

# Fire camera keeps eye on Wallowa County

Howard Butte sends high-tech alerts when smoke detected

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
EO Media Group

HOWARD BUTTE — Fire detection has come a long way in the 75 years since Smokey the Bear was first created to remind us, “Only you can prevent forest fires.”

In fact, it now includes technology almost unimaginable when Smokey was created in 1944. The first Smokey was an imaginary bear for an ad campaign, but after an orphaned bear cub was found after a 1950 wildfire in New Mexico, he was adopted by the USDA Forest Service to add life to the wildfire prevention effort.

In his original day, fire lookout towers and public reports were the prime detection efforts. Today, alongside a wooden lookout tower built in 1946 on 4,319-foot-tall Howard Butte, stands a 110-foot-tall metal tower topped by a 360-degree, high-definition camera. It gives a 20-mile view to detect smoke visible from its perch in western Wallowa County, according to Matt Howard, unit forester for the Wallowa Unit of the Ore-



EO Media Group Photo/Bill Bradshaw  
**Matt Howard, unit forester for the Oregon Department of Forestry's Wallowa Unit, looks at a view transmitted from the fire-detection camera on Howard Butte on a computer in his office in Wallowa.**

gon Department of Forestry.

The towers stand on 2 acres of land deeded to the ODF by what was then the Bowman-Hicks Lumber Co. for the purpose of establishing a lookout. Also there is communications equipment serving the ODF, state and county agencies powered by a line from Pacific Power and Light, Howard said.

The ACTi i96 PTZ camera completes a full rotation in about 15 minutes. If smoke is detected, an alert is sent via a microwave signal west to Mount Emily and down to La Grande, where the signal is relayed to the Central Oregon Interagency Dispatch Center

in Prineville. Once notified of an alert, the center views the image sent by the camera, and then contacts the appropriate response units to check it out.

Howard said since the camera was installed in July, there have been several alerts but all have proven to be legal burns.

Although the state-of-the-art camera is the latest technology, it's by no means a “silver bullet” and they won't replace human eyes, he said.

“We just like having it in our tool box of different tools” for detecting fires, Howard said.

That “tool box” includes a partnership the ODF has developed with the U.S. Forest



Oregon Department of Forestry Photo  
**This close-up shows the high-definition, fire-detection camera mounted on a 110-foot tower atop Howard Butte that relays views showing smoke to the Central Oregon Interagency Dispatch Center in Prineville.**

Service, Wallowa County and other state agencies.

Paul Karvoski, fire chief for the county and the city of Enterprise, works closely with the ODF and hopes to see additional cameras located in the county.

“I can't say enough about it,” he said on the one on Howard Butte. “I'd like to get three or four more in the county.”

In particular, he'd like to see one established on Courtney Butte overlooking Troy, which was nearly destroyed by the Grizzly Fire in August 2015.

Nathan Goodrich, U.S. Forest Service fire management officer for the Wallowa

Valley Ranger District of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest based in Joseph, said there are no such cameras in his area. Although there are lookout towers, they are lacking in basic infrastructure required for a camera, such as power lines, cables, hardware and line-of-sight connections to which the microwave dishes can transmit.

“We've been looking at those (cameras) for some time now, but they're pretty spendy to get into,” he said. “They've shown to be pretty successful.”

But Goodrich is relatively satisfied with his lookout towers that are manned during the

peak fire season from June to October.

“They're invaluable,” he said. “You can't talk to a camera and get more information.”

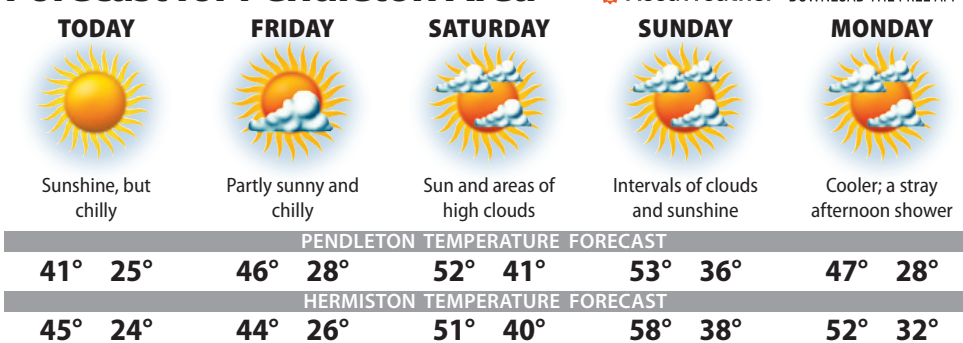
Goodrich said he'd like to see a camera on Mount Ireland on the Grant-Baker County line “if we come into a little extra money.”

