

Dam safety overhaul approved

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press



EO Media Group File Photo

An excavator breaks a log jam in April 2013 at the Three Mile Dam on the Umatilla River north of Hermiston. The state legislature has voted to beef up the department's authority over dam safety.

SALEM — Dam owners would be subject to civil penalties for failing to maintain the structures under an overhaul of Oregon's dam safety laws that's passed the Legislature.

House Bill 2085, which passed the Senate unanimously June 3 after clearing the House in April, would also clarify the Oregon Water Resources Department's authority over approving dam construction, removal and modification, among other provisions.

"This aging infrastructure needs to be carefully watched," said Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, noting that the bill also streamlines court procedures for compelling upgrades to unsafe dams.

"This is important authority that is necessary to protect the people of Oregon," he said.

The bill applies to about 950 dams regulated by OWRD, including 75 "high hazard" structures that would likely cause deaths if they failed. About one-fourth of such dams are considered to be in poor or unsatisfactory condition.

"Every year, we typically have at least one dam that has a safety incident," said Racquel Rancier, the agency's senior policy coordinator, during a May hearing.

Since the 1800s, 55 dams

have failed in Oregon, including one that killed seven people in 1896. Oregon's dam safety statutes haven't been updated since 1929.

Under the bill, OWRD could order a maintenance action after inspecting a dam that poses a high or significant hazard, which the owner can challenge in an administrative hearing.

Dam owners can work with the agency to develop a plan for correcting problems under the bill, while under current law, such orders are automatically subject to administrative hearings.

If the owner doesn't perform the ordered maintenance, the agency can impose a civil penalty in an amount that's yet to be determined by

the Oregon Water Resources Commission.

Such penalties would be waived if the owner carries out the maintenance work and the final order can also be contested in court.

"Today, we're in the position of asking, 'Please,'" Rancier said, explaining that OWRD can't impose penalties under current law.

New fees ranging from \$1,750 to \$8,500, depending on hazard rating, would be also charged to dam owners under HB 2085 to offset OWRD's cost of reviewing plans for new structures or raising existing ones.

The bill would apply only to state-regulated dams and not those under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

Drought grows 'severe' in Western Washington

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

VANCOUVER, Washington — A drought covering all or parts of nine Western Washington counties worsened in the past week from "moderate" to "severe," the U.S. Drought Monitor reported Thursday.

The downgrade comes after the fifth warmest May on record in Washington's coastal region between the Olympic Peninsula and Oregon. Severe drought prevails over 11% of the state, while moderate drought affects another 33%.

The dry conditions contrast with soggy Midwest states experiencing their wettest 12-month period on record. "Out West, drought conditions intensified in Western Washington, where streamflow conditions are well below normal levels after a shallow snowpack this past winter," the Drought Monitor stated.

The weekly report estimates the severity and spread of drought in the U.S. Washington is the only state in the Western U.S. with

significant drought.

At the recommendation of water managers, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee issued drought declarations in April and May that apply to 27 watersheds covering about half the state. More basins could be added later this month.

Irrigation districts, conservation districts and other public agencies in drought areas can apply for grants from the state Department of Ecology for drought-relief projects, such as deepening wells, leasing water or repairing leaks.

Conditions are not as severe or as widespread as in early June 2015, the last time Washington declared a drought emergency. The USDA reported this week that farming conditions were mostly favorable in Washington, including west of the Cascades.

"In Western Washington, dry weather brought more field work," according to the USDA's weekly crop report. In Whatcom County in northwest Washington, where moderate drought prevails, strawberry harvest began,

and "raspberries excelled during ideal growing conditions," according to the USDA.

The U.S. Geological Survey reported Thursday that 4% of the streams it monitors in Washington were at record lows. On the same date in 2015, 17% were at record lows.

Moderate drought touches the northwest corner of Oregon, making up 2% of the state. The rest of northwest Oregon and the Willamette Valley are abnormally dry.

The tip of the Idaho panhandle is in moderate drought, 3% of the state. California is drought-free.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration says the odds favor warmer than average temperatures for the Northwest in June, July and August. Western Washington is also expected to be drier than normal.

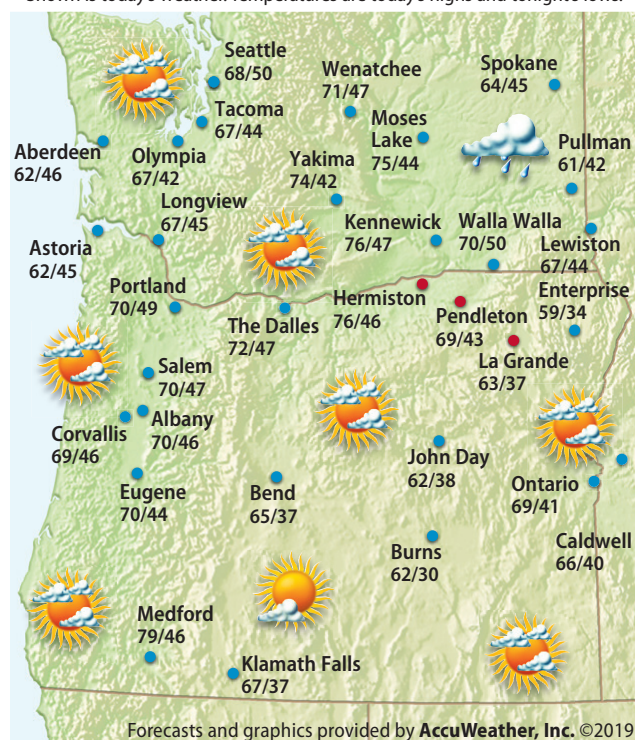
The Drought Monitor's four levels of drought are: moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional. No state in the Lower 48 has drought conditions worse than "severe."

Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Episodes of sunshine	Mostly sunny and warmer	Mostly sunny	Very warm with some sun	Partly sunny and hot
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
69° 43°	79° 51°	84° 55°	88° 56°	93° 68°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
76° 46°	84° 52°	90° 57°	95° 60°	100° 73°

OREGON FORECAST

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



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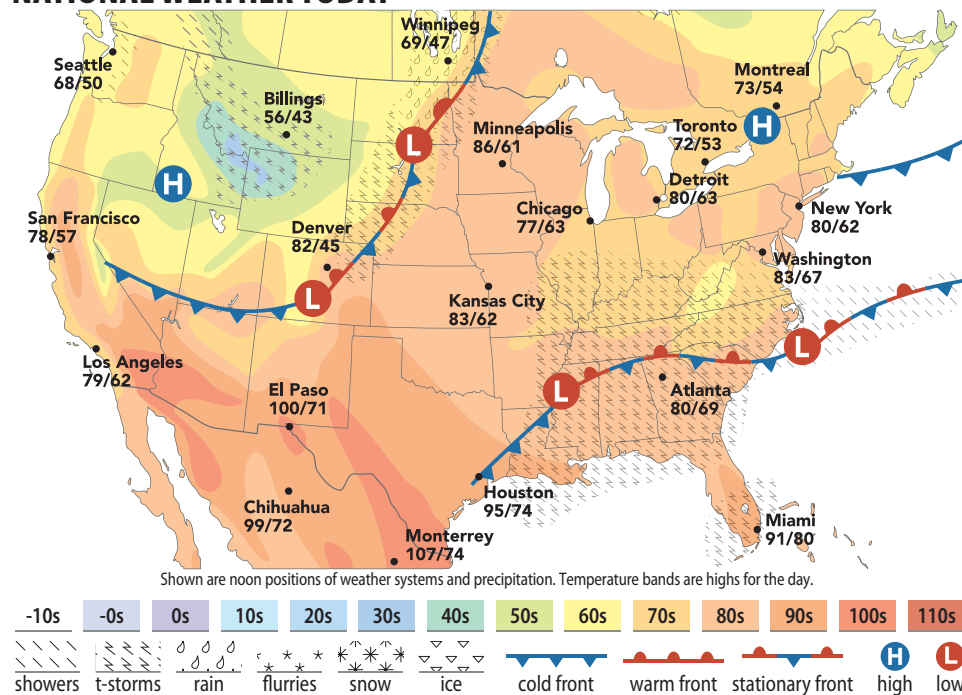
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	63°	41°		
Normals	76°	51°		
Records	104° (1931)	34° (1919)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"			
Month to date	0.05"			
Normal month to date	0.40"			
Year to date	9.33"			
Last year to date	6.07"			
Normal year to date	6.91"			
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	70°	47°		
Normals	77°	52°		
Records	102° (2016)	40° (2002)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"			
Month to date	Trace			
Normal month to date	0.19"			
Year to date	4.42"			
Last year to date	4.96"			
Normal year to date	5.30"			
WINDS (in mph)				
	Today	Sun.		
Boardman	WSW 7-14	E 3-6		
Pendleton	WSW 7-14	N 4-8		
SUN AND MOON				
Sunrise today	5:06 a.m.			
Sunset tonight	8:42 p.m.			
Moonrise today	10:48 a.m.			
Moonset today	12:42 a.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 109° in Zapata, Texas Low 25° in Crater Lake, Ore.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



OREGON IN BRIEF

Cougar suspected in goat killings shot, trail reopening

BRIDAL VEIL (AP) — Authorities say a Columbia River Gorge landowner shot and killed a cougar that's believed to have killed two goats and entered a nearby home, prompting a trail closure and search.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports authorities are confident the slain cougar is the same one that killed the goats, and a search for the animal has ended. The Angel's Rest Trailhead was reopened Friday afternoon.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife spokesman Rick Swart says the landowner shot the cougar Thursday night after the wild cat became caught in a trap set up by authorities.

Swart says the landowner notified law enforcement and the cougar's body was recovered.

Biologists estimate the animal is a 2-year-old female.

The landowner won't face any repercussions for shooting the cougar, Swart said.

New trial ordered for pastor over use of word victim

PORTLAND (AP) — The Oregon Supreme Court has ordered a new trial for a pastor sentenced in 2015 to 20 years in prison in a sex abuse case after finding that witnesses in testimony improperly referred to the accuser as a victim.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports the court found Thursday the term may have undermined Michael Sperou's presumption of innocence and affected his right to a fair trial.

During the trial, the witnesses called by Multnomah County prosecutors included the woman Sperou was charged with abusing as a child, six other women who accused him of abuse, detectives and others.

The court says detectives and at least one former church member referred to the women as victims.

Sperou was a co-founder and pastor of the North Clackamas Bible Community in Happy Valley. He denied any abuse occurred and said the accusations were lies that followed a split in the church.

CORRECTION: The June 7, 2019 article "Hermiston gets HazMat ready" misstated the agency involved in organizing the HazMat drills. The Umatilla County Fire District, not the Umatilla Fire District, was involved.

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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