

Water crisis in Warm Springs drags into third month

By **EMILY CURETON**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

WARM SPRINGS — The Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Central Oregon has been without safe drinking water all summer. Some people don't have running water at all. In May, a burst pipe led to a cascade of infrastructure failures. That leaves around 4,000 people improvising for an essential human need.

"I'll go back to being a teacher, hopefully, after this is done," said Dorothea Thurby, a volunteer emergency manager whose days now revolve around a man-made disaster.

The preschool where she teaches shut down when the water system failed. Thurby was furloughed.

At an ad-hoc water distribution center on the reservation, she lifts about 1,000 pounds of water containers a day, organizes supplies and helps keep mobile showers clean. She said her main job, though, is being a leader, supervising youth workers as they work out of an old grade school building. It's where she was once a student.

"I wish we could make something better out of this place, but right now we have to store all of our water in here," Thurby said.

She surveyed bottles taking up one of the defunct classrooms. "See how the sunlight hits some of the gallons? ... We'll cover those

blinds, because when the sunlight hits the water too long, it creates algae," she said.

She said the window shades were open so she could see to take an inventory. The results made her anxious.

"We're low ... and so in my mind, I'm thinking, what if we don't have enough?" she said. "I want to help serve the community, and say we run out. What are we going to do?"

The center runs on donations, and it might distribute 3,000 gallons of water a day, plus other supplies like bleach wipes, plastic plates, utensils and commodes, said Danny Martinez, emergency manager for the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

At first, donated supplies poured in from all over the Pacific Northwest.

"But they're all hoping that it's resolved today," Martinez said. "And so when I call them back, they're kind of puzzled by it. ... 'You mean you still don't have water, Dan?'"

The list of problems is long. Firefighters can't count on hydrants to work, Martinez said, and "the sprinkler system, the cooling systems, air-conditioning systems, the restrooms, the toilets, everything is affected by lack of water."

Meanwhile, federal agencies have been slow to commit money toward long-term fixes in Warm Springs. At the same time, the Environmental



OPB Photo/Emily Cureton

Volunteer Emergency Manager Dorothea Thurby, of Warm Springs, takes inventory of bottled water. The Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Central Oregon has been without safe drinking water all summer. Some people don't have running water at all.

Protection Agency has threatened to fine the tribe nearly \$60,000 a day if it doesn't make repairs by October.

The EPA order says "the system may present imminent and substantial endangerment" to human health, while "state and local authorities have not acted to protect the health of such persons."

A spokesperson for the EPA said the tribes have not requested funding from its water infrastructure-related loans and that it would be unlikely to get such an application approved since those programs require systems to bill individual users for water. That idea has been shot down by Warm Springs tribal members before.

A spokesperson for the

Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, said in an email that the tribes have not asked for aid since the Warm Springs Tribal Council declared an emergency May 31.

In an unusual move, this summer the Oregon Legislature stepped in, earmarking \$7.8 million in lottery bonds for water and sewer projects on the reservation. The amount is about half of what Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, said he first proposed adding to an omnibus bill.

"Although (Warm Springs) is a sovereign nation, they are also my constituents," Bonham said.

"There are philosophical questions we can ask at some point, about what should the

state's role be, what is the federal government's commitment in terms of treaties already signed. But right now we've got a community in need," Bonham said. He added: "If everybody is responsible, then no one is responsible."

Still, the state lottery bonds won't pay out before 2021, according to the governor's office.

Leaders from the Bureau of Indian Affairs declined to be interviewed and a spokesperson sent a written statement: "The trust relationship is shared by all federal agencies, not just the BIA. The specific level duties and appropriate responses that fall under the trust responsibility will be dependent on the factual circumstances and the treaty, statute, or regulation at issue," according to the statement.

The BIA statement said the agency has provided over \$400,000 in emergency funding for things like bottled water and portable bathrooms in Warm Springs.

