

Weather fluctuations affect prescribed fires

By JAYSON JACOBY
EO Media Group

BAKER CITY — Autumn weather that careened between extremes has had a profound effect on prescribed burning plans on public lands in Northeastern Oregon.

“It was a different sort of fall,” said Steve Hawkins, fuels program manager for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

The season swapped the typical sequence, starting with temperatures more typical of winter, then transitioning to a long spell of abnormally warm and dry weather.

Crews ended up burning about 2,500 acres, mostly in three areas — Goose Creek about 20 miles northeast of Baker City; near Unity Reservoir; and in the Wolf Creek area northwest of North Powder.

That’s more acreage than Hawkins expected would be burned back in early October, after a series of Pacific storms doused the region with rain and snow.

During that time, the grass and pine needles that carry flames across the ground were too wet to sustain blazes.

The 2,500 acres burned is about one-third of the



A prescribed fire near Goose Creek, about 20 miles northeast of Baker City, produced a plume of smoke in early October.

area that’s typically treated during the fall, Hawkins said.

Forest officials use prescribed fire to accomplish a variety of tasks, including reducing the amount of combustible material on the ground, and spurring the growth of forage for wildlife and livestock.

Although the weather changed dramatically after the middle of October — 30 days in a row passed without measurable rain at the Baker City Airport, and the high temperature was above average on each of the first 20 days of November — two factors conspired to make burning conditions mar-

ginal, he said.

First, as the period of daylight shrinks with the approach of the winter solstice, the burning “window” — when conditions are conducive to a fire that spreads at a reasonably rapid rate — is confined to three or four hours during the afternoon, Hawkins said.

Second, the long dry spell that stretched from Oct. 20 through Nov. 18 was caused in large part by a persistent high pressure ridge that created a temperature inversion and resulted in gentle winds.

In such conditions cooler air is trapped in valleys, and smoke from prescribed fires tends to settle rather than

disperse, Hawkins said.

Even though some areas slated for prescribed burning dried sufficiently, the stagnant conditions made it difficult to burn without violating smoke guidelines, he said.

The potential for smoke was one reason that prescribed burning proposed for the Washington Gulch area near Baker City was canceled for this fall, Hawkins said.

The situation was somewhat different when it comes to burning piles of slash.

During the early autumn, when soggy ground rendered widespread underburning impractical, conditions were better suited to burning piles, he said.

