

Court rejects environmentalist challenge to Lostine project

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — A federal appeals court has rejected an environmentalist challenge to a 2,000-acre forest thinning project along 11 miles of the Lostine River in Northeast Oregon.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has upheld an earlier ruling that determined the U.S. Forest Service complied with environmental laws in authorizing the project.

The agency didn't violate the Healthy Forest Restoration Act by concluding that "extraordinary circumstances" did not justify an environmental study of the thinning project, which is aimed at reducing wildfire risks, according to the 9th Circuit.

The Forest Service properly analyzed "resource conditions" along the river in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in deciding the project was eligible for a "categorical exclusion" from such environmental reviews, the 9th Circuit said.

"The Forest Service rationally concluded the Lostine Project had no effect, no adverse effect, likely no adverse effect, or a neutral or beneficial effect on each applicable 'resource condition,'" the ruling said.

Likewise, the thinning project is consistent with the land and resource management plan for the national forest, the ruling said. "The Forest Service reasonably interpreted its plan, adhered to its



The Lostine River Canyon has heavily forested lower slopes partly due to fire exclusion. The 9th Circuit Court just upheld a USFS thinning project that will treat about 2,100 acres along the Lostine River Road outside of the adjacent Eagle Cap Wilderness.

relevant processes, documented its findings, and made rational conclusions based on those findings."

Contrary to allegations by the environmental plaintiffs, the Greater Hells Canyon Council and Oregon Wild, the agency's "collaborative process" for planning the project was sufficient and didn't require a formal group, the 9th

Circuit said.

The Forest Service followed guidelines requiring the plan to "involve relevant stakeholders" and to use an "open, inclusive and transparent process," the ruling said.

Capital Press was unable to reach representatives of the environment groups for comment as of press time.

Wallowa County, which intervened in the litigation to defend the project, is glad the 9th Circuit has agreed the thinning should proceed, said Caroline Lobdell, executive director of the Western Resources Legal Center, which represented the local government.

The project is in the "wildland-urban interface," so it's

needed to protect local residents, tourists and emergency responders in the region, Lobdell said.

The county also argued that thinning will support the economic stability of the area's forest products industry, such as a 23-employee firewood processor that depends on the project for wood.

"Economic development is always important for rural counties," Lobdell said.

The American Forest Resource Council, a timber industry group that tracked the case, said the 9th Circuit ruling is a win for reducing fuels and improving forest health.

"This is really a high risk area for wildfire. The focus of the project is really community protection," said Lawson Fite, an attorney with AFRC.

