

Tensions lessening between rangeland fire groups, government

By CHRIS BRANAM
For EO Media Group

CORVALLIS — The first responders to wildfires in the remote areas of the Great Basin of Oregon and Idaho are increasingly volunteer groups of private landowners that have been authorized and trained in partnership with federal and state agencies.

Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, which started in the 1960s in Eastern Oregon but have proliferated in the region over the last 20 years, are now responsible for protecting 25.5 million acres of federal, state and private land in the Pacific Northwest. Prior to the formation of these groups, response to wildfire was often marked by strife between ranchers and government officials.

Historically, there were arguments about the authority of federal entities, lack of local community engagement, or disagreement about fire response strategies and tactics. Now, a study led by Oregon State University finds these tensions have lessened — rapidly in Idaho and gradually in Oregon.

The study, published in the journal *Disasters* and funded by the Joint Fire Science Program, comes at a time when wildfires in the Great Basin have become more destructive. The Long Draw fire of



A rangeland wildfire burns in Wasco County. Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, which started in the 1960s in Eastern Oregon but have proliferated in the region over the last 20 years, are now responsible for protecting 25.5 million acres of federal, state and private land in the Pacific Northwest.

OSU Extension Photo/Emily Jane Davis

2012 in Southeastern Oregon burned 557,648 acres before it was contained.

These megafires threaten and destroy working rangelands for cattle production; habitat for species, such as the greater sage grouse and ungulates; and other values, such as recreation and the western culture of the region.

“These relationships are improving, and with time they continue to improve,” said study lead author Emily Jane Davis, an assistant pro-

fessor and Extension specialist in OSU’s College of Forestry. “Every fire where these folks work together, the ranchers learn more about fire and how agencies operate and the agencies learn more about what ranchers know about the land, especially the terrain. That’s largely positive.”

For their study, the research team comprised of Davis, Jesse Abrams, an assistant professor at the University of Georgia, and Katherine Wollstein, a doctorate student at

the University of Idaho, conducted a thorough examination and analysis of RFPAs in the Great Basin region of Oregon and Idaho.

They compiled public documents, conducted 59 interviews with key RFPA, state and BLM leaders, attended state-level RFPA meetings in 2016 and 2017, and developed case studies of four RFPAs — two in Oregon and two in Idaho.

Federal government agencies, chiefly the Bureau of

Land Management, manage about 70% of rangelands in the western United States, where they are responsible for management as well as wildfire suppression. A leasehold tenure system allows ranchers to graze cattle on federal lands, so ranchers have a significant stake in their management.

Rangeland Fire Protection Associations typically operate in rural and remote areas. By responding to fires when they are small, RFPAs are intended

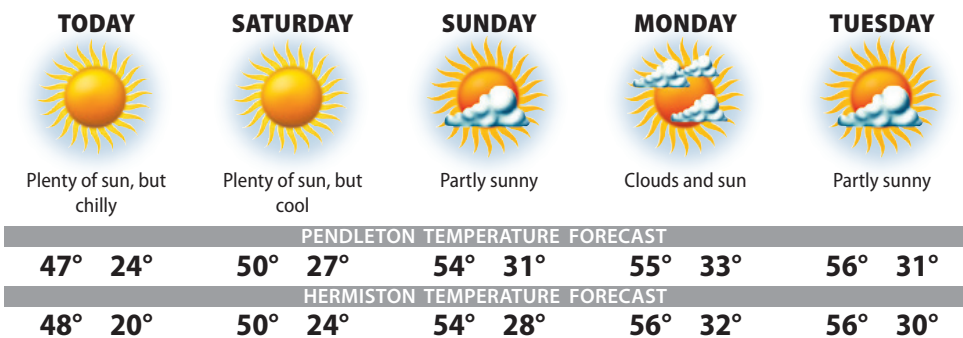
to help prevent large, destructive rangeland fires that have become increasingly common in the Great Basin and surrounding regions.

The RFPA model is unique in that it incorporates non-professional, non-governmental entities in wildfire response, Davis said. RFPAs emerged due to desires of many ranchers to actively fight fire and protect their livestock and forage, as well as larger policy and management objectives including more effective wildfire suppression for purposes including sage grouse habitat conservation.