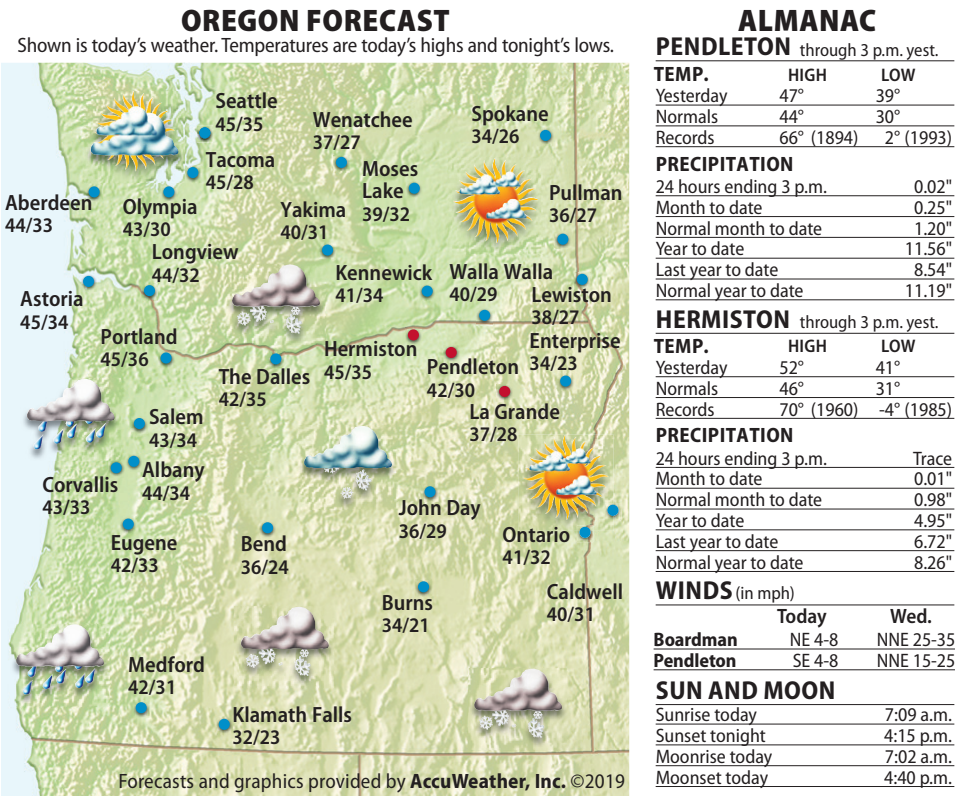
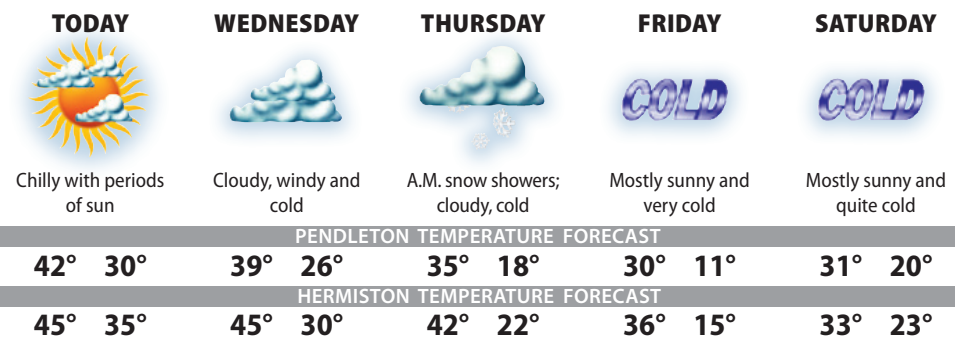
But the dry spell lasted so long that eventually officials had to postpone some pile-burning due to the potential for flames to spread from the piles, Hawkins said.

“We didn’t want them creeping onto private land,” he said.

With wintry weather forecast to return late this weekend and continue through Thanksgiving, Hawkins said Thursday it’s likely that there won’t be any more widespread prescribed burning this fall.

Pile-burning, which can be done even with snow on the ground, will continue.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

