

Wildfire scars beloved Columbia Gorge

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

TROUTDALE — A fast-moving wildfire chewing through Oregon's forestland is threatening more than homes and people. It's also devouring the heart of the state's nature-loving identity.

As flames erupted this week in the Columbia Gorge, horrified Oregonians mourned the devastation of beloved day trails, swimming holes and dozens of crystalline waterfalls that are all an easy day trip from Portland.

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area attracts more than 3 million tourists a year and holds North America's largest concentration of waterfalls — including 77 named cascades. It is also home to 800 wildflower species, including 16 found nowhere else in the world.

The gorge's winding trails are lush with ferns, hidden pocket waterfalls and stunning vistas of the mighty Columbia River. They are most cherished by Oregonians, who feel a deep connection to an area that's often referred to as Oregon's "crown jewel."

As the flames spread through the gorge's forests at an alarming rate, social media lit up with posts recalling favorite hikes, memories of gorge weddings and worries about what will remain when the smoke clears.

"Everybody has this visceral attachment to what they care about there and that all feels like it's slipping through our fingers," said Kevin Gorman, executive director of Friends of the Columbia Gorge. "We literally are waiting until the smoke clears to go out and assess what's there, what we've lost and then try to move on from there."

On Wednesday, two fires merged to form a blaze of more than 50 square miles. The fire has closed a 30-mile stretch of nearby Interstate 84 and forced the evacuation of hundreds of homes on the far eastern fringes of Portland's metropolitan area. Authorities say the fire was started by a 15-year-old boy who tossed fireworks into the woods.

Scorching heat, bone-dry vegetation and winds of 30 to 40 mph pushed the flames 13 miles in 16 hours at one point — an almost unprecedented



Terry Richard/The Oregonian via AP, file

In an April 2015 file photo, hikers move along a ridge at Munra Point, an airy perch at 1,740 feet in elevation overlooking the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and Bonneville Dam near Cascade Locks. The fast-moving wildfire chewing through Oregon's Columbia River Gorge is threatening more than homes and people. It's also devouring the heart of the state's nature-loving identity.



Tristan Fortsch/KATU-TV via AP

This Monday photo provided by KATU-TV shows the Eagle Creek wildfire as seen from Stevenson Wash., across the Columbia River, burning in the Columbia River Gorge above Cascade Locks.

rate of fire spread, authorities said. Embers from the blaze also were carried by winds across the Columbia River and started a spot fire on the opposite bank in Washington state.

On the Oregon side, the flames had some of the gorge's most treasured spots in its crosshairs.

After an all-night battle, fire crews saved the historic Multnomah Lodge, a historic 92-year-old information center, bar and restaurant at the base of Multnomah Falls.

That waterfall, visible and easily accessible from Interstate 84, alone attracts more than 2 million visitors a year from

around the world. A low bridge allows easy viewing and a steep one-mile hike allows visitors to peer down 620 feet from just above its drop-off while taking in a panoramic view of the Columbia River and Washington state on the far bank.

Oneonta Falls, famous for a hike that includes wading in waist-deep water through a steep-walled canyon, was also endangered. Photos posted on Twitter show a popular pedestrian tunnel near the gorge ringed with flames. The extent of damage there and the fate of other waterfalls with wistful names — Bridal Veil, Horsetail Falls and Ponytail Falls among

them — was still uncertain.

The U-shaped canyon that holds the Columbia River is unique in its geology and contains microclimates nurtured by up to 70 inches of rain annually, said Gorman. But this summer has been unusually dry and extremely hot, creating an opportunity for a large fire to take hold in what is usually a lush forest, he said.

The gorge has burned before — and will likely burn again.

In 1902, a massive wildfire scorched the same area and also jumped the river to the Washington side. And in 1991, flames crept to within a few yards of the same lodge that fire crews battled to save this week. The scars from that blaze were still visible amid the forest before this year's fire started, said Gorman.

Authorities sought to reassure the public even as they lamented the devastation.

Lt. Damon Simmons, a spokesman with the Oregon Fire Marshal, on Wednesday drove the historic Columbia River Highway, a winding, two-lane road that parallels the river on the Oregon side and offers majestic viewpoints from the gorge's steep cliffs. He came back with a hopeful message. "The gorge still looks like the gorge," he said. "It's not a wasteland. It's not a blackened, destroyed no man's land."

