large wave of closures in as many years in Texas, which had 41 abortion clinics in 2012, before other new restrictions took effect that require doctor admitting privileges.

“Not since before Roe v. Wade has a law or court decision had the potential to devastate access to reproductive health care on such a sweeping scale,” said Nancy Northrop, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights. “We now look to the Justices to stop the sham laws that are shutting clinics down and placing countless women at risk of serious harm.”

Texas will be able to start enforcing the restrictions in about three weeks unless the U.S. Supreme Court agrees to halt the decision, said Stephanie Toti, an attorney for the center. Only seven abortion facilities in Texas, including four operated by Planned Parenthood, meet the more robust requirements.

White House press briefing interrupted, room evacuated after bomb threat

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secret Service agents interrupted a live, televised White House press briefing Tuesday to evacuate journalists after a bomb threat was called in to police. No bomb was found, the Secret Service said.

President Barack Obama was in the Oval Office and remained there during the evacuation, which only affected the James S. Brady Briefing Room. White House press secretary Josh Earnest, who was briefing reporters at the time of the evacuation, said later that first lady Michelle Obama and daughters Sasha and Malia were in the White House residence and were not evacuated.

The incident came after a bomb threat related to the White House briefing room was phoned in to local Washington police, the Secret Service said. Roughly 20 minutes later, uniformed Secret Service officers on the scene said an all-clear had been issued, and journalists were later allowed back into the White House, where the daily press briefing resumed.

Evacuations at the White House are rare, but not unprecedented. Last year, journalists and officials were temporarily evacuated after a fence-jumper made it inside the White House.

Yet Tuesday’s incident was made more dramatic by the fact that it took place on camera during a live press briefing - the first such instance since the White House started allowing live television coverage of full press briefings in the 1990s.

Police descend on town in search for escapees

Associated Press

WILLSBORO, N.Y. — With police helicopters hovering overhead, hundreds of law officers in body armor poured into this small town in the Adirondack foothills Tuesday in a search for two killers who used power tools to break out of a maximum-security prison 30 miles away.

The hunt that began over the weekend focused on Willsboro, close to Lake Champlain, after residents reported seeing a couple of men walking on a road late Monday during a driving rainstorm.

Hundreds of black-clad searchers wearing bulletproof vests and sidearms methodically worked their way shoulder-to-shoulder in the rain through hilly woods, fields and swamps, checking every home, garage, shed and outbuilding, then yelling, “Clear!” when there were no signs of the inmates.

By early evening, it appeared the sweep had come up empty, and there was no confirmation from police that the escaped convicts had been there.

Authorities have fielded numerous tips since the breakout from the Clinton Correctional Facility in Dannemora, about 20 miles from the Canadian border, but appeared to have jumped hardest on this one.

David Sweat, 34, and Richard Matt, 48, cut through a steel wall, broke through bricks and crawled through a steam pipe before emerging through a manhole outside the prison grounds.

They were discovered missing early Saturday after stuffing their beds with clothes to fool guards on their rounds and leaving behind a taunting note: “Have a nice day.”

Given the meticulous planning that went into the breakout itself, there



AP Photo/Seth Wenig

Law enforcement officers search for escaped prisoners near Essex, N.Y., Tuesday. State and federal law officers searching for two killers who used power tools to break out of a maximum-security prison poured into a small town 30 miles away after getting a report of a possible sighting.

was speculation that the inmates had arranged for someone to pick them up outside the prison and were long gone from the area.

On Monday, authorities said the inmates could be anywhere — perhaps Canada or Mexico.

On Tuesday, Willsboro dairy farmer George Sayward said he saw troopers parked next to his barn around 5 a.m., and they told him they were there because of a possible sighting of the convicts. Around 7 a.m., Sayward said, he heard one trooper tell another to call in 100 more men.

“The next thing I know, there were a ton of them, by the busload,” Sayward said.

State Police said more than 400 corrections and other law enforcement officers were in the area and planned to

go door to door, checking homes and seasonal camps.

The escape from the 3,000-inmate state prison has raised suspicions the men had help on the inside.

Investigators have been questioning prison workers and outside contractors to try to find out who may have supplied the power tools. Contractors have been doing extensive renovations at the 170-year-old prison, a hulking, fortress-like structure that looms over Dannemora’s main street.

A \$100,000 reward has been posted for information leading to the men’s capture.

Sweat was convicted in the 2002 killing of a sheriff’s deputy and was doing life without parole. Matt was serving 25 years to life for kidnapping and dismembering his boss in 1997.

Officer in Texas pool party incident resigns

Associated Press

MCKINNEY, Texas — The white police officer who was recorded on video pushing a black girl to the ground at a North Texas pool party resigned from the police force Tuesday.

Officer David Eric Casebolt resigned from the McKinney Police Department after almost 10 years on the force, said his attorney, Jane Bishkin of Dallas.

Police Chief Greg Conley confirmed the resignation at a news conference later Tuesday, saying Casebolt had not been pressured.

A video recorded by another teenager and posted online showed Casebolt pushing a bikini-clad black girl to the ground on Friday and brandishing his gun at other black teens after he and other officers responded to complaints about the pool party at a community-owned McKinney swimming pool. The 41-year-old former Texas state trooper was put on leave after the incident.

Conley said a review of the incident video showed Casebolt’s actions were “indefensible,” and that “our policies, our training and our practices do not support his actions.”

In all, 12 officers responded to the report of fights and a disturbance at the pool party at the Craig



AP Photo/Ron Jenkins

Rosalyn Harrison speaks during a protest Monday, in response to an incident at a community pool involving McKinney police officers in McKinney, Texas.

Ranch North Community Pool in an affluent area of western McKinney.

“Eleven of them performed according to their training,” Conley said. Casebolt did not, he said.

“He came into the call out of control and the video showed he was out of control during the incident,” Conley said.

Despite Casebolt’s resignation, his actions remain under investigation and no decision has been made as to whether charges will be filed against him, Conley said. Charges of interfering with an officer and evading arrest against the only man arrested during Friday’s incident have been dropped, Conley said. Everyone else was released.

Bishkin declined to say where Casebolt is now and said the officer had received death threats. The attorney said she would release more information at a news conference Wednesday.

The incident has prompted criticism of the affluent suburb of McKinney north of Dallas, which is among the nation’s fastest growing cities, has highly regarded public schools and was ranked by one publication as America’s best place to live.

People who demonstrated this week at a McKinney school compared the city to Baltimore and Ferguson, Missouri, where use of force by police triggered widespread protests and violence.

The NAACP is asking the

U.S. Department of Justice to review the procedures of the McKinney police force, stopping short of asking for a formal investigation. A review of department policies is needed to ensure officers are responding appropriately to calls involving minorities, the local NAACP chapter said.

Casebolt had been accused of excessive force in a 2007 arrest as part of a federal lawsuit that named him along with other officers. The officers arrested Albert Brown Jr., who authorities said was found with crack cocaine during a traffic stop. Brown, who is black, accused the officers of forcibly searching him after pulling down his pants and slamming his head against a car hood. A defense attorney denied Brown’s accusations. The lawsuit was dismissed in 2009.

The city of McKinney also has been the target of lawsuits accusing it of racial segregation in public housing.

A lawsuit in 2008 accused the McKinney Housing Authority of restricting federally subsidized public housing for low-income families to older neighborhoods east of U.S. 75. The lawsuit said that in the Dallas area, 85 percent of those receiving so-called “Section 8” housing vouchers are African Americans.





Place a Yard Sale Ad

25 words, 3 days, private party only

\$20.00 East Oregonian & Hermiston Herald

Yard Sale Kits - \$5.00

Includes 2 signs, stakes & price stickers.

Call Paula

541-278-2678