The Indian Health Service, an agency within the federal Department of Health and Human Services with responsibility for serving Native populations, said in a statement it has been responding. IHS said it has sent engineers to the reservation six times since November and helped with funding applications, but those

will take years to be ready to move into construction.

Nationally, IHS has found Native homes are nine times more likely to lack access to safe water than those in the general population.

According to Warm Springs Chief Operating Officer Alyssa Macy, repairs underway now "are considered temporary, and temporary is a couple of years ... because we know this isn't the permanent fix," as reported by the tribally owned radio station KWSO in June.

Macy did not respond to requests for comment.

The boil water notice could be lifted by the end of the month, but that timeline has been extended before.

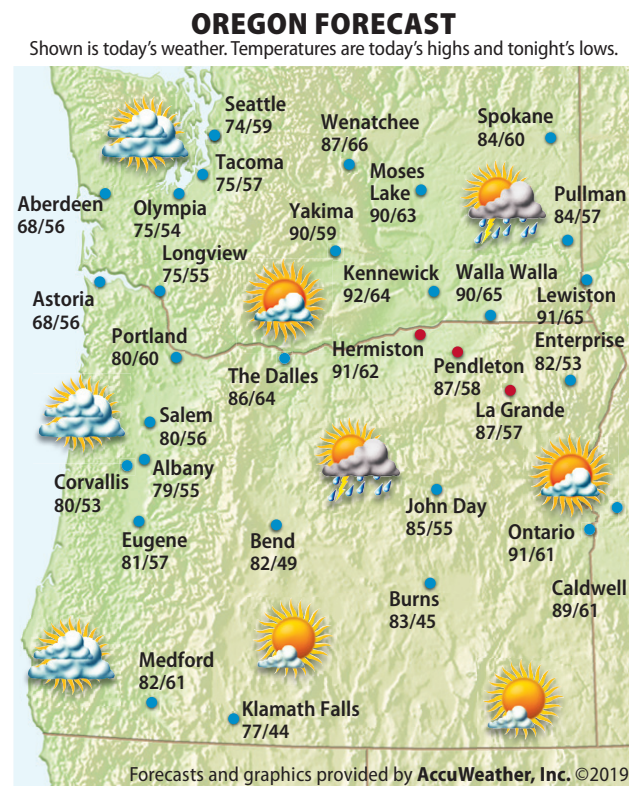
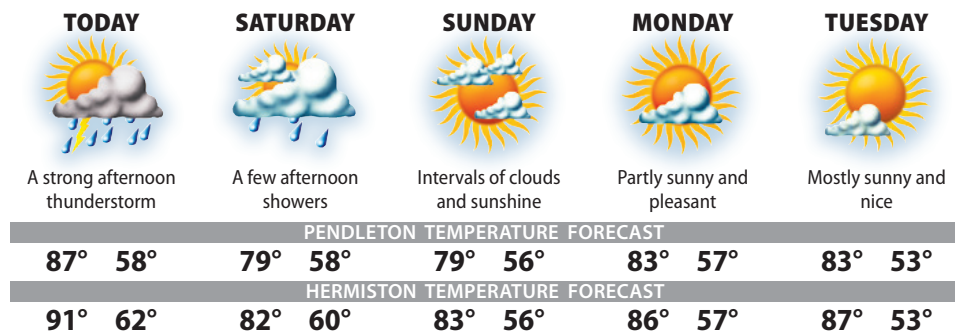
On a recent morning at the water distribution center, two teenage volunteers took a break from hauling water around in the warm weather to chase a yellow butterfly.

Fifteen-year-old Cajun Rain Scott giggled as she tried to cup it in her hands.

"Butterflies keep coming around me," she said. "... That's good. ... That means change."

She said summer normally means "having fun with my friends and skateboarding. But I can't do that now because I'm helping the community, and that's more important than skateboarding, so I'd rather be doing this."