For now, Howard Butte has Northeast Oregon's only fire detection camera. Howard said another is planned in Umatilla County, likely by next spring. Another is being considered for Baker County. He said such cameras are used in other areas of the state and other states, though he didn't have statistics on those.

But the cameras don't come cheap. The one on Howard Butte, since there already was a communications tower there, cost about \$60,000, Howard said. To erect one where there is no tower, the price increases by another \$50,000 to \$75,000.

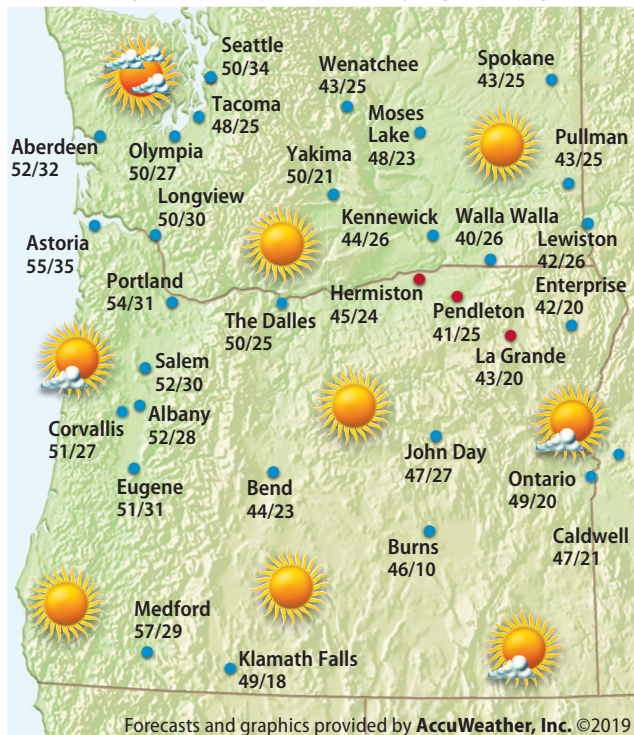
Howard said his unit has an annual budget of about \$900,000, about half of which comes from a landowner assessment and half from the state's general fund. Oregon even has an insurance policy with Lloyds of London to cover fire-suppression costs — the only state in the Union with such a policy. Howard said he believes that's because Lloyds determined Oregon a “good risk.”

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



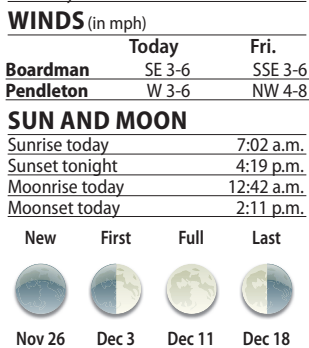
## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

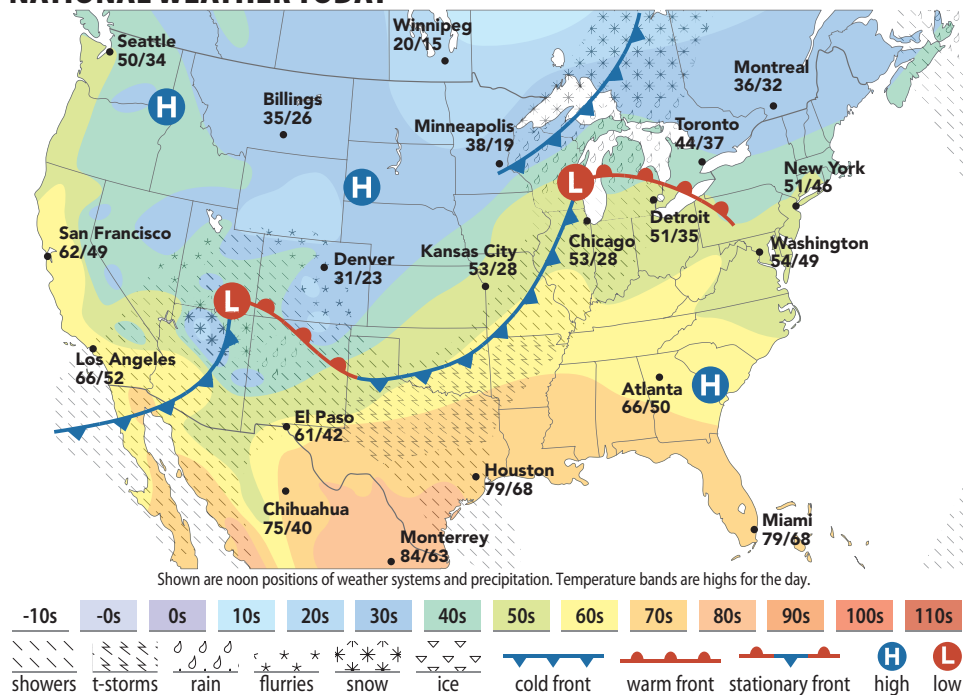
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	43°	34°
Normals	47°	32°
Records	69° (1958)	9° (1977)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.23"	
Normal month to date	0.92"	
Year to date	11.54"	
Last year to date	8.25"	
Normal year to date	10.91"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	52°	41°
Normals	48°	32°
Records	65° (1962)	6° (1929)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.01"	
Normal month to date	0.76"	
Year to date	4.95"	
Last year to date	6.46"	
Normal year to date	8.04"	
WINDS (in mph)		
	Today	Fri.
Boardman	SE 3-6	SSE 3-6
Pendleton	W 3-6	NW 4-8
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	7:02 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	4:19 p.m.	
Moonrise today	12:42 a.m.	
Moonset today	2:11 p.m.	



## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 88° in Falfurrias, Texas Low 11° in Bodie State Park, Calif.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## Anthropology meets sociology in interdisciplinary tribal food systems

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — Basic groceries are at least an hour away from home for Kalispel Tribe members in Northeastern Washington.

The tribe invited researchers to submit applications about how they would identify policy solutions. Eastern Oregon University anthropology professor Linda Jerofke had been in touch with tribal members, and reached out to sociology professor Jennifer Puentes about tackling the problem with an interdisciplinary study.

“Linda approached me about a collaboration on this project given our mutual interests and research on food systems,” Puentes said.

Out of all of the submissions, the Kalispel

Tribe selected Jerofke and Puentes' proposal. In February 2019, three students joined the two faculty members and drove about seven hours from La Grande to Sk, Washington.

“One of the biggest problems for the tribe are food deserts,” Jerofke said. “There are not a lot of food options. There is a small convenience store and members have to drive at least an hour to get food and other resources that they cannot get off of the land.”

Together, students and faculty worked to identify regional and community needs regarding access to healthful and first foods, Puentes said. The data they collected led to a proposal for grant funding to preserve tribal traditions.

“For the Kalispel Tribe of

Indians, effective food system planning incorporates heritage, culture, territory, and community needs,” Jerofke said.

The three undergraduates managed focus groups and general discussions, collecting 800 minutes of qualitative research from 25 interviewees.

“This was a great opportunity to collaborate with a colleague and find ways to incorporate students,” Puentes said.

Puentes and Jerofke got involved because they share a background in food systems, but approach the topic from different academic points of view.

“It turned out to be a good pairing because we look at society and cultures in slightly different ways,” Jerofke said.

## BRIEFLY

### Company must pay for toxic waste on Idaho tribal land

BOISE, Idaho — A U.S. appeals court has ruled a Philadelphia-based agribusiness company that left millions of tons of toxic waste on tribal land in Idaho must pay the tribes nearly \$20 million plus \$1.5 million annually.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday upheld a lower court ruling against FMC Corp. involving a now-shuttered Idaho plant that turned phosphate into fertilizer.

FMC for about 50 years, until 2001, operated the fertilizer plant that produced 22 million tons of waste stored on the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Fort Hall Indian Reservation.

The company contended it wasn't obligated to pay the \$1.5 million annual permit fee to the tribes for storing the waste after closing the plant.

The tribes say the money will be used for monitoring and cleanup at the site.

### Portland must stop charging excessive public record fees

PORTLAND — A Multnomah County

judge has ruled Portland must stop charging excessive fees for routine email and document searches to fulfill public records requests.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reported Circuit Court Judge Shelley D. Russell ruled Monday the city's current system for determining records search costs is unreasonable.

Russell's order stems from a September 2018 lawsuit filed by attorney and activist Alan Kessler.

He claimed the city overcharged him by requiring him to pay \$311.67 for metadata from emails between a member of Portland's Historic Landmarks Commission and employees at the Bureau of Development Services.

A trial held Nov. 4-5 resulted in Russell's ruling and her injunction against future high search charges. The city gave Kessler a \$52 refund in acknowledgment it had overcharged him by overstating an employee's hourly pay.

Portland City Attorney Tracy Reeve said the city was evaluating the decision and determining next steps.

— Associated Press

**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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