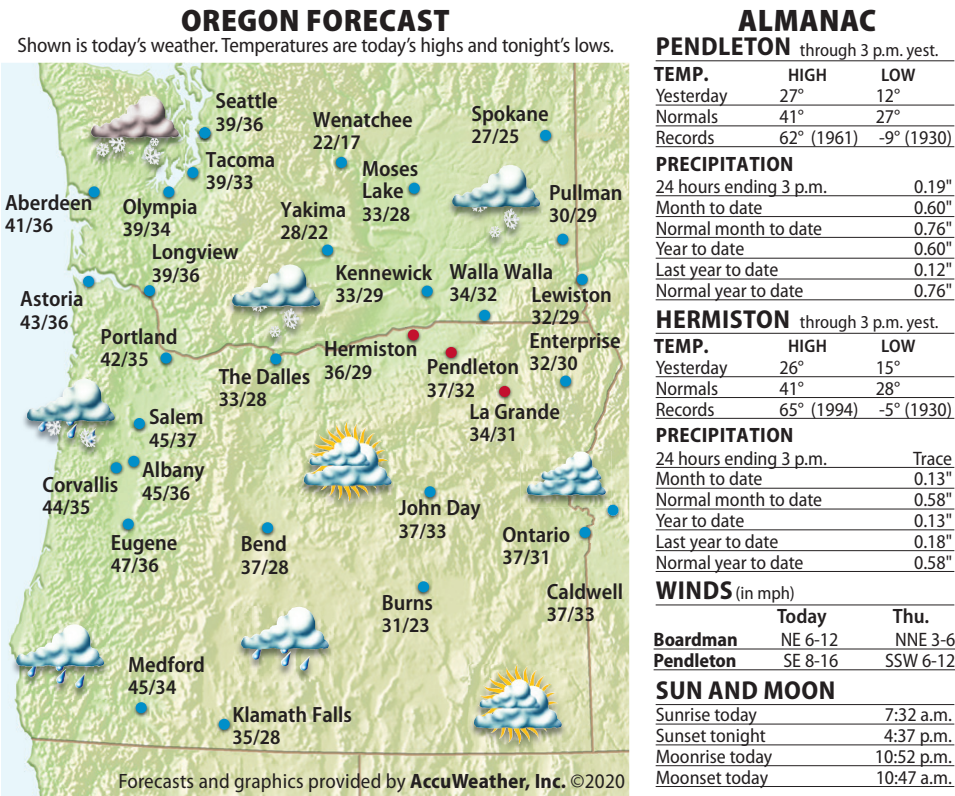
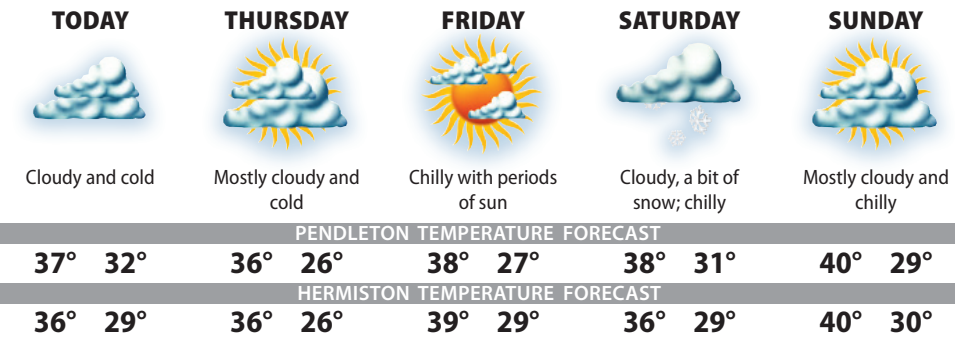
It's also heartening that the 9th Circuit found the project didn't adversely affect sensitive resources and wasn't subject to the narrow definition of "collaborative process" favored by environmental groups, he said.

"This project is a great example of listening to the community," Fite said.

Though the 9th Circuit's ruling doesn't set a binding legal precedent, it does show that federal courts are starting to understand the need for management to control fire, disease and pest risk, as called for under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, he said.

"They're giving the Forest Service the appropriate amount of deference to implement the statute," Fite said.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

