

FIRE: State moving away from talking about a “fire season,” now just a “fire year”

Continued from 1A summer.

Overall, Livingston said, Oregon’s fire outlook for 2018 has not changed much from last year.

Joe Hessel with the Oregon Department of Forestry said the southwestern and central Oregon regions already declared their fire seasons, and the

state’s northeast area usually declares its season before the Fourth of July.

“What I tell people is things will be hot and dry,” he said.

Katy Gray, spokesperson for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, said the U.S. Forest Service and other wildland fire agencies are moving away from

talking about a “fire season.” Instead, they are using the term “fire year” because wildfires are year-round.

As the summer progresses, use restrictions on national and state forests increase to cut down on the number of human-caused fires. Darcy Weseman, spokesperson on the Umatilla National Forest, said

the Forest Service wants to highlight its “know before you go” list, which urges visitors to the forest to first check for alerts and safety rules that include road closures, and make sure someone knows where you are going and when you will return. Then stick to the plan.

Ron Simpson, acting fire

management officer on the Malheur National Forest, addressed the use of drones. The unmanned aircraft are a concern over wildfire areas, he said. Drone operators buzzed forest fire airspace at least 36 times in 2017 throughout western and southern states and shut down at least 25 aerial fire-fighting efforts.

“That puts the fire fighting effort on hold, that puts people lives at risk,” he said.

One of the shutdowns occurred over the Rogue National Forest. But the 2017 drone incursions were an improvement from 2016, according to the National Interagency Fire Center, when there were 41 incursions.

The city was considering trading McKay Neighborhood Park to the school district for this piece of property, which was the former site of school district administrative offices, just east of the Pendleton Early Learning Center.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney



SWAP: The two sides couldn’t reach a deal

Continued from 1A

cover the cost of turning the east block into a “green space” for the surrounding community, but bond funds ran out as they went to other projects.

The district considered relinquishing the east block to the city under the thought that it could be developed for housing or commercial purposes, but the east block’s \$276,000 real market value was higher than McKay Park’s \$209,000.

Jones said the two sides couldn’t find a deal that would see each side get equal value, and the district eventually decided to hold onto its property.

Jones said the east block could either be sold by the district itself to a prospective developer, or used by the district for future expansion.

“It is in a prime location,” she said.

For the city of Pendleton’s part, City Manager Robb Corbett said the city would remain open to working with the school district if they need to use McKay Park to help build a new school.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com

LAW: Most of those denied the right to own weapons were male, white, 18-50

Continued from 1A

ing unfettered access to guns.

On the heels of a gun suicide in one lawmaker’s family and amid confessions of domestic violence in another’s, the Oregon Legislature narrowly passed a law in 2017 giving judges discretion to pry guns from people not convicted of a crime who show signs they might shoot themselves or someone else.

Under the new law, police, family members or roommates can petition a judge for an “extreme risk protection order” barring gun possession. If an order is granted, the person named in it has 24 hours to turn over all guns to law enforcement, a qualified third party or gun dealer. The order stands for a year but can be extended indefinitely by a judge.

To understand the ramifications of Oregon’s law since it took effect in January, *The Oregonian/OregonLive* reviewed hundreds of pages of court filings, listened to hours of courtroom audio and conducted interviews with people who lost their gun rights or tried to get someone’s weapons taken away.

That analysis revealed that, in the law’s first four months, Oregonians in 16 counties used it to try to get weapons out of the hands of nearly 30 people, most of whom were operating at a potentially deadly nexus of substance abuse, anger and gun ownership.

Tracking those cases wasn’t easy. There is no

clearinghouse, and records aren’t listed on public dockets. *The Oregonian/OregonLive* filed public records requests with state court administrators, who sought documents from their counterparts in all 36 counties.

The news outlet reviewed case files showing 27 instances in which a person sought a no-guns order. They represent all or virtually all cases brought from January 1 through April 30. None of those cases has been previously reported.

Judges ordered guns taken away in 24 of them.

