

New Oregon Trail site honors legendary pioneer

Lower Ladd Canyon Oregon Trail Site in Union County salutes Ezra Meeker

By DICK MASON
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — The legendary pioneer Ezra Meeker devoted much of his life to preserving the Oregon Trail and keeping memories of it alive.

Meeker's efforts included three stops in Union County in 1906 to dedicate Oregon Trail markers.

The steps Meeker took in Union County on behalf of the Oregon Trail are not being forgotten.

Ronnie Allen of La Grande is making sure of it.

Allen, with major help from people like La Grande's Dale Counsell, has created the Lower Ladd Canyon Oregon Trail Site along Hot Lake Lane, which salutes Meeker. The site includes a replica of Oregon Trail marker Meeker dedicated there in 1906, a covered wagon wheel that rolled across the Oregon Trail in the 1800s, a wooden horse-drawn wagon used for farm work more than a century ago and a 26-inch by 34-inch sign with text pro-

viding details about the Oregon Trail in Union County and Meeker's markers in this area.

Allen has determined that the site is exactly where Meeker dedicated his Lower Ladd Canyon marker on April 11, 1906. The marker replica is 5 feet west of where the original marker dedicated by Meeker was, said Allen, who has analyzed photographs of the 1906 dedication.

Meeker had plenty of company at the site during the dedication.

"There were 25 school children, two oxen, a wagon and collie named Jim," Allen said.

Meeker owned the collie but sadly lost it later in the Midwest during his cross-country trip.

"He paid \$5 for it and offered a \$15 reward for it," Allen said.

The 25 school children at the 1906 dedication were from the old Ladd Canyon School about 4 miles away.

Today this site is part of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area. Allen was granted permission to set up the Lower Ladd Canyon Oregon Trail Site at the area by its manager, Kyle Martin. Cathy Nowak, an ODFW biologist at Ladd Marsh, said



The site includes a replica of an Oregon Trail marker Ezra Meeker dedicated there in 1906.

EO Media Group Photo/Dick Mason

she is delighted to have an Oregon Trail site there.

"It has always been a point of pride that the Oregon Trail goes through there. This means that a very small part of the Oregon Trail is protected there," Nowak said. "It looks very nice."

The wagon wheel at the

site that went across the Oregon Trail was donated by Willie Myers of La Grande. Allen said the help she provided for the project was critical to its success.

The wheel she donated was from a collection of her husband. He assembled his wagon wheel collection

while living in Fossil.

The farm wagon was donated by Counsell and his family's nearby Century Farm. Counsell played a big role in helping to set up the Lower Ladd Canyon Oregon Trail Site, Allen said.

Anyone looking for the new display need only look for a 9-foot posted brown, white and black "Oregon Trail" sign, below which is a smaller "Trail Site" placard. The signs were obtained from an Oregon Department of Transportation sign collection in Island City. Allen credits Sharon Magnuson, a La Grande Observer employee, with playing an important role in helping him obtain these signs.

The Meeker marker is a replica of one that had been missing for about 100 years until Allen found it in 2017 in the driveway of a Union County home after an extensive search. Allen later purchased the 150-pound marker from its owner and next showed it to officials from the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City, who confirmed that it was the missing marker. Allen then donated it to the interpretive center in Baker City, where it is now displayed at an Ezra Meeker display. Allen said so many people were touching the marker at the Oregon

Trail Interpretive Center that it has been put under glass.

Allen is delighted that it is proving to be so popular.

"I'm proud to be able to share history with the other people of the state of Oregon," Allen said.

The replica Meeker marker at the new site was made from a rock of the same shape of the original one Allen found in the Grande Ronde Valley.

"It was a twin," said Allen, who sent it to a monument company in Idaho to be engraved.

The marker is a replica of one of 15 for which Meeker was present for the dedication of in 1906 while traveling across much of the United States in an ox-drawn wagon along the Oregon Trail from 1906 to 1908.

