

Brown proposes new wildfire protection plan

By CASSANDRA PROFITA
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown is calling for a major expansion in the state’s wildfire response plans in a new legislative concept lawmakers heard on Tuesday.

The draft proposal outlines the governor’s long-term vision for how the state should adapt to wildfire, reduce wildfire risks on forestland and improve fire suppression.

The plan echoes a 110-page report from the Governor’s Council On Wildfire Response, which spent about a year developing recommendations for improving the state’s ability to prevent and respond to wildfires.

It calls for land-use planning changes, new building codes and requirements for “defensible space” around homes to reduce the risk of wildfires damaging residential areas. It requires new standards for residential smoke filtration systems to protect people from the health risks of wildfire smoke.

It adds new jobs in the Office of Emergency Management that would be designed to handle wildfire emergencies, and it sets a goal of “treating” 300,000 acres of forestland a year to reduce wildfire fuel through logging, controlled burning and eco-



A rangeland wildfire burns in Wasco County in 2018. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown is calling for a major expansion in the state’s wildfire response plans in a new legislative concept.

system restoration projects.

Over the next 20 years, the governor wants to see similar treatment on 5.6 million acres of forestland across the state, which her wildfire council estimated would cost about \$4 billion in a report released in November.

The legislative draft calls for a study of how the state might pay for wildfire preparedness and suppression. It does not include any dollar figures for how much money should be appropriated to pay for legislative requirements, leaving lawmakers to determine later what parts of the bill would actually receive funding.

Jason Miner, Gov. Brown’s natural resources policy manager, outlined the broad strokes of the bill for lawmakers in the Senate Interim Committee on Wildfire Prevention and Recovery. He said the governor is open to discussion and amendments to her proposal.

Committee member Herman Baertschiger, R-Grants Pass, said wildfire risk is so immense that the governor’s proposal will barely begin to address it.

“When you look at how big the problem is and what you’re proposing here — even at 300,000 acres a year — it’s like mowing your grass with

a tweezers,” he said. “Everybody needs to know how big this problem is. It is big. It is huge. And how we’re going to pay for it, I have no idea.”

Sen. Baertschiger told Miner and other members of the governor’s wildfire council that the plan will have to produce its own revenue through logging because lawmakers are facing demands for funding to help with major problems with foster care, mental health care and homelessness as well as the need to fund Medicaid and the Public Employee Retirement System.

“Those are the dollars you’re competing with,” he

said. “We have to produce some commodities to pay for this. You can’t run to the general fund for the dollars. We need them somewhere else.”

Critics of the governor’s proposal warned the committee to focus its spending on measures that have proven to be effective in reducing wildfire risks and avoid logging in back-country areas where wildfire could be beneficial and there aren’t any homes in need of protection.

“Scientists have found that thinning forests far from homes does nothing to protect Oregonians from wildfire,” Lluvia Merello, energy justice organizer for Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, said. “Ironically, thinning forests to reduce wildfire risk releases more carbon than the fire itself.”

Merello and others with conservation groups told the committee the most important changes will be the ones that make homes and communities more resilient to wildfire in the future.

Samantha Crop with Cascadia Wildlands said many of the fuel reduction logging projects she’s seen on federal land involve opening the forest canopy with clearcuts that remove medium and large trees that would typically be resistant to fire, compacting the soil and drying out the forest.

“So-called fire reduction proposals that I’m seeing in practice look like just the same old commercial logging and clear-cut style practices with a fire or fuel rationale tacked onto them,” she said.

“I think it’s really important for us to be really skeptical of these so-called fire reduction logging projects.”

The governor’s wildfire council created a prioritized list of forest thinning and burning projects that are ready to go and have already gone through environmental reviews. How many of those projects get accomplished in the next year will likely depend on how much funding lawmakers allocate to that portion of the proposed bill.

Sen. Lew Frederick said the funding question is a big one, but he wants the state to do what it can to address wildfire risks with the funding it can muster.

“Everybody wants somebody else to pay for it and that’s simply not going to be available,” the Portland Democrat said.

“We’re not going to be harvesting the way we were in the ’70s and ’80s. We’re not going to be stopping everything from happening in the forest the way some folks would like to have happen. We have to find a balance and this is an attempt at a balance.”

Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY

Chilly with periods of sun

SATURDAY

Mostly cloudy with a few showers

SUNDAY

Cloudy and chilly

MONDAY

Cloudy and chilly

TUESDAY

Rain and drizzle in the p.m.

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
38°	33°	41°	34°	42°
37°	32°	41°	33°	43°

HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
38°	33°	42°	29°	40°
37°	32°	41°	33°	42°

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	45°	24°
Normals	41°	27°
Records	63° (1976)	-5° (1950)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.60"
Normal month to date	0.85"
Year to date	0.60"
Last year to date	0.29"
Normal year to date	0.85"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	31°	22°
Normals	42°	28°
Records	63° (1961)	-9° (1957)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.13"
Normal month to date	0.66"
Year to date	0.13"
Last year to date	0.32"
Normal year to date	0.66"

WINDS (in mph)

Today	Sat.
W 3-6	SW 3-6
S 6-12	SSE 7-14

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:31 a.m.
Sunset tonight	4:39 p.m.
Moonrise today	12:06 a.m.
Moonset today	11:39 a.m.

Last

New

First

Full

Jan 17

Jan 24

Feb 1

Feb 8

NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 88° in Zapata, Texas Low -35° in Fosston, Minn.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

-10s

-0s

0s

10s

20s

30s

40s

50s

60s

70s

80s

90s

100s

110s

showers

t-storms

rain

flurries

snow

ice

cold front

warm front

stationary front

high

low

Man sentenced to more than 36 years for 1996 murder

By EMILY THORNTON
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

DAYTON, Wash. — A judge in Columbia County Superior Court on Wednesday imposed a more than 36-year prison sentence on Dayton native Benjamin Orozco, 45, convicted by a jury last