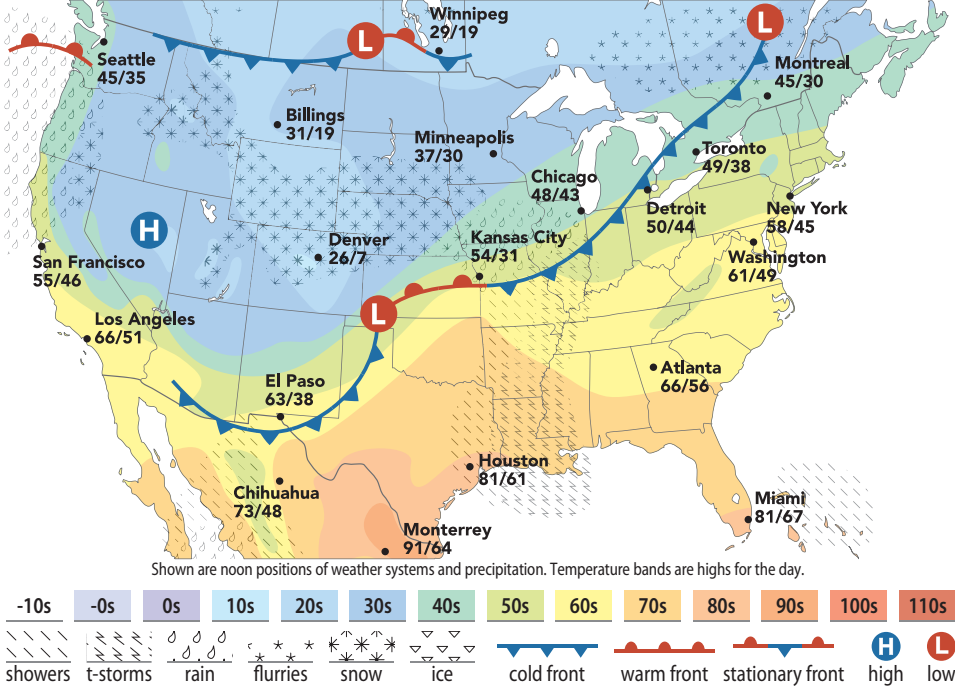


NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 91° in Carrizo Springs, Texas Low -1° in Gothic, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Carcass of giant blue whale brought to surface for study

Associated Press

NEWPORT — The carcass of a giant blue whale that’s been submerged off the Oregon coast for more than three years was hauled to the surface so it can be reassembled, studied and put on public display, scientists with Oregon State University said Friday.

The dead whale, which was about as long as two school buses, washed ashore near Gold Beach in 2015.

It’s exceptionally rare to see an intact blue whale carcass wash ashore. The only other documented case happened more than 200 years ago, said Bruce Mate, emeritus director of Oregon State University’s Marine Mammal Institute. That’s when the Lewis and Clark expedition traded

with a local tribe for blubber in 1806 when what is believed to be a blue whale washed ashore near modern-day Cannon Beach.

Seeing an opportunity, scientists removed 58 tons of flesh from the 2015 carcass, and then placed the bones in the water off Newport, Oregon, so underwater scavengers could pick them clean. The bones were placed in huge nets and submerged with weights in Yaquina Bay with the help of a technical dive team from the Oregon Coast Aquarium.

All 365 of those bones were brought back to land Thursday, including 18-foot-long mandibles and a skull weighing 6,500 pounds, according to a statement from the university.

The bones will be trans-

ported to a nearby warehouse, and the university is asking for local volunteers who can help them remove oil and fat from the bones, Mate said. The process of cleaning and reassembling the giant whale will take about a year, he added.

“We’ve got a bunch of work to do to get everything cleaned up,” Mate said. “It’s critical to get the oil out of the bones to help preserve the skeleton and keep it from becoming rancid.”

Once reassembled, the skeleton will go on display at the new marine studies building under construction at the Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport.

Scientists in 2015 said it wasn’t clear why the whale had died, but it did appear undernourished.

BRIEFLY

Man guilty of killing fiancée, raiding bank account

CORVALLIS — A Corvallis man has been found guilty of killing his fiancée and pilfering her bank account.

The *Gazette-Times* reported the 12-person jury on Friday found William Hargrove guilty after three hours of deliberation.

Anna Repkina, a 27-year-old Russian woman who moved in with Hargrove after an online romance, was found killed by a single shotgun blast on a logging road near Alsea on April 17, 2017.

Hargrove was arrested three days later and charged with murder. He was also charged with identity theft and two counts of theft for using Repkina’s bank card to make withdrawals totaling \$800 from her account.

Prosecutors argued Hargrove killed Repkina to appease his married lover. Hargrove’s lawyer argued it was that woman who killed Repkina out of jealousy.

His lawyer says Hargrove will appeal the verdict.

Rampant stomach virus closes elementary school

ALBANY — The rapid spread of a stomach virus through the Greater Albany School District has forced the closure of an elementary school.

The *Gazette-Times* reported Monday that the school district in Linn County has been struggling to contain the spread of the virus, which causes vomiting and diarrhea.

The district worked to disinfect all its buildings over the weekend, but decided to keep Periwinkle Elementary School closed on Monday after consulting with the Linn County Health Department.

Students are urged to stay home for 48 hours after symptoms have passed and parents are being asked to enforce strict hand washing policies at home.

— 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.

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 Manager:

• Angela Treadwell
541-966-0827 • atreadwell@eastoregonian.com

Multimedia Consultants:

• Lora Jenkins
541-276-2214 • ljenkins@eastoregonian.com

• 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 rstuthers@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