

Big spring growth could make for bad fire season at Hanford

By ANNA KING
Northwest News Network

RICHLAND, Washington — At the Hanford Nuclear Site in southeastern Washington, and across the West, winter's deep snow and a cool spring have produced lots of brush and grass.

That's a problem for the coming fire season.

Hanford and the region surrounding it is a desert. Sagebrush and bunchgrass stud the site. But there's also a lot of

invasive cheatgrass that forms a brittle shag carpet across the landscape. And then there are drifts of tumbleweeds. The site's a bit like an expansive firestarter. It's all fine if there isn't a spark.

"You have to have luck," said Norb Kuhman, chief of the Hanford Fire Department.

"Anyone in this business realizes how fortunate we get at times, or how unfortunate we get at other times, based on prevailing weather conditions — the wind speeds, the

humidity. It all goes into play."

Kuhman said his crews have to defend sensitive wildlands, historic structures and radioactive waste sites at Hanford. There are about 100 firefighters rolling out on these lands — with more heavy equipment operators and helpers.

And they're getting ready: training, digging defendable dirt lines and burning excess brush along roadways. Last year, Hanford firefighters responded to 11 wildland fires

on the site that burned about 20,000 acres on the 586-square mile nuclear site.

But across the West in the lower foothills and in grasslands of the Columbia Basin there is also dramatic grass and brush growth.

"We are definitely seeing substantial growth of fine fuels like grass crops," said Deb Schweizer with the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho. "They have to dry out and cure — that's where we'll have our concerns."

Schweizer said the concern is fires in that grass and brush can burn hot and fast — like kindling for starting a larger fire. Federal fire managers expect grasses to begin drying out soon with higher expected temperatures in the region.

In central Washington, late spring rains have sprung up a second crop of grass and shrubs adding even more to the fuel loads, according to Liz Smith, district manager for the state Department of Natural Resources in Ellensburg.

"Grasses here will grow a lot taller and grow thicker in density," Smith said. "Those fuels will grow quickly, and they will die off quickly. That is concerning."

Smith says in the area north of Ellensburg, there have already been a few roadside fire starts, burning 30 to 40 acres before they're caught by firefighters.

"That's a little big [number] for this time of year," she said. "And to have that many is worrying."

Brown plans to announce Friday as gun violence awareness day

By JONATHAN LEVINSON
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown will sign a proclamation June 7, declaring it gun violence awareness day.

She will be joined by legislators and members of the Oregon chapter of Moms Demand Action, a national gun safety organization that campaigned for Brown in the 2018 election.

Hilary Uhlig, the legislative lead for the Oregon chapter, said they were dis-

appointed that the governor sacrificed her promised gun legislation earlier this month to end a Republican walkout and pass a large school funding bill.

"We definitely are hopeful that we will continue to work with legislators to get some positive gun violence prevention passed," Uhlig said.

For her part, Brown said this year's legislative bargaining is part of a long fight and that revenue from the school funding bill will contribute to safer schools.

"The significant investments that we are making through the Student Success Act in behavioral health, in counselors, in ensuring that our students have access to the mental health support and services that they need ... will hopefully reduce any opportunities for violence in our schools across the state," Brown said.

The governor said she anticipates introducing firearms safety legislation in future sessions and encouraged students to stay engaged.



