

Oregon Hemp Commission proposal likely to return

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — A proposal to raise much-needed research money for Oregon's fast-growing hemp industry failed to pass muster during the legislative session that just ended, but supporters say it will likely return next year.

The concept of an Oregon Hemp Commission again died in the budget-setting Joint Ways and Means Committee at the end of the 2019 legislative session, which is the same fate that befell a similar proposal two years earlier.

Establishing a formal industry-wide organization would have helped Oregon State University better understand the top difficulties faced by hemp growers, said Jay Noller, the university's hemp leader.

"It does set things back because that was seen as a means to collectively prioritize the research focus," as well as provide funding for those projects, he said. "What we're missing is a tried-and-true model of how the industry can turn the head of the research."

Oregon already has 23 commodity commissions that collect assessment fees from farmers, ranchers and



Capital Press Photo/Mateusz Perkowski, File

A bill establishing a state hemp commission is likely to resurface during the next legislative session.

fishermen to pay for research and promotions, so it's hardly a novel idea. Hemp production in the state, meanwhile,

has surged from about 100 acres to more than 50,000 acres in the past five years. House Bill 2740, which

would have added hemp to that list, did not encounter any opposition and would not have involved spending sig-

nificant sums of tax dollars.

While the bill was unanimously approved by the House Agriculture Committee in April, it wasn't assigned to the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources until early June — the final month of the legislative session.

At that same time, the subcommittee was debating contentious climate legislation that would eventually lead to a walkout of Republican senators.

"There were a lot of other things taking precedent at the Capitol," said Courtney Moran, an attorney and president of the Oregon Industrial Hemp Farmers Association.

With the de facto legalization of hemp at the national level under the 2018 Farm Bill, many questions about federal rules remain up in the air.

Lawmakers may have wanted to avoid jumping the gun before more is known about how hemp will be regulated, said Michelle Binker, chief of staff for Rep. Carl Wilson, R-Grants Pass, the bill's chief sponsor.

"In some small measure, people were reluctant to get ahead of the USDA," which will decide on testing regulations, as well as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which will regulate

hemp products for human consumption, she said.

Wilson also resisted attempts to use HB 2740 as a "political football," Binker said. "We didn't allow it to become part of the session negotiations so it died."

Draft rules from the USDA are expected in August and the FDA's guidance for hemp products is also expected to be forthcoming, so a bill to create an Oregon Hemp Commission would be better positioned during the 2020 short legislative session, said Moran.

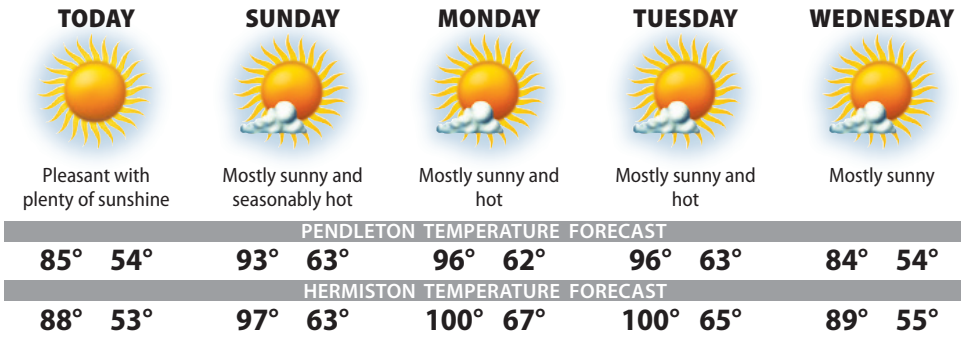
"We're looking for that additional guidance from the federal government," she said.

There's still a lot of basic agronomic information that growers need about hemp, including fertility studies to determine proper nutrition for the crop, said Noller.

Research funded and directed by an Oregon Hemp Commission would also likely focus on pesticide options for insects and diseases, as well as the impacts from inadvertent pollination, Noller said.

