

Remains of WWII soldier identified 76 years after going MIA

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — The remains of a World War II soldier from Oregon who went missing in the final weeks of the Guadalcanal campaign have been positively identified 76 years after he was listed as missing in action, according to the U.S. government.

Skeletal remains recovered two years ago on the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific are those of Pfc. Dale W. Ross, according to a statement from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

Ross was born in North Dakota, but moved with his family as a child to Ashland. He was the third of four brothers who fought in WWII. Assigned to the Army's 25th Infantry Division, he was listed as MIA on Jan. 14, 1943, during the final weeks of the Guadalcanal campaign. He was last seen in an area that saw heavy fighting around a Japanese-held hilltop.

A search was conducted, but soldiers were unable to find his remains. On July 14, 1949, based on a lack of information, the U.S. Army determined Ross to be non-recoverable, the statement said. He was 22 at the time.

The other three Ross



In this Aug. 3, 2017, file photo, the dog tags and a Hawaiian pressed penny charm of Pfc. Dale W. Ross are displayed at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.

AP Photo/Justin Taylor

brothers made it back home, including the oldest, Charles, who served aboard a Navy PT boat in the Solomons and visited Guadalcanal in an attempt to learn about his brother Dale's fate.

Then, in 2017, a WWII researcher named Donna Esposito was visiting the South Pacific when she traveled to the Solomon Islands. While there, a local man said his neighbor's son had found dog tags and remains believed to be those of an American soldier, according to an Associated Press story on the case in 2017.

The man gave her a

pressing of the dog tags, which included Ross' name and hometown of Ashland, Esposito said in a phone interview Monday from her home in upstate New York.

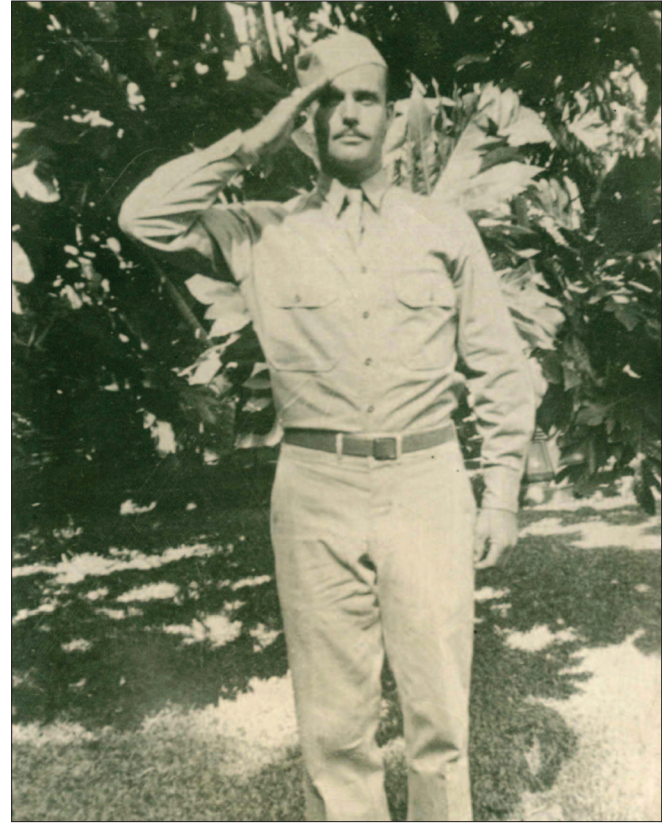
She tracked down his nieces and nephew in Southern Oregon, and in August 2017 Esposito returned to Guadalcanal with his nephew, Dale Ross Jr., and one of his nieces, Peggy Freitas. On the island, the family that had the dog tags and remains handed them over to the Americans, who turned them in to a Pentagon team that was on Guadalcanal searching for U.S. MIAs

75 years after the start of the Solomon Islands campaign.

The test results, released publicly on April 18, positively identified what the younger Ross and Freitas already believed to be true — they had finally found their uncle.

"I feel just so incredibly happy to finally have this case solved," said Esposito, who lives in upstate New York. "It was an honor to be involved in the reparation of his remains."

The younger Ross and Freitas did not respond to emails and phone calls Monday.



AP Photo/File

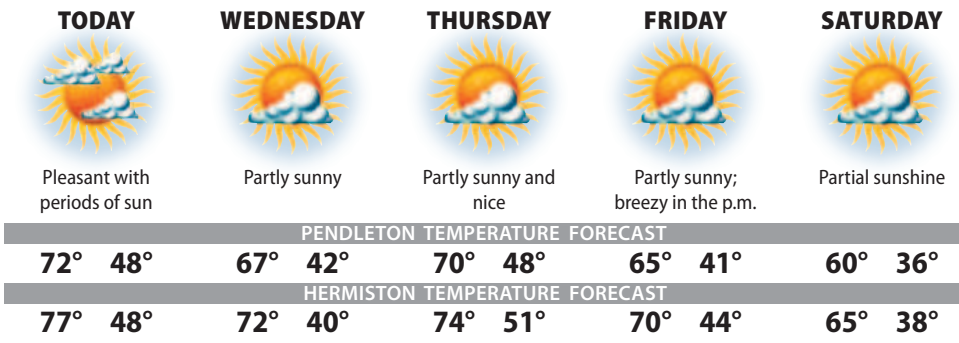
This 1942 file photo provided by Dale Ross shows his uncle, Pfc. Dale W. Ross, in Hawaii. Ross went missing in the final weeks of the World War II Battle of Guadalcanal. The U.S. Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has positively identified skeletal remains recovered two years ago on the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific as those of Pfc. Dale W. Ross, whose surviving family lives in Ashland.

One of Ross' nieces, Vicki Plankenhorn, of Talent, Oregon, said the family would like to bury his remains in a cemetery where his mother and three other brothers are interred. Ross' mother hoped for years that

her son was a prisoner of war, but died without closure, she said.

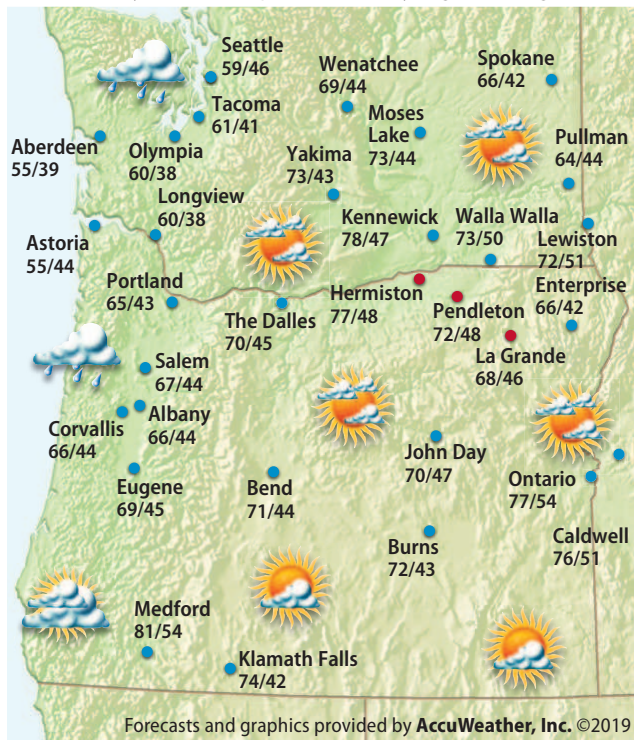
"They're all right there together," she said of the family plot. "He'll be right there with his mom. He'll be home with his family."

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



ALMANAC

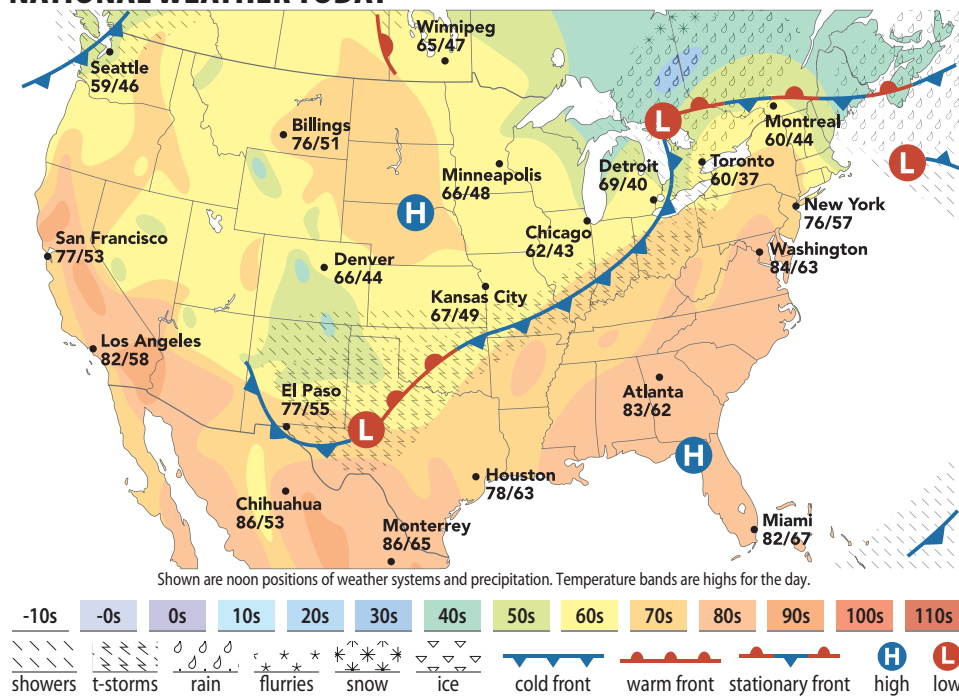
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	68°	40°	
Normals	64°	40°	
Records	95° (1934)	29° (2006)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	1.68"		
Normal month to date	0.86"		
Year to date	7.76"		
Last year to date	5.08"		
Normal year to date	4.82"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	76°	40°	
Normals	66°	40°	
Records	94° (1934)	25° (1951)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.29"		
Normal month to date	0.60"		
Year to date	3.88"		
Last year to date	3.93"		
Normal year to date	3.71"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	WSW 8-16	WSW 3-6	
Pendleton	WSW 7-14	WNW 6-12	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	5:56 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	7:51 p.m.		
Moonrise today	none		
Moonset today	9:00 a.m.		
Last	New	First	Full
Apr 26	May 4	May 11	May 18

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 93° in Thermal, Calif. Low 21° in Leadville, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Three proposed bills would ease rules around wetland development

By TRACY LOEW
Statesman Journal

SALEM — Developers would be able to build in wetlands more cheaply and quickly if three bills in the Oregon Legislature are approved.

The legislation would reduce the amount of wetland mitigation required in some cases, streamline the permitting process and create a pilot program to create a local mitigation bank, *the Statesman Journal* reported on Monday.

Backers say the bills will help address Oregon's housing crisis and spur economic development.

"As much of our valley is wet and delineated as wetlands, we are at a disadvantage when trying to develop new housing, economic opportunity or industry," Corvallis Mayor Biff Traber said during public testimony on the bills.

Opponents say the legislation threatens to undermine natural infrastructure that protects residents from floods and drought, helps provide clean air and water, and provides critical habitat for fish and wildlife.

Wetlands once covered 2.3 million acres in Oregon. Over the years, nearly a million acres have been lost to agricultural and urban development.

Oregon law requires people who want to fill wetlands in order to build to obtain a permit from the Oregon Department of State Lands.

Each permit requires an evaluation of efforts to reduce harm to aquatic resources, and of how unavoidable impacts will be offset.

The state requires mitigation of those impacts at a ratio of between one and three acres of wetland res-

toration for every acre of impacted wetland, determined on a case-by-case basis.

Many projects also must navigate a parallel, federal permitting process.

Those rules are hampering efforts to address Oregon's growing housing crisis, cities and developers say.

House Bill 2796 would apply to so-called degraded wetlands, or those that already have been negatively altered by human activity.

Under the proposal, developers would be able to build "needed housing" on degraded wetlands under a general permit, rather than each project getting its own evaluation. And mitigation would be limited to no more than one acre of restored wetland for every four acres of degraded wetlands developed.

Needed housing is defined in Oregon law as meeting the need for housing within an urban growth boundary at price levels affordable to households with a variety of incomes, including, but not limited to, low income households.

Supporters, such as Nicholas Veroske of Sheridan, say current rules are exacting an "economic tragedy" upon communities.

Veroske has owned 12 acres of residential land, classified as wetland, since 1997, but is unable to develop it without paying \$705,000 into a mitigation bank, he told lawmakers.

Wetlands exist in nearly all north Sheridan's lands, he said, "destroying feasible development of those lands, making the lands virtually worthless and harming the community's ability to create both housing and jobs."

A coalition of eight envi-

ronmental groups, including WaterWatch of Oregon, Bonneville Environmental Foundation and Audubon Society of Portland, is opposing the legislation.

"Any policy that broadly encourages developers to undermine natural infrastructure and place already vulnerable people in harm's way is not acceptable," the groups wrote to legislators. "The language of this bill essentially gives a free pass to developers while expecting the public to shoulder the near and long-term costs of inappropriate development."

Two state agencies also weighed in, citing potential problems.

The bill would make it less certain that impacts to fish and wildlife habitat would be adequately considered and addressed, said Shannon Hurn, deputy director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

It also would run afoul of federal law, which requires a no net loss wetland policy, or at least one-to-one mitigation of developed wetlands, said Bill Ryan, deputy director of the Oregon Department of State Lands.

And it could provide an incentive for developers to purposely degrade wetlands in order to qualify for reduced mitigation obligations, both Hurn and Ryan said.

House Bill 2436 directs the Oregon Department of State Lands to develop a proposal, to be considered by the Legislature next year, for the state to assume partial authority to administer certain wetland development permits under the Federal Clean Water Act.

Currently, developers must receive permits from both the state and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

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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Business Office Manager:

541-966-0822

COMMERCIAL PRINTING

Production manager: Mike Jensen
541-215-0824 • mjensen@eastoregonian.com