As of 2019, Oregon had 24 RFPAs responsible for protecting 16.5 million acres of land. Idaho’s program, established in 2013, has nine RFPAs covering nearly 9 million acres. In Oregon, Idaho and Nevada, state laws define and authorize RFPAs. Washington state has been considering a similar law. In January 2019, Davis presented the highlights of a Northwest Fire Science Consortium report on RFPAs to the Washington Legislature’s House Rural Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

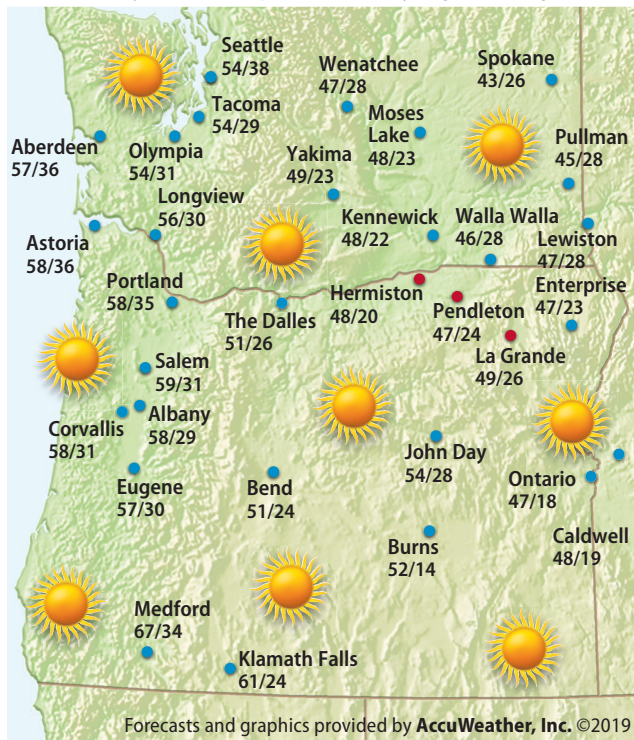
Although RFPAs aren’t yet in Washington, efforts to find solutions for protecting unprotected and remote rangelands continue and studies such as this one may help, Davis said.

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	44°	16°
Normals	57°	36°
Records	78° (1901)	14° (2002)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.46"
Normal month to date 1.05"
Year to date 11.31"
Last year to date 8.15"
Normal year to date 9.99"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	45°	17°
Normals	58°	36°
Records	73° (1988)	7° (2002)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.18"
Normal month to date 0.72"
Year to date 4.94"
Last year to date 6.45"
Normal year to date 7.28"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Sat.
Boardman	NE 3-6	NE 3-6
Pendleton	N 4-8	NNW 4-8

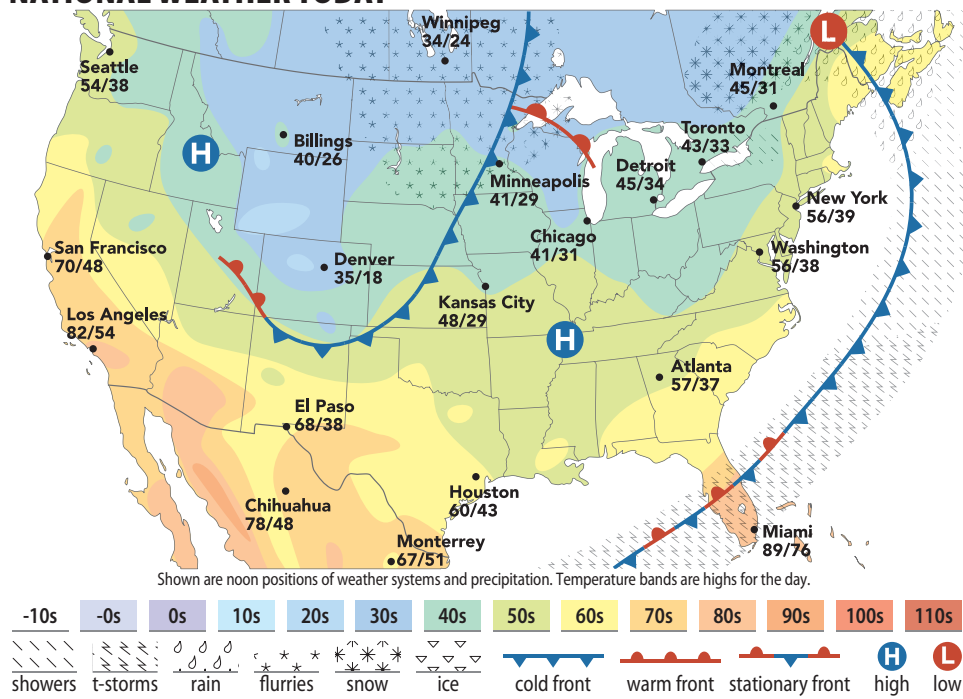
SUN AND MOON
Sunrise today 7:34 a.m.
Sunset tonight 5:42 p.m.
Moonrise today 12:35 p.m.
Moonset today 9:26 p.m.

