

Wildfires down in Oregon in 2016

SALEM (AP) — Oregon enjoyed one of the least damaging forest fire seasons of the past decade, despite dry and warm conditions.

The Statesman Journal reports wildfires torched 186,317 acres in Oregon this year, the lowest total since 2010 and well below the 10-year average, according to data from the National Interagency Fire Center.

“We’ve seen significantly less fire activity than last year,” said Jessica Gardetto, spokeswoman for the interagency fire center.

Forest fires are down nationwide as well, with 4.9 million acres burned, compared to last year’s record-setting 10 million acres blackened.

People caused 910 fires and burned 126,409 acres this season, down from 1,397 fires and 139,483 acres burned in 2015.

There is still the chance of fires popping up during October. However, no large wildfires are active in Oregon and most fire restrictions have been lifted

Acres burned

2016:	186,317
2015:	685,809
2014:	984,629
2013:	350,786
2012:	1,256,049
2011:	285,712
2010:	93,731
2009:	100,668
2008:	136,572
2007:	648,046
2006:	545,870
2005:	155,331
2004:	30,018
2003:	160,191
2002:	1,010,952



In this Aug. 24 file photo, a plane drops fire retardant near the northwest side of Owyhee Canyon south of Vale.

after cool and wet conditions on the state’s west side.

Officials said a major reason for the overall improvement was the lack of dry lightning strikes this summer, officials said.

“The number of days where we had thunderstorms or dry lightning events was low compared to a normal year,” said Matthew Cullen, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Portland. “In a typical year, we have a lot more outbreaks.”

Conditions also improved this summer, compared to 2015 and 2014.

Snowpack this winter was far better than in 2015 and ‘14. However, a hot and dry spring — along with the Willamette Valley’s fifth-warmest summer in recorded history — kept the state abnormally dry or in drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

“Even if the snowpack was just decent, it at least delayed fire season more than during the past few years, especially in the higher mountains,” Gardetto said.

Recreational pot shops set to open

SALEM (AP) — Starting Saturday, Oregonians can buy marijuana for recreational use at shops intended for that purpose.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission announced on Friday it has approved licenses for 26 retailers around the state, meeting a key deadline almost two years after voters passed a ballot measure legalizing pot.

“It’s a pretty exciting day for the OLCC,” Steven Marks, the executive director of the commission charged with regulating recreational marijuana, said in a conference call with journalists. He said 12 retailers can start operating as soon as Saturday.

October had been set as the month in which retail store licensing would start under an OLCC timeline. Medical marijuana stores have been permitted to sell recreational marijuana since last October. Such dispensaries won’t be allowed to sell to recreational users

after Dec. 31. The approved retail shops are located in the Portland area, and in southern, central and western Oregon.

The commission has also licensed dozens of recreational producers.

Ten testing laboratories have also been licensed, Marks said. Recently, the head of the agency that accredits labs that tests pot for pesticides, potency and other elements complained that the agency was overburdened and at the point of collapse.

Marks said those issues seem to have been resolved and that the Oregon Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program, known as ORELAP, made a “heroic effort” in dealing with lab accreditation applications.

Marijuana sold legally in Oregon had been tested before, but now the labs must be accredited, and the packaging labeled with the lab results.

BRIEFLY

Police: Man blasted hateful message to disrupt rally

SPRINGFIELD (AP) — An Oregon man faces a charge of disorderly conduct after police say he installed a large speaker on his rooftop and played a “pro-hatred” message on loop as a group rallied against hate crime at a nearby park.

Springfield police say the amplified message could be heard from blocks away Thursday, and it attracted about 30 people upset by the volume, including the man’s neighbors.

The suspect, Jimmy Marr, has attracted attention for years as a white supremacist and Holocaust denier. In 2009, the state recalled his personalized license plate after protesters at a neo-Nazi rally in southern Oregon complained about its

anti-Semitic message. He more recently drew attention by repainting the tailgate on his truck from “Jew Lies Matter” to “Trump: Do the White Thing.”

Police say Marr told officers Thursday he was trying to get his message out.

Standoff judge wants more proof Cox had gun

PORTLAND (AP) — The lone woman on trial in Oregon’s refuge-standoff case could have a weapons charge dismissed unless more evidence emerges.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports U.S. District Judge Anna Brown gave prosecutors until 5 p.m. Monday to provide more evidence to support the charge of firearm possession in a federal facility against



defendant Shawna Cox of Kanab, Utah.

She’s one of seven defendants on trial in the 41-day occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

All are charged with conspiring to impede federal employees from carrying out their work at the refuge. Five of them, including Cox, face the gun charge.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ethan Knight told the judge after the jury left Thursday he regards Cox as someone who aided and abetted the possession of firearms.

The judge said the government must point to specific proof.

The trial that began Sept. 13 continues Monday.

One-year anniversary of UCC shooting

Associated Press

ROSEBURG — To mark the one-year anniversary of one of the deadliest shootings in Oregon, a moment of silence fell Friday over the campus of a community college near Roseburg where the shooting occurred.

Saturday marks one year after Chris Harper Mercer killed nine people and injured nine others at Umpqua Community College before dying in a shootout with police Oct. 1, *The Register-Guard* reported.

To mark the somber occasion the campus held a moment of silence on campus at 10:38 a.m. Friday, the same time of the shooting but one day early.

“We’re really doing a fairly low-key, solemn” remembrance, said college spokeswoman Anne-Marie Levis said. “Campus is still open, it’s still a day of classes, so we’ll be solemn and remember but not have a big thing that day.”

Other memorials were planned in the area for Friday.

Sen. Ron Wyden announced on the

Senate floor Wednesday that he and fellow Democrat and Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley would be in Roseburg for the anniversary.

“This anniversary is going to be a painful reminder of an extraordinarily difficult day,” Wyden said.

“We’re so proud of that community we call it ‘UCC Strong,’ and yet, we want to remember those individuals whose lives were ripped away that day and all in the community who’ve been suffering.”

On the UCC campus, the school is working to move forward. Snyder Hall, the building where the shooting took place, is set to be demolished in mid-October and rebuilt for the next fall. Levis said the new building will likely include an internal reflection garden but there are no official memorials yet on campus.

“The recommendations from other campuses (where shootings occurred), such as Virginia Tech, was to wait until a year after (the shooting) and then start planning,” Levis said. “Because you really don’t know what you want to do until after a year.”

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