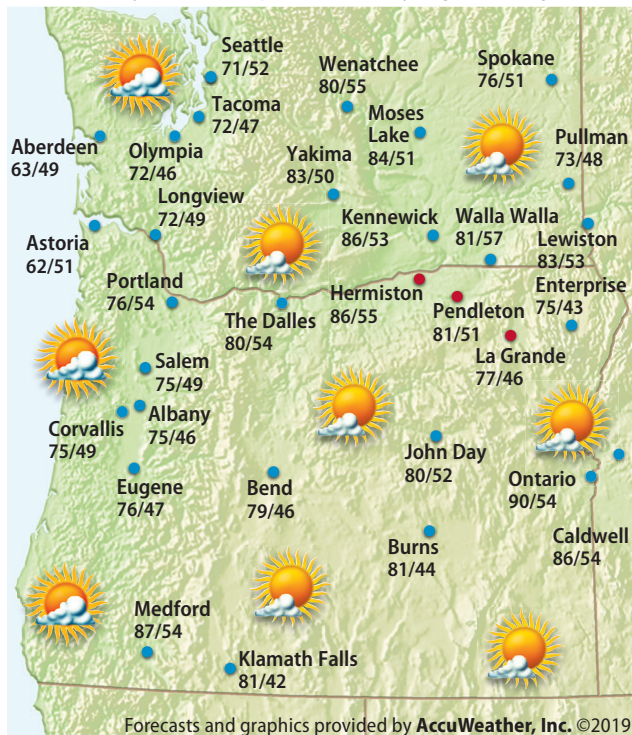
OPB Photo/Conrad Wilson, File
Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announces a plan to address gun violence in the state in this July 15, 2016, file photo.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Mostly sunny and pleasant	Beautiful with clouds and sun	An afternoon shower or t-storm	Some sun, a shower in the p.m.	Mostly cloudy, a shower possible
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
81° 51°	81° 52°	62° 44°	63° 46°	67° 44°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
86° 55°	85° 56°	71° 48°	70° 49°	74° 47°

OREGON FORECAST

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



ALMANAC

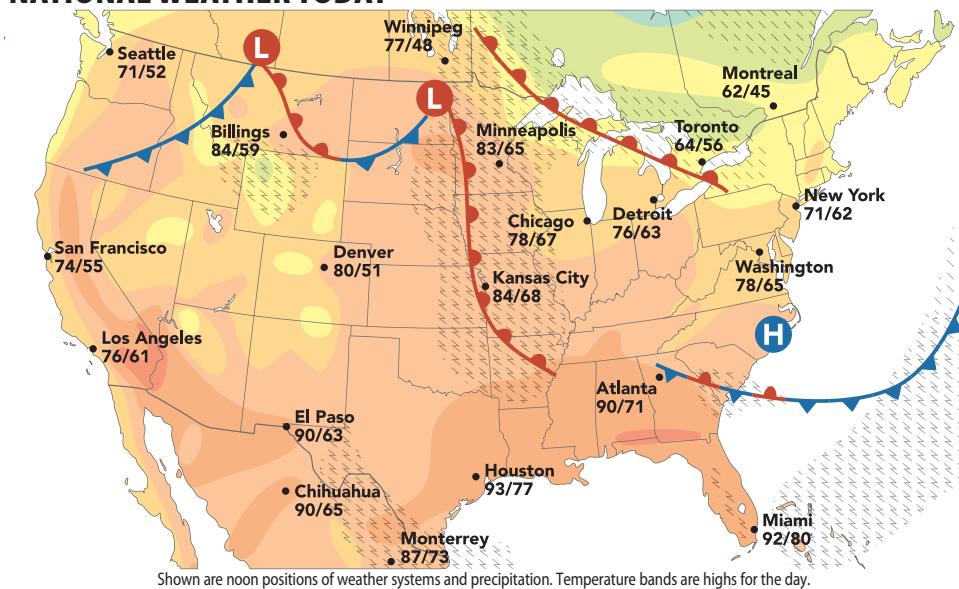
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	80°	59°	
Normals	75°	50°	
Records	98° (2007)	34° (1918)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.00"		
Normal month to date	0.19"		
Year to date	9.28"		
Last year to date	6.07"		
Normal year to date	6.70"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	85°	65°	
Normals	76°	51°	
Records	99° (2007)	34° (1929)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.00"		
Normal month to date	0.09"		
Year to date	4.42"		
Last year to date	4.96"		
Normal year to date	5.20"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	WSW 7-14	WSW 7-14	
Pendleton	W 7-14	WNW 6-12	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	5:08 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	8:39 p.m.		
Moonrise today	6:23 a.m.		
Moonset today	10:14 p.m.		
First	Full	Last	New
June 9	June 17	June 25	July 2

NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 101° in Zapata, Texas Low 23° in Doe Lake, Mich.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



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

-10s	-0s	0s	10s	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s	80s	90s	100s	110s
showers	t-storms	rain	flurries	snow	ice	cold front	warm front	stationary front	high	low			

Boot camp aims to bring more women to wildland firefighting

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A special boot camp in Eastern Oregon aims to bring more women into wildland firefighting careers.