BRIEFLY

Equipment stolen from crews fighting Oregon wildfire

BROOKINGS (AP) — A thief made away with thousands of dollars of firefighting equipment taken from trucks parked at a Brookings high school.

The Eugene Register-Guard reports the equipment was taken off two Lane County Task Force fire rigs that parked at the school Friday night after making a more than 230-mile drive to assist in fighting the Chetco Bar Fire in southwestern Oregon. Lane County Fire Defense Board Chief Chad Minter says they discovered the trucks were ransacked early Saturday morning. The missing items included an oxygen tank, a firefighter's bag, a flat-headed ax and a firefighter's jacket. A couple of items, including the oxygen tank, were found discarded nearby.

The firefighters filed a police report, and Minter says he is unaware of any arrests for the crime.

Nike to lay off 490 Oregon workers by end of September

PORTLAND (AP) — Nike officials say the company will lay 490 Oregon workers by the end of the month.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports the layoffs are part of the 2 percent of the workforce Nike plans to eliminate worldwide. In July, the Nike laid off 255 Oregon workers, and plans to cut another 490 local jobs by Sept. 30 for a total of 745 jobs lost in the state.

News of the layoffs comes months after Nike announced a broad restructuring of the footwear manufacturing company. Nike is the largest company headquartered in Oregon near Beaverton. It employs 74,000 people worldwide.

Idaho officials designing giant, glow-in-the-dark potato

KETCHUM, Idaho (AP) — Idaho officials plan to replace a 6-ton potato replica used for advertising with one that glows in the dark.

Idaho Potato Commission officials say it will be lighter and leaner than the Great Big Idaho Potato Truck's current Russet Burbank potato replica, the Capital Press reported.

The potato truck is used to promote the Idaho brand and has travelled over 148,000 miles and toured through 7,200 cities in six years.

By making the new model two feet narrower, the potato truck will be able to operate without wide-load restrictions, permitting it to drive at night so the glow-in-the-dark spud can shine during nighttime parades, Idaho Potato Commission President and CEO Frank Muir said.

Officials intend to make the new model look almost identical to the current one and keep it at 27 feet long.

"The potato will look like it magically is glowing, and people will absolutely love it," Muir said, while announcing the plans during the Idaho Grower Shippers Association's 89th Annual Convention last month.

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.

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AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Hazy sunshine and smoky	Hazy sunshine and smoky	Hazy sunshine	Pleasant with partial sunshine	Mostly sunny
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
89° 65°	87° 62°	83° 58°	81° 54°	84° 59°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
91° 68°	90° 64°	86° 61°	84° 50°	86° 52°

ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	86°	57°
Normals	82°	53°
Records	102° (1955)	34° (1898)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.00"
Normal month to date 0.09"
Year to date 11.37"
Last year to date 7.69"
Normal year to date 8.47"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	86°	56°
Normals	82°	52°
Records	99° (2003)	39° (1961)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.00"
Normal month to date 0.07"
Year to date 6.65"
Last year to date 5.40"
Normal year to date 6.19"

SUN AND MOON

	Last	New	First	Full
Sunrise today	6:24 a.m.			
Sunset tonight	7:22 p.m.			
Moonrise today	8:24 a.m.			
Moonset today	7:48 a.m.			