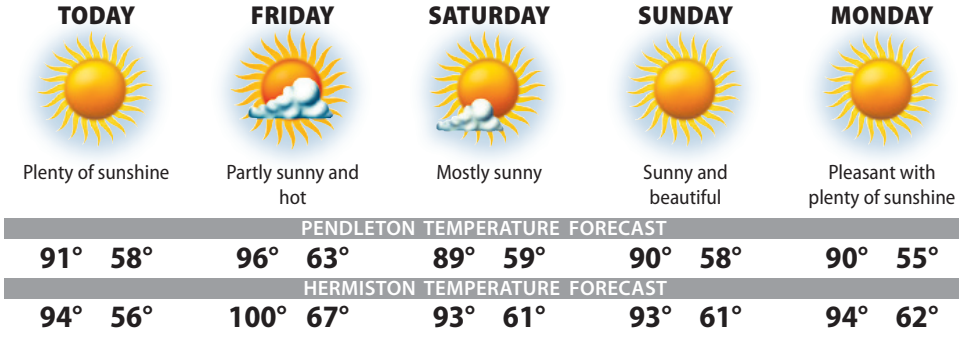
The Oregon Trail was close to Meeker's heart because he had come west on it in 1852 from Iowa as a young man. He later settled in what is now Puyallup, Washington, and was the town's first mayor.

Meeker in Union County also dedicated a marker in southwest La Grande, and one in Ladd Canyon. The marker in Ladd Canyon has never been found, but Allen believes it may still be there.

"I am often up there looking for it," Allen said.

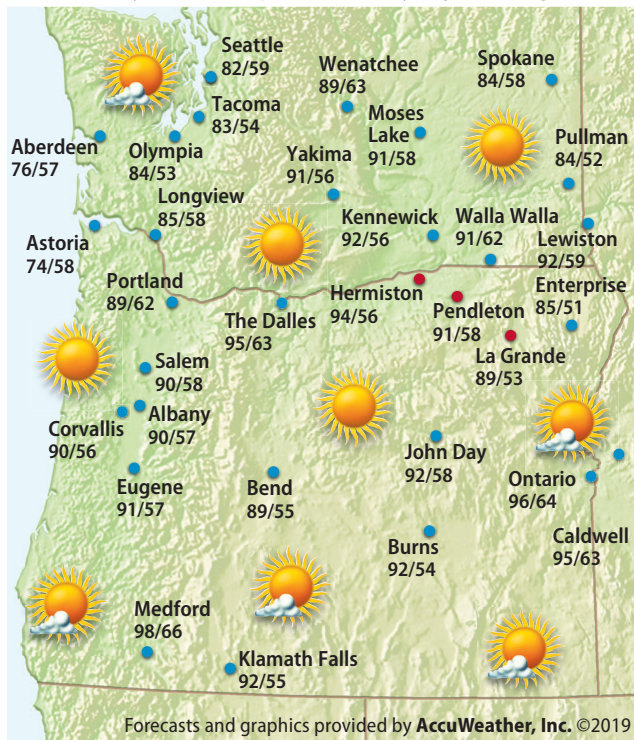
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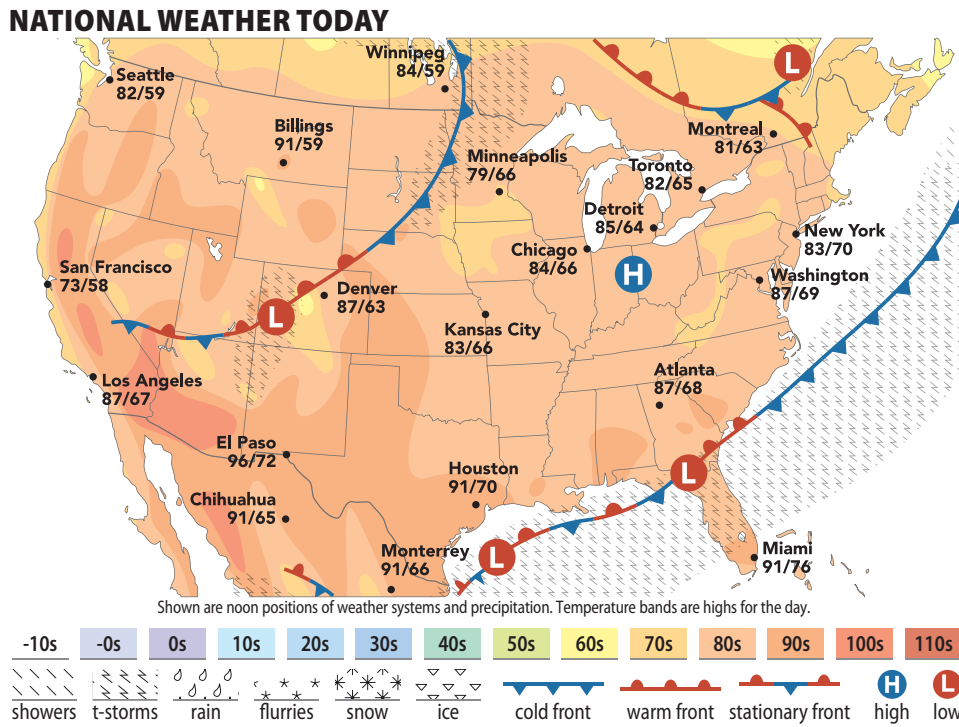
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NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 106° in Ontario, Calif. Low 30° in Odell Lake, Ore.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Food stamp benefits for Oregonians threatened by proposed rule change