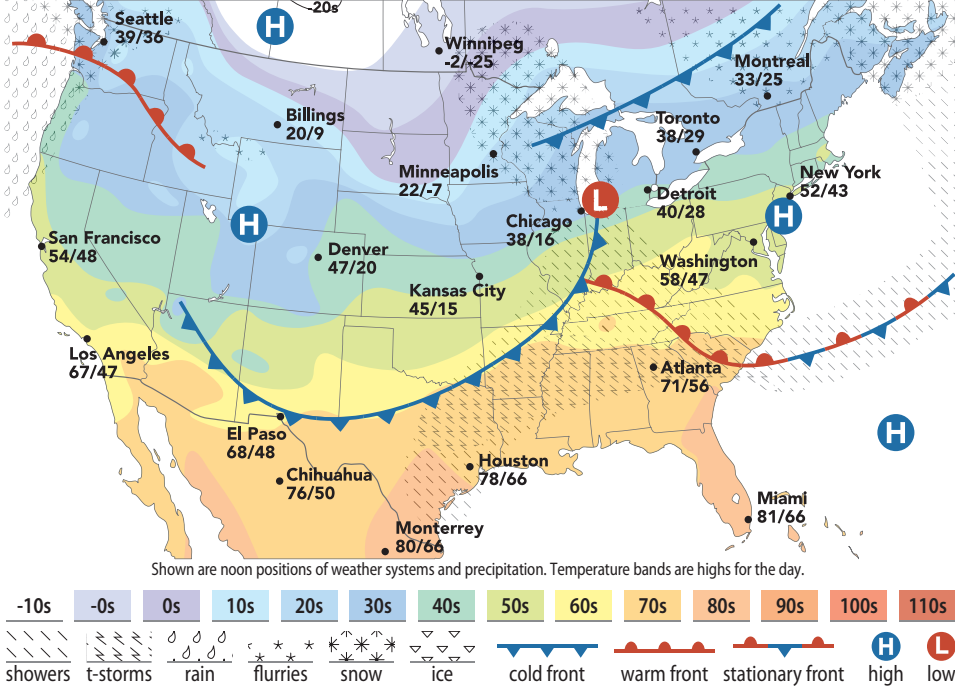


NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 92° in Falfurrias, Texas Low -24° in Scobey, Mont.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Tumalo man announces his bid for Rep. Greg Walden's seat in Congress

By BRENNA VISSER
EO Media Group

BEND — Jimmy Crumpacker, a Tumalo businessman and Republican, announced his bid for Oregon's 2nd Congressional District on Monday.

Crumpacker is running against Bend physician Knute Buehler, Jason Atkinson, Cliff Bentz, David Campbell, Kenneth Medenbach, Mark Roberts and Jeff Smith for the seat currently held by Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River.

Walden, the state's only congressional Republican, announced he was not seeking re-election in October.

A seventh-generation Oregonian, Crumpacker was born and raised in Portland before going to Georgetown University and earning a bachelor's degree in government, according to his website. He has worked for American Insurance Group and as an investor in oil on Wall Street for First New York Securities. He moved from the East Coast back to Oregon seven years ago.

Since then, he founded and manages Crumpacker Asset Management. He has also served on the board of the Oregon Ballet Theatre and Meals on Wheels, an organi-



Photo courtesy of Crumpacker for Congress

Jimmy Crumpacker, of Tumalo, announced Monday his intention to run for Oregon's 2nd Congressional District.

zation that delivers meals to seniors.

Crumpacker decided to run for the 2nd Congressional District after hearing of Walden's retirement, according to his campaign website.

Crumpacker describes himself as a strong supporter of President Donald Trump and ardent defender of free market capitalism.

"For far too long, Washington insiders have forgotten so many folks like those in rural Oregon — farmers, ranchers; folks who just want a fair shake," Crumpacker said in a written release.

"That's why this district voted for Donald Trump in the first place," the release

stated. "They were tired of getting the short end of the stick. Rural Oregonians can rest assured knowing that I will work tirelessly with this President to deliver real results for the district."

For Crumpacker, that means defending the Second Amendment, securing the border, and "putting an end to the spread of radical socialism," according to the release.

Crumpacker had raised nearly \$600,000 by the end of last year, according to a press release.

The Democrats who have filed to run are Nick Heurtz, John Holm, Jack Howard, Alex Spenser and Isabella Tibbetts.

BRIEFLY

Senate president out for medical treatment

SALEM — Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, is out of the Capitol this week while being treated for a hip injury at Oregon Health & Science University, according to his office.

Courtney's absence occurs as state lawmakers convene in the Capitol for a series of meetings in preparation for the legislative session



Courtney

next month.

The senate president "started having severe hip pain while at an out of state conference in Arizona," his office said in a statement.

"We expect him to be released in the next few days, and he will likely have to do some physical therapy."

Courtney "fully expects to be back in time for the February session," the statement continued. The session starts Feb. 3 and can last up to 35 days.

The 76-year-old has been Oregon Senate president since 2003.

— EO Media Group

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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