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Fog during the morning; otherwise, mostly cloudy today. A stray shower.	Eastern Washington: Smoky today with hazy sunshine. Hazy tonight. A passing shower in the north tomorrow.
Eastern and Central Oregon: Hazy sun and smoky today. A thunderstorm in spots; not as hot in central parts.	Cascades: A shower or thunderstorm around today; not as warm in the south.
Western Washington: Clouds and sun today. Fog at the coast; a thunderstorm in spots across the south.	Northern California: A couple of showers at the coast today; a thunderstorm elsewhere.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	69	57	c	68	52	c
Baker City	91	54	pc	87	50	pc
Bend	82	55	pc	80	52	pc
Brookings	66	58	t	70	57	c
Burns	86	49	pc	85	48	pc
Enterprise	90	58	pc	84	56	pc
Eugene	79	58	pc	77	53	pc
Heppner	88	64	pc	85	60	pc
Hermiston	91	68	pc	89	64	pc
John Day	88	61	pc	85	55	pc
Klamath Falls	76	47	t	79	46	pc
La Grande	88	58	pc	84	52	pc
Meacham	86	55	pc	82	50	pc
Medford	76	61	t	79	58	pc
Newport	66	56	c	65	51	c
North Bend	65	57	c	67	52	c
Ontario	92	61	pc	91	60	pc
Pasco	90	64	pc	91	55	pc
Pendleton	89	65	pc	87	62	pc
Portland	81	63	pc	77	56	pc
Redmond	83	49	pc	81	47	pc
Salem	82	61	pc	79	56	pc
Spokane	92	63	pc	85	59	pc
Ukiah	86	56	pc	83	51	pc
Vancouver	82	62	pc	77	55	pc
Walla Walla	89	67	pc	87	65	pc
Yakima	93	63	pc	89	55	pc

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	90	64	s	89	68	s
Hong Kong	89	81	sh	89	80	c
Jerusalem	82	65	s	89	69	s
London	67	58	pc	63	51	r
Mexico City	67	57	pc	67	57	pc
Moscow	62	50	sh	59	48	sh
Paris	67	55	pc	66	53	c
Rome	78	65	t	78	62	pc
Seoul	80	65	pc	82	66	pc
Sydney	68	51	s	67	48	pc
Tokyo	83	71	sh	80	69	sh

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Friday
Boardman	WSW 6-12	WSW 8-16
Pendleton	W 6-12	WSW 7-14

UV INDEX TODAY

1 3 5 5 3 1

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.
0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2017

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

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

National Summary: Today will be a cool, cloudy and dreary day in the Northeast. Severe storms could fire in Northern California and Oregon. The interior Northwest will stay hot, as dry and cool air spills into the South.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 109° in Palm Springs, Calif. Low 27° in West Yellowstone, Mont.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Fri.			Today			Fri.			
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	
Albuquerque	87	62	s	88	63	pc	Louisville	72	54	s	77	54	pc
Atlanta	76	56	s	79	60	s	Memphis	76	57	t	80	61	s
Baltimore	75	59	pc	75	55	s	Miami	93	81	t	93	81	pc
Birmingham	87	54	s	74	52	s	Millwaukee	66	51	pc	64	52	pc
Boise	76	55	s	79	59	s	Minneapolis	72	51	pc	69	53	s
Boston	93	66	pc	90	63	pc	Nashville	74	53	s	78	55	s
Charlotte, SC	76	58	r	74	56	pc	New Orleans	83	67	s	84	68	s
Chicago	68	52	pc	72	50	pc	New York City	74	58	pc	73	56	pc
Cleveland	69	51	s	67	50	pc	Oklahoma City	83	59	s	83	61	s
Dallas	86	64	s	87	65	s	Omaha	78	56	s	84	62	pc
Denver	86	57	s	88	58	pc	Philadelphia	74	57	pc	74	55	pc
Detroit	65	50	sh	65	47	c	Phoenix	106	83	s	99	80	pc
El Paso	92	68	s	93	67	s	Portland, ME	74	53	r	72	51	pc
Fairbanks	62	41	pc	63	41	c	Providence	76	55	r	75	53	pc
Fargo	80	49	s	74	54	s	Raleigh	76	54	r	78	56	s
Honolulu	88	75	pc	87	75	sh	Rapid City	84	59	s	85	56	pc
Houston	85	62	s	86	63	s	Reno	85	49	s	84	56	pc
Indianapolis	71	52	pc	76	50	pc	Sacramento	79	59	s	86	60	pc
Jacksonville	84	70	pc	85	71	s	St. Louis	76	56	s	83	58	s
Kansas City	76	58	s	81	59	s	Salt Lake City	94	70	pc	91	68	t
Las Vegas	100	78	s	92	72	pc	San Diego	79	69	pc	76	68	pc
Little Rock	78	56	s	81	59	s	San Francisco	75	62	pc	73	61	pc
Los Angeles	85	67	pc	82	65	pc	Seattle	79	63	pc	74	55	c
							Tucson	99	74	s	95	72	pc
							Washington, DC	75	58	pc	76	58	pc
							Wichita	86	61	s	86	61	s

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.