By REBECCA ELLIS
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Officials of Oregon's Department of Human Services are crunching numbers, trying to determine how many food stamp recipients might be impacted by a federal proposal to toughen eligibility requirements for SNAP benefits.

The Trump administration announced this week that it plans on "closing a loophole" that had previously made recipients of "minimal" benefits through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, known as TANF, automatically eligible for SNAP. Oregon is one of 43 states that qualifies certain TANF recipients for SNAP benefits without requiring the applicant to again verify their income and report their expenses.

"For too long, this loophole has been used to effectively bypass important eligibility guidelines," said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue in a press

release. "Too often, states have misused this flexibility without restraint."

The administration estimates 3.1 million Americans could lose their SNAP benefits under the rule change, which it claimed would save the Department of Agriculture billions of dollars. Jennifer Grentz, a spokesperson with Oregon's Department of Human Services, said the agency's policy team is currently trying to figure out how many of those live in Oregon.

"We know that if that change went into effect, it would affect Oregonians that are currently receiving SNAP or those that could become eligible," Grentz said.

According to 2017 data, which the agency said was the most recent available, about 100,000 Oregonians receive cash assistance through TANF and roughly 911,000 receive SNAP food benefits.

"A lot of Oregonians are facing hunger and food insecurity because of the

high costs of living here," said Jeff Kleen, a public policy advocate at Oregon Food Bank. "Reducing categorical eligibility will have a disproportionate impact."

Kleen said, for the past 15 years, Oregon has allowed people receiving minimal benefits through TANF to qualify for SNAP. He believes the provision fueled the state's evolution from being "one of the very top states in terms of level of hunger and food insecurity" to a state that's more middle of the pack. From 2014 to 2016, Oregon had the 14th highest rate of food insecurity in the country, according to the Oregon Center for Public Policy.

If the rollback happens, Kleen said he fears "we're going to see increased rates of hunger, increased demand on food banks, and, ultimately, weaker communities and families."

The rule will be published Wednesday and remain open for public comment for 60 days.

Roadwork underway around Oregon

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Summertime — and the paving's easy.

The Oregon Department of Transportation is embarking on dozens of projects to fix up roads and other transportation infrastructure across the state this summer.

Paving work tends to ramp up in the summer, because workers need certain

temperatures and conditions to pave.

It can't be too hot, but it can't be too cold, either, so that the asphalt sets properly and lasts as long as possible, said an agency spokeswoman.

The department does other construction work year-round, when weather allows.

All told, ODOT has 92 projects on its agenda this summer, from cleaning culverts to installing guardrails.

Some projects are being paid for with more than \$5 billion raised by a major transportation funding program approved by the Oregon Legislature two years ago.

Sometimes construction can interfere with travel plans, so before hitting the road to camp, hike or attend a rodeo, consider checking ODOT's website, TripCheck.com, for information about possible delays on your route.

CORRECTION: In a page A8 photo of a motocross event at the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds, published Tuesday, July 23, the headline misstated the name of the event. The event was the Summer Chute Out II flat track motorcycle race.

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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