

# Planning underway to replace Wallowa Dam

By **KATY NESBITT**  
For the Capital Press

JOSEPH — A fix for the aging Wallowa Lake Dam is on the horizon with \$14 million from the state of Oregon and a series of stakeholder meetings on the calendar.

Gov. Kate Brown included \$16 million in her proposed 2020-21 biennium budget to rehabilitate the 103-year-old dam. Earlier this year, the Legislature approved the project, whittling the amount down to \$14 million and requiring the stakeholders to create a memorandum of agreement spelling out the terms on which the four parties agree.

The dam, owned and managed by the Wallowa Lake Irrigation District, provides water to upper Wallowa Valley farms. As the district's board has sought funding it has also discussed state-required fish passage options with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Nez Perce Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla.

"The funding for a new dam cures a fish problem and a farm problem," Dan Butterfield, the irrigation district's president, said.

With the current funding, the dam reconstruction project manager, Mort McMillen of McMillen, Jacob and Associates, said fish passage would likely be "trap and haul" — trapping adult, returning sockeye and moving



EO Media Group Photo/Katy Nesbitt

**The Wallowa Lake Dam will be rebuilt with \$14 million from the Oregon Legislature. Planning is underway.**

them around the dam and into the lake. A future option might be a "Swoosh!" or salmon cannon — a facility into which fish swim and are propelled over a dam.

"We ended up with trap-and-haul system, but could upgrade ... at some point," McMillen said. "That was the compromise —

multiple benefits that fit within the budget."

Another compromise proposed in the final hours of the legislative session was a request for allocating some stored water for fish and wildlife benefit. McMillen said the district made an agreement to do so.

Anticipating funding would one day become available, the district hired McMillen to draw plans for a new dam. Because of the risk of a failure, he said the dam has been running at 72% of capacity since 1994. The rehabilitated dam would provide more water to irrigators and allow for more water

to be released, increasing stream flows for fish.

"With rehabilitation the district will be able to run the dam for another 100 years and continue to restrict the lake's release for safer operation," McMillen said.

The grant may not be available until 2021, but Butterfield said the board is eager to get the final engineering design drafted and permitting underway, so its members are exploring loan options.

"Once we get the MOA signed, that's as good as gold to go to a bank and get a loan," Butterfield said. "We put feelers out to a couple different banks."

Nez Perce Tribe Fisheries' managers have long anticipated a reconstructed dam to bring sockeye salmon back to Wallowa Lake. This summer Shane Vatland, project manager for Nez Perce Tribe Fisheries, oversaw research on Wallowa Lake that measured water temperature, dissolved oxygen, nutrient levels, abundance of zooplankton, mysis shrimp and kokanee and analyzed biological samples.

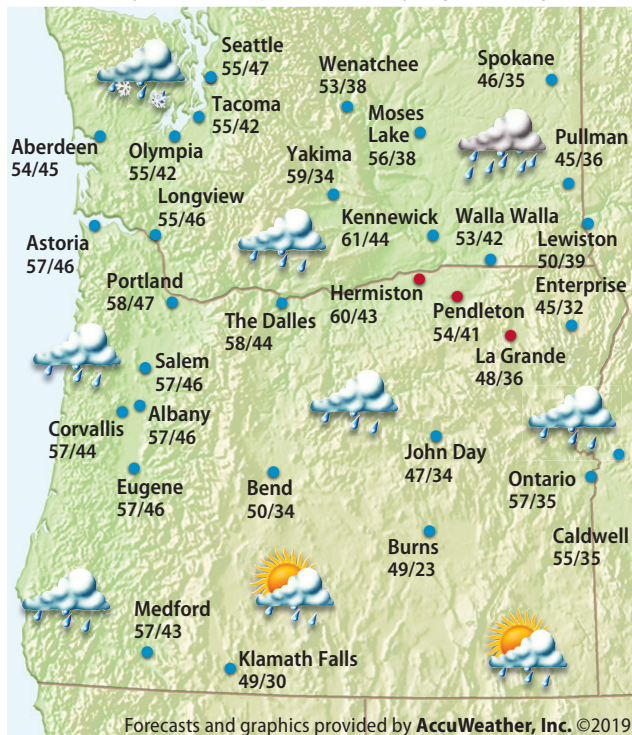
"We plan to collect similar data this autumn and all of next year, including samples from spawned kokanee in the river at the head of the lake," Vatland said. "These data and subsequent analyses, combined with ODFW's long-term monitoring of the kokanee population, will provide valuable information for potential sockeye salmon reintroduction."

## Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Windy with a couple of showers	Some sun, then increasing clouds	Mostly cloudy	An afternoon shower	A passing morning shower
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
54° 41°	55° 46°	59° 51°	65° 46°	60° 33°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
60° 43°	59° 49°	63° 53°	69° 48°	64° 33°

## 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	59°	43°
Normals	63°	39°
Records	85° (1940)	20° (1917)

**PRECIPITATION**

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.19"
Normal month to date	0.59"
Year to date	11.04"
Last year to date	7.91"
Normal year to date	9.53"

**HERMISTON** through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	62°	46°
Normals	64°	38°
Records	85° (1940)	23° (1976)

**PRECIPITATION**

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.04"
Normal month to date	0.33"
Year to date	4.80"
Last year to date	6.29"
Normal year to date	6.89"

**WINDS** (in mph)

Today	Sun.
Boardman WSW 12-25	SW 6-12
Pendleton W 12-25	SSW 6-12

**SUN AND MOON**

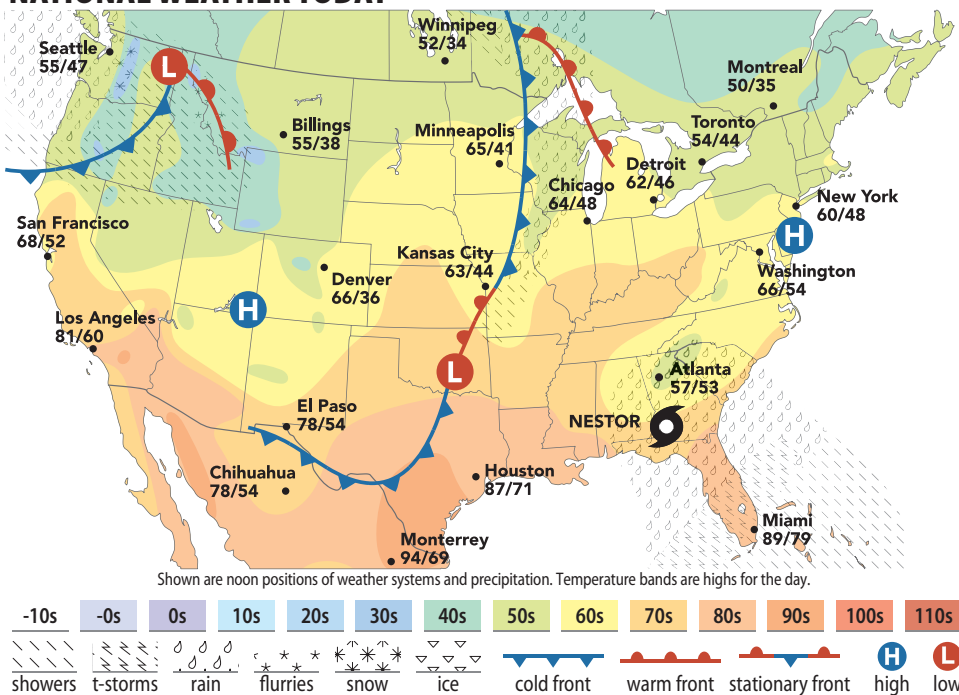
Sunrise today	7:16 a.m.
Sunset tonight	6:03 p.m.
Moonrise today	10:03 p.m.
Moonset today	1:06 p.m.

Phase indicators for Oct 21, Oct 27, Nov 4, Nov 12.

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 91° in McAllen, Texas Low 13° in Bridgeport, Calif.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## Meeting to tackle resuming Amtrak service to Eastern Oregon

Eastern Oregon Passenger Rail Summit set for Oct. 26 in La Grande

EO Media Group



AP Photo, File

LA GRANDE — A group of advocates for returning passenger train service to Eastern Oregon will meet Oct. 26 in La Grande for what they bill as the Eastern Oregon Passenger Rail Summit.

"This is an effort that won't happen overnight, and it's going to depend on support from communities along the route," said Jon Nuxoll of Eugene, president of the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA).

The organization wants to resurrect Amtrak's Pioneer route, which ran from Seattle to Salt Lake City and Chicago, passing through and stopping in La Grande, Baker City and Ontario.

Amtrak ended the route in 1997 due to budget cuts. There have been several efforts in the ensuing 22 years to resurrect the Pioneer route, some of which have gained support

from members of Congress, including Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden and Rep. Greg Walden.

But none of these campaigns was successful. Nuxoll, who is organizing the Oct. 26 meeting from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Cook Memorial Library, 2006 Fourth St., hopes to change that.

"People in Washington's Yakima Valley are organizing to bring trains back to Eastern Washington," Nuxoll said. "We're hoping to bring together similar local support in the Blue Mountains and Treasure Valley."

Nuxoll contends the need for passenger rail service is greater now than it was when Amtrak canceled the Pioneer route in 1997.

"There's now just one daily bus on I-84," Nuxoll said. "The only other option to driving is flying out of Pendleton. And I-84 isn't any safer or less crowded."

Nuxoll said local officials are slated to speak at the Oct. 26 meeting, along with organizers of the Yakima Valley group.

More information about AORTA is available on its Facebook page and at [www.aorta.chcs.net](http://www.aorta.chcs.net).

## BRIEFLY

### Woman sentenced for drug dealing, child neglect

SALEM — A Salem woman arrested following a drug bust three years ago on child neglect and drug charges was sentenced to prison this week after being caught dealing heroin and again exposing her children to drugs.

The *Statesman Journal* reports that when 26-year-old Vanessa Gonzalez-Coria was arrested in 2016, police dubbed her arrest and the arrest of nine others the

"largest drug bust in recent Mid-Valley history."

During the bust, police seized 10 pounds of heroin, 14 pounds of methamphetamine, 2 pounds of cocaine, 15 guns, seven vehicles and \$467,000.

The street value of the drugs totaled more than \$1.2 million, according to court records.

She was sentenced Monday to a total of five years in prison for the 2019 convictions and for violating her probation.

— Associated Press

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