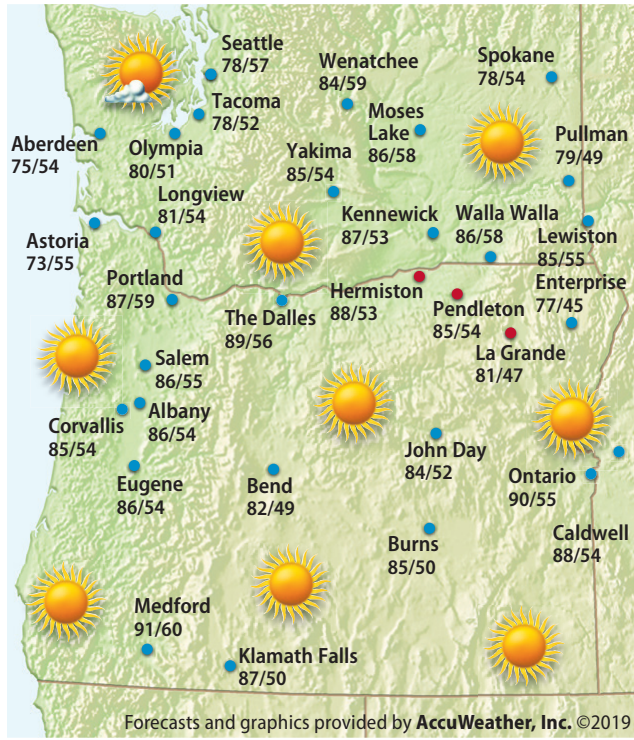
Many growers are using drip tape for irrigation but more data is needed on the most effective way to apply water, he said. "We don't know what the appropriate irrigation rates are."

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	76°	53°
Normals	90°	59°
Records	107° (1931)	43° (1932)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.02"
Normal month to date	0.19"
Year to date	9.59"
Last year to date	6.49"
Normal year to date	7.76"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	77°	52°
Normals	90°	59°
Records	108° (1960)	47° (1932)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	Trace
Normal month to date	0.13"
Year to date	4.55"
Last year to date	5.10"
Normal year to date	5.83"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Sun.
Boardman	NE 4-8	NE 4-8
Pendleton	NNE 4-8	NNE 6-12

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	5:25 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:38 p.m.
Moonrise today	10:56 p.m.
Moonset today	9:01 a.m.