Forecast for Pendleton Area



ALMANAC
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	86°	61°
Normals	89°	59°
Records	111° (1972)	40° (1893)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.00"
Normal month to date 0.09"
Year to date 9.61"
Last year to date 6.49"
Normal year to date 8.04"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	83°	70°
Normals	89°	59°
Records	108° (1972)	40° (1934)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.00"
Normal month to date 0.05"
Year to date 4.56"
Last year to date 5.10"
Normal year to date 5.97"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Sat.
Boardman	S 6-12	SW 7-14
Pendleton	NNW 6-12	WSW 6-12

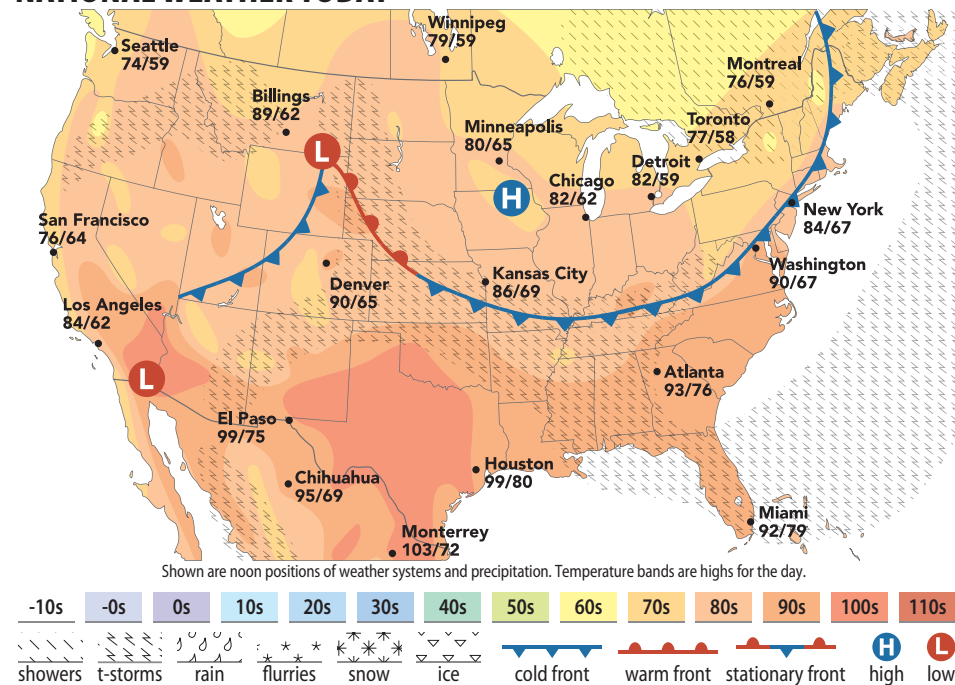
SUN AND MOON
Sunrise today 5:48 a.m.
Sunset tonight 8:13 p.m.
Moonrise today 4:02 p.m.
Moonset today 12:46 a.m.

Full Aug 15, Last Aug 23, New Aug 30, First Sep 5

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 111° in Palm Springs, Calif. Low 40° in Climax, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Most fires contained at HK Complex

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — A majority of the fires in the Umatilla National Forest's HK complex have been contained according to a Thursday morning press release as firefighters transitioned command from a Type 3 management team to a Type 2 team at 6 a.m.

The HK Complex consists of 13 fires sparked by lightning that are burning 15 miles north of Monument on the Heppner Ranger District. 8 of those fires have been 100% contained by Thursday while

the fires have grown to 2,455 acres in total.

The Sulfer Springs fire was active on Wednesday and pushed toward the 21 road, where it is being contained by dozer lines. The Little Bear fire is 50% lined but aviation resources stalled on Wednesday due to lightning in the area.

According to the press release, 474 personnel have been assigned to the fire with multiple engines and crews, along with multiple fixed-wing resources from John Day Airbase.

Fire officials warn that

a red flag warning remains in effect until Saturday at 10 a.m. with danger levels high and public use restrictions on chain saw use in effect. Winds are expected to be light with high temperatures, while Friday is also expected to be partly cloudy with scattered showers. Thunderstorms are expected over the next couple of days.