Nov 4 Nov 12 Nov 19 Nov 26

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 93° in Immokalee, Fla. Low -14° in Gothic, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



BRIEFLY

Whooping cough case at Portland high school

PORTLAND — The Multnomah County Health Department has confirmed a case of whooping cough at a high school in Portland.

KOIN reported the case was at Grant High School. Whooping cough, or pertussis, causes severe, violent coughing and spreads easily in groups.

Other signs include cold-like symptoms like a runny nose but usually no fever.

There is a vaccine for pertussis, but the health department said it wears off over time.

OLCC podcasts answer questions about cannabis

SALEM — The Oregon Liquor Control Commission has produced a podcast that focuses on the issues surrounding marijuana vaping and the national outbreak of a respiratory illness.

“In the Weeds – The Ultimate OLCC Potcast,” is a series aimed at the recreational marijuana industry. The fourth episode focuses on vaping. Nationwide, more than 1,600 cases of lung injuries and 34 deaths have been reported, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Two of the deaths were in Oregon.

The Oregon Court of Appeals temporarily stopped a ban ordered by the governor on flavored nicotine vaping products. But a ban on the sale of flavored THC vaping products approved by the OLCC remains in effect. It was not covered by the court ruling.

Recent legal changes have caused confusion in the cannabis industry, and the podcasts are meant to explain state regulations and laws in a conversational way, according to the OLCC, which regulates recreational marijuana. But they are not meant to replace knowledge of the law, the agency said in a news release. The podcasts are available on soundcloud.com and other locations.

Man who used racial slurs convicted under bias crime law

PORTLAND — A man convicted under Oregon’s new bias crime law for chasing a man with a shovel and yelling racial slurs at him has been sentenced.

The Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office says Eric Eugene Scardino Jr. pleaded guilty last week to one count of bias crime and one of unlawful use of a weapon. He was sentenced to five days in jail, three years of probation and mental health and substance abuse evaluations and

possible treatment.

Portland police said they responded Aug. 29 to a disturbance and found Scardino holding a raised shovel while approaching another man.

Officers stopped Scardino from chasing the man and learned that before police arrived, Scardino had been chasing the man with the shovel and a knife while yelling racial slurs at the man, who is black.

Scardino is the second person to be convicted under Oregon’s “hate crime bill,” which became law earlier this year.

Public comment on gray wolf management plan extended

OLYMPIA, Wash. — The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has extended the public comment period for residents to weigh in on how the state should manage the gray wolf population.

KING-TV reported the public comment period has been extended through Nov. 15.

The state has in recent years authorized killings of wolves or an entire pack in an effort to stop the wolves from preying on cattle.

The Profanity Peak wolf pack in 2016 was shot by contractors from helicopters. Then wolves from the Sherman and Wedge packs were lethally removed. Members of the Togo pack were killed in 2018 after attacks on cattle.

In August and September, the entire OPT pack and some members of the Grouse Flats pack were killed for the same reason.

The state canceled wolf-related meetings in August, citing concerns of violence from people on both sides of the issue.

Severely neglected horses removed from property

CRESWELL — Authorities say several severely neglected horses have been removed from a property south of Eugene.

The Lane County Sheriff’s Office says the horses were removed Wednesday by county Animal Services and other community partners from the property near Creswell.

The sheriff’s office says it is working with multiple agencies on criminal charges against the woman who owns the animals.

The sheriff’s office says she and her husband had contacts in 2018 with county animal services about horses in poor condition and at that time care of the horses was brought up to a minimum standard.

The current investigation started when the county’s animal services received photos in mid-October of horses boarded at Davies’ property that appeared to be severely neglected.

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