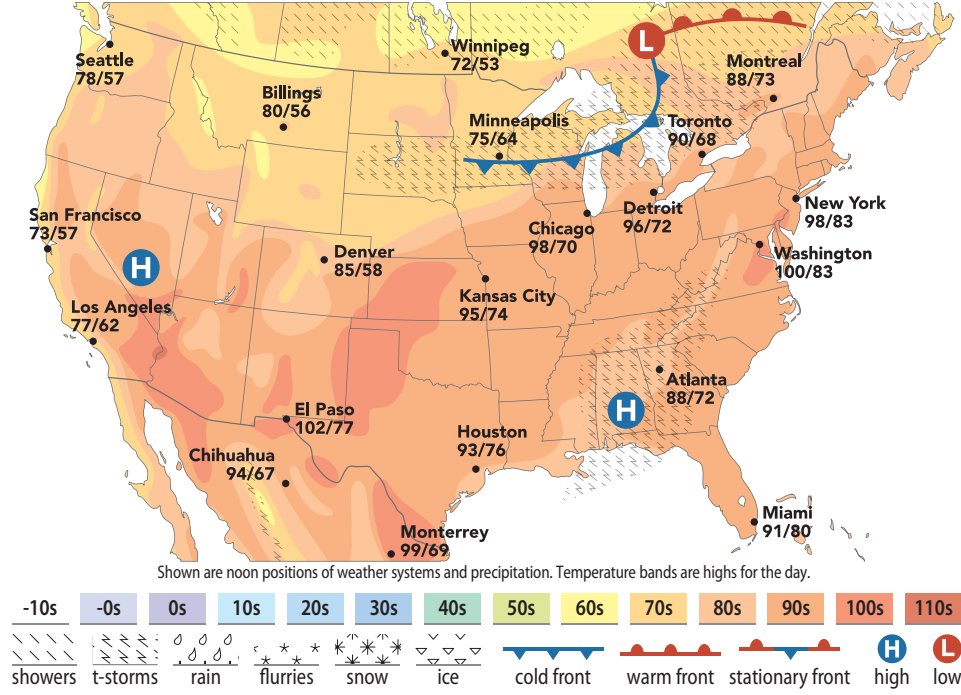


NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 110° in El Centro, Calif. Low 34° in Gothic, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Health insurance rate decisions lower 2020 premiums by \$44M

By KATY NESBITT
For the EO Media Group

SALEM — Oregonians signed up for individual or small group health plans got some good news this week when the state announced their final rate decision will lower premiums in 2020 by \$44 million.

The final rates for next year are 2% lower than the original request filed by insurance companies in May and 1% lower, on average, from the division's preliminary rate decisions.

"The rate increases over the years have been high and the costs for insurance can be something difficult to pay," said Brad Hilliard, public information officer for Oregon Division of Financial Regulation.

The division regulates insurance rates through a two-month review process with an open public comment period. Through that process the state determines to what extent insurance providers can raise or lower their rates, Hilliard said.

The division issued final decisions for seven companies in the individual market with average rate changes ranging from a 3.2% decrease to an 8.9% increase, for an average increase of 1%. Under the decisions, Silver Standard Plan premiums for a 40-year-

old in Portland would range from \$436 to \$530 a month.

The division encourages everyone to apply for federal subsidies who don't qualify for the Oregon Health Plan through Medicaid.

"We encourage everyone to apply," Hilliard said. "The vast majority who do qualify for financial help for their health insurance."

The state's announcement gives those who work for businesses with fewer than 50 employees or are self-employed several months to look over the available policies ahead of the enrollment period between Nov. 1 and Dec. 15.

Since the Affordable Care Act instituted the individual and small group markets rates have greatly fluctuated, but are becoming more stable and sustainable, Hilliard said.

To determine premium rates Hilliard said health insurance companies that offer plans for individuals and small groups submit financial reports with enrollment numbers to his division, kicking off a review process each year in mid-May. The state's actuaries look over the requests and consider a broad range of factors like medical loss trends.

If the numbers don't add up, Hilliard said the state pushes back on the insurance companies and determines

MORE INFORMATION

More information for each insurance company can be found at oregonhealthrates.org. A complete premium comparison table for each county based on ages 21, 40, and 60 will be posted online in August.

what they can charge. Several factors, such as medical costs, federal policy changes, the Oregon Reinsurance Program, and federal risk adjustment payments are considered to make sure rates will adequately cover health care costs.

The reinsurance program — insurance for insurance companies, Hilliard said — has helped lower rates overall by 6% a year.

During the public hearings each insurance company will state their case and hear what the division has to say about it, Hilliard said.

"We take into account loss trends and claims to predict future claims and to determine what rates should be — not too high, but high enough to cover costs," Hilliard said.

Insurance companies have 21 days to request a hearing before the final rates are set for 2020.

BRIEFLY

DMV worker accused of using driver info to steal from cars

PORTLAND (AP) — An Oregon Driver and Motor Vehicles Services worker and her boyfriend have been indicted in an alleged scheme to steal from dozens of cars in the metro area over at least two years using driver's license information.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports 37-year-old Valerie Applegate of Happy Valley also is accused of accepting bribes to provide driver's licenses to people and other misconduct.

The state Department of Transportation says Applegate has worked since June 2010 at the agency's Mall 205 outlet in Portland. She's been on paid administrative leave since April 26.

Police say Applegate is suspected of looking up driver information on cars for boyfriend Israel Fonseca. Police say Fonseca is suspected of using the information to follow cars from a driver's home, break in and drive them away.

Police say the cars would be stripped and stolen items would be sold. It wasn't known if the two have lawyers.

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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