A closure order in the area is also in effect due to the fire activity. People are urged to be cautious while driving in the area and to expect increased fire traffic on the roads.

BRIEFLY

Judge: Trump administration can't withhold Oregon grants

PORTLAND — A judge has barred the Trump administration from withholding public safety grants from the state and the city of Portland over Oregon's sanctuary law that directs police not to help federal agents enforce immigration policies.

U.S. District Judge Michael J. McShane, who is based in Eugene, also said in the decision issued late Wednesday that the federal government can't impose immigration-related conditions on the grant awards.

McShane's ruling mirrors similar ones by federal judges elsewhere in the country. The *Oregonian*/OregonLive reported McShane made the decision in a case brought by Gov. Kate Brown, Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum and the city against President Donald Trump and U.S. Attorney General William Barr.

He found that two federal statutes unconstitutionally ban local and state governments and agencies from enacting laws or policies that limit communication with federal officials about immigration or someone's citizenship status.

PAC helps pay fines for GOP senators

SALEM — A political action committee has donated enough money to cover the majority of fines for each of the 11 Republican state senators in Oregon who walked out of the Capitol to kill a climate change bill in June.

The *Oregonian*/OregonLive reports the Stand with Our Senators Political Action Committee on July 30 contributed \$3,000 to each of the campaign committees of the 11 senators involved in the walk-out, according to state campaign finance records. That's most of the \$3,500 that Senate leaders, who are Democrats, fined Republicans for missing seven days of work near the end of this year's legislative session.

The fines accrued at \$500 per day, per absent senator. The largest donor to the political action committee was 2018 gubernatorial candidate Knute Buehler, who chipped in \$5,000. Other top donors include individuals and companies in the construction and logging industries.

— *Associated Press*

CORRECTION: In the Page A3 story "Condon Times-Journal," published Tuesday, July 9, the name of *The Times-Journal's* new owner Stephen Allen was misspelled.

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.

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

EastOregonian.com

To subscribe, call 1-800-522-0255 or go online to EastOregonian.com and click on 'Subscribe'

East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published daily except Sunday, Monday and postal holidays, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR.
Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801.
Copyright © 2019, EO Media Group

Subscriber services:

For mail delivery, online access, vacation stops or delivery concerns call 1-800-522-0255 ext. 1

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Local home delivery	Savings (cover price)
EZPay	\$13/month	60 percent
52 weeks	\$173.67	41 percent
26 weeks	\$91.86	38 percent
13 weeks	\$47.77	36 percent

*EZ Pay = one-year rate with a monthly credit or debit card/check charge

Single copy price:
\$1.50 Tuesday through Saturday

Circulation Dept.
800-781-3214

ADVERTISING

Regional Publisher and Revenue Director:

• Christopher Rush
541-278-2669 • crush@eomediagroup.com

Advertising Services:

• Angela Treadwell
541-966-0827 • atreadwell@eastoregonian.com
• Grace Bubar
541-276-2214 • gbubar@eastoregonian.com

Multimedia Consultants:

• Jeanne Jewett
541-564-4531 • jjewett@eastoregonian.com
• Audra Workman
541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com

Business Office Coordinator

• Dayle Stinson
541-278-2670 • dstinson@eastoregonian.com

Classified & Legal Advertising

1-800-962-2819 or 541-278-2678
classifieds@eastoregonian.com or legals@eastoregonian.com

NEWS

• To submit news tips and press releases: call 541-966-0818 or email news@eastoregonian.com
• To submit community events, calendar items and Your EO News: email community@eastoregonian.com or call Tammy Malgesini at 541-564-4539 or Renee Struthers at 541-966-0818.
• To submit engagements, weddings and anniversaries: email rstruthers@eastoregonian.com or visit eastoregonian.com/community/announcements
• To submit sports or outdoors information or tips: 541-966-0838 • sports@eastoregonian.com

Business Office Manager:
541-966-0824

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