Judges declined to order guns removed in three cases and reversed the initial decision in three others, citing the high bar necessary to justify taking away a person’s guns. Under Oregon’s law, evidence the person is at risk to harm themselves or others has to be “clear and convincing,” not merely a preponderance, and must point to likely harm in the very near future.

Details of the cases of people who lost their gun rights paint a disquieting portrait:

A Portland man who posed for photos with a semi-automatic rifle and had spoken openly about planning a school shooting.

A Beaverton veteran who threatened to gun down people at his church.

A Vale man who fired his .357 Magnum into the ceiling of his home, believing he was shooting at people in his attic who were poisoning him.

A man in Pendleton stopped by his sister from

returning to work to shoot the boss who’d just fired him.

Most of the people denied the right to own weapons were white men in their 20s through 50s. They live in big cities, small towns and rural hamlets. Nearly all were reported to be drug users or drinkers or face mental health challenges or both.

Some were suicidal, as shown in cases from Tillamook to Portland to Redmond. Most, witnesses told judges, were very angry.

At a time when many in the nation are searching for ways to stop would-be shooters before they can massacre innocents at a school or at a mall, the Oregon cases suggest pre-emptive gun removals may prove an effective tool. Of those who lost gun rights so far, at least four had threatened to shoot people in public places.

But Oregon’s law has been used most often to try to pre-empt shootings that draw far fewer headlines but claim far more lives: suicides and domestic violence.

The law allows a judge to order guns seized without the gun owner being so much as notified that a gun-removal petition has been filed and a court hearing scheduled. That’s atypical for court actions, but mirrors what happens in elder abuse, stalking and domestic violence cases, in which only the accusing side is present at the initial court hearing. A review of case records shows only a single gun owner was present or had their side repre-

sented when a judge first decided how much of a risk they posed.

If the judge orders guns taken away, the affected person is told he or she can challenge the decision. But so far, few affected gun owners have done that. They are not provided government-paid lawyers if they wish to.

Before the law passed, lobbyists for the National Rifle Association and Oregon Firearms Federation questioned whether it is legal to seize guns from peo-

ple without their knowledge. (The NRA reversed its position this year, and its top lobbyist, Chris Cox, declared “we need to stop dangerous people before they act” and called for Congressional funding for state risk protection orders systems.)

No Oregon court has ruled on the constitutionality of the new gun confiscation law, but the Oregon Court of Appeals mentioned it in footnotes to three April opinions, noting it as a possible less-onerous alterna-

tive to involuntary commitment to the state mental hospital.

Pro-gun lobbyists also complained that the new law does not connect people who have their guns taken to social services that may help with underlying problems. Connecticut’s law, by contrast, requires the state health agency to be notified of those served with a no-guns order so they can give them mental health advice and a list of places to turn for help.

FREE EVENT!

ABC’S OF MEDICARE

Helping you through the Medicare Maze

June 26th. The Saddle at 9 am
St. Anthony’s Hospital at 4:30 pm

Looking for a fun, no-pressure way to learn more about Medicare? Join us at an upcoming event! We’ll answer any questions you have about Medicare and explain the benefits of the plans.

Terry Beckett • Sr Health Care Specialist
541-276-0367 • terry@pendletoninsurancecenter.com

DONT MISS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO ADVERTISE IN GET A TASTE OF EASTERN OREGON!

INCLUDES FREE COLOR, BOGO AD SPACE AND 3 MONTHS OF DIGITAL ADS ALL FOR ONE LOW PRICE! CONTACT YOUR SALES REP TODAY TO RESERVE YOUR SPACE!

Your culinary guide to Fine Dining, Breweries, Pubs, Cafes, Distilleries, Burger Joints, Food Trucks and soooo much more!

PUBLISH DATE: June 27th, 2018
in the EO, HH, WCC & BME.
DEADLINE: June 20th, 2018

Jeanne Jewett
541-564-4531
jjewett@hermistonherald.com

Audra Workman
541-564-4538
aworkman@eastoregonian.com

Kimberly Macias
541-278-2683
kmacias@eastoregonian.com

Angela Treadwell
541-966-0827
atreadwell@eastoregonian.com