WEATHER

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day

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Phoenix

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Salt Lake City

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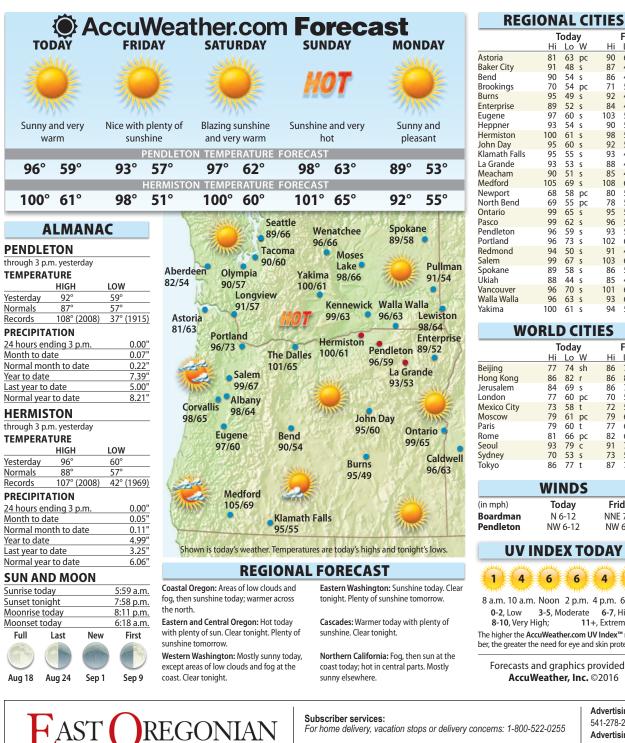
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COMMERCIAL PRINTING

Oregon, county spar over timber lawsuit seeking \$1.4B

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI Capital Bureau

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ALBANY Linn County shouldn't be allowed to represent other counties in a lawsuit seeking \$1.4 billion from Oregon over its forest management practices, according to the state's attorneys. It's also impractical for the case to proceed as a class action due to the different forest circumstances in each county, the state's attorneys claimed during oral arguments Aug. 17 in Albany, Ore. The county filed a lawsuit against the State of Oregon earlier this year, arguing that insufficient logging had cost 15 counties more than \$1.4 billion. The complaint claims these counties turned over ownership of forestlands to Oregon in the early 20th Century with the expectation the state would maximize timber revenues, but since 1998, forest managers have instead prioritized wildlife habitat, water quality and recreation values. More than 650,000 acres were donated to Oregon by Benton, Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Coos, Douglas, Josephine, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, Tillamook, and Washington counties.



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Groups challenge EPA over river temperatures

Hot water killed 250,000 sockeye last year

groups

By GEORGE PLAVEN East Oregonian

Conservation

on the Columbia River," said Miles Johnson, clean water attorney for Columbia Riverkeeper. "At some point, we

emergency measures to assist fish after the devastating year that was 2015, though Johnson said this lawsuit is meant to address the problem as a whole moving forward.

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Linn County is seeking class action status for the lawsuit, permitting it to represent the other counties in the case.

Scott Kaplan, an attorney for Oregon, said the problems in managing the case as a class action would be "enormous."

The counties donated 183 separate parcels of land to the state, each of which contains different slopes, tree types, waterways and federallyprotected species, he said.

Determining how much timber could have been generated from each parcel would devolve into 183 minitrials, he said.

"How can we decide if revenue has been maximized EO Media Group File

Linn County is suing the state over how it manages Oregon Forest Trust Lands. The suit, filed on behalf of 15 counties that donated timber land to the state, seeks \$1.4 billion in lost revenues.

on a particular parcel unless you consider all of those issues?" Kaplan said.

Linn County is also an inadequate representative of the other counties for multiple reasons, he said.

The litigation costs are currently being paid for by timber groups and lumber companies — Oregon Forest & Industries Council, Sustainable Forests Fund, Stimson Lumber and Hampton Tree Farms.

Linn County is simply lending its name to a lawsuit actually represents that private interests, according to Oregon's attorneys.

"It's not a public interest case. It's a case to benefit one particular group," said Kaplan.

Unlike the counties, which appreciate tourism and other benefits from uses besides logging, the timber interests funding the lawsuit primarily want to change the state's "greatest permanent value" rules for forest management to emphasize harvesting, he said.

Much of the alleged damages are for lost future timber revenues, which may force the state to change its logging policies, he said.

"That would directly challenge the interests of the other counties," Kaplan said.

The case also doesn't qualify as a class action

because of the lack of "commonality" among the counties, which donated their land to Oregon during different times and under specific terms, he said.

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The presence of threatened and endangered species, which constrain logging, varies widely by county and affects the damages calculation, he said.

"It's a complicated issue involving federal agencies," Kaplan said.

Chris McCracken, an attorney for Linn County. rejected the argument there's a lack of commonality among the counties.

They all face the same issues, such as whether the state has violated its contract to maximize timber revenues, he said.

The Oregon Department of Forestry does not manage each parcel individually but instead treats them according to regional forest plans, he said.

Deciding the counties' contractual rights collectively is more efficient than trying separate cases with potentially conflicting verdicts, he said.

McCracken also disputed that the lawsuit's funding mechanism should disqualify it as a class action.

The Davis Wright Tremaine law firm would be entitled to 15 percent of any financial award in the case.

from across the Northwest are suing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to protect salmon from lethally warm water in the Columbia and Snake rivers.

A notice of intent to sue the EPA was filed Monday by Columbia Riverkeeper, Idaho Rivers United, Snake River Waterkeeper, the Institute for Fisheries Resources and Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Association. They accuse the agency of failing to manage river temperatures for the fish, which could lead to massive die-offs.

More than 250,000 adult sockeye died due to warm water in the rivers last year, which all but decimated the run upstream. For endangered Snake River sockeye, 96 percent of the fish died before passing Lower Granite Dam in Washington and 99 percent died before reaching Idaho's Sawtooth Valley.

"The death of 250,000 sockeye in 2015 was an ugly reminder of what scientists have understood for decades

are going to run into another real problem like we saw in 2015.

The federal Clean Water Act requires water temperatures in the Columbia River to stay at or below 68 degrees to preserve native salmon and steelhead. By July 2015, the temperature had exceeded 72 degrees at Bonneville Dam.

Johnson attributed rising river temperatures to operations at the dams, in combination with climate change. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently unveiled improvements at both Ice Harbor and Lower Granite dams meant to cool down water in the fish ladders and improve passage, but Johnson said these are only short-term solutions.

"Those things aren't going to solve the problem, that the average river temperature is becoming too hot for salmon migration," he said.

Columbia Riverkeeper and Snake River Waterkeeper signed on to a letter in February asking for the Army Corps to come up with

lawsuit The would force the EPA to complete comprehensive plan addressing temperature in the Columbia and Snake rivers under the Clean Water Act. A formal draft of the plan was developed by the agency in 2000 at the request of Oregon and Washington, and revised as recently as 2003 before it was shelved. Johnson said it was the dam operators that objected to the plan.

"Unfortunately, that plan was derailed," he said. "Essentially, there was a lot of pressure from the Army Corps and other agencies that operate the dams to shelve this study.

A spokesman for the EPA said the agency does not comment on pending litigation. The notice of intent provides 60 days for the EPA to reach a settlement, or the lawsuit will proceed in U.S. District Court.

"In 50 years, we hope to be teaching our future generations how to catch salmon on the Columbia River, and not explaining to them what salmon were," Johnson said.

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Corrections

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.