Boise State Public Radio reports Cassandra Fleckenstein with the Vale District for the Bureau of Land Management sought out the grant funding to start the wildland fire boot camp, which is now in its second year.

Fleckenstein has been in the field since 2006, starting as a wildland fire dispatcher right out of high school.

She says last year the boot camp drew applications from women as far away as Great Britain and Hawaii. Twenty women participated in 2018, and half of them have gone on to receive jobs in the industry for the 2019 fire season.

The BLM's Vale District is now taking applications for this year's 3-day boot camp, which will be held in October.

Texas man sentenced to 9 years for role in pill mill

PORTLAND (AP) — A Texas man who helped run an illegal pill mill in Portland recruiting customers from Narcotics Anonymous meetings and others from a homeless shelter, has been sentenced to nine years in federal prison.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports 56-year-old Osasuyi Idumwonyi pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute or dispense Oxycodone and was sentenced Monday.

Idumwonyi and nurse practitioner Julie DeMille opened the Fusion Wellness

BRIEFLY

Clinic in January 2015. Both were arrested in July 2016.

Prosecutors say the clinic had no business bank account and didn't report wages to authorities.

Prosecutors say Idumwonyi commuted from Houshington to assist DeMille in running the Portland clinic. DeMille was sentenced in March to four years in prison.

Idumwonyi said in court he could have used "better judgment," saying he was led astray by a desire to help a former girlfriend who was addicted.

3 killed in suspected drunken driving crash in Salem

SALEM (AP) — Police say three teenagers were killed in Salem when their car was hit by an intoxicated motorist who sped through a red light.

The Salem Police Department says officers and fire crews responded to the collision at about 11:30 p.m. Sunday.

Police say initial investigation shows a man driving a Jeep ran the red light and collided with a car carrying three teens.

Police say 19-year-old Trinity Watt of Salem, 19-year-old Madison Capobianco of Salem, and 18-year-old Makayla Tryon of Keizer, were pronounced dead at the scene.

Police say Juan C. Rodriguez Palacios remained at the scene with his passenger and both were taken to a hospital. Police say Rodriguez Palacios' blood alcohol content was three times the legal limit when tested.

He was arrested on manslaughter and other charges.

It wasn't immediately known if he has a lawyer.

OSU approves new \$1.3 billion budget

SALEM (AP) — Oregon State University's Board of Trustees has approved a budget of more than \$1.3 billion for the next fiscal year, beginning in July.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reports the board, which approved the budget Friday, is asking university leaders to prioritize funding toward recruiting and retaining students and faculty and promoting diversity and inclusivity. Other key priorities include advancing construction on the OSU-Cascades campus in Bend.

How the university will balance its budget remains unclear, while facing flattening student enrollment and a potential lack of additional funding from the state.

Gov. Kate Brown's proposed 2019-21 budget noted no additional funding for the state's Public University Support Fund.

OSU budget planners have projected a budget gap of about \$18 million at the Corvallis campus, despite an upcoming tuition increase of more than 4% for resident undergraduate students at both the university's Corvallis and Bend campuses.

This gap is an increase over the \$12.7 million budget gap discussed during last month's OSU board meeting. Budget planners gave two reasons for that increase. First, the university's insurance rates are increasing in the new fiscal year by an estimated \$3 million, mostly driven by property insurance. "This is over a 250% increase," the operating budget report states. Second, fewer non-student undergraduate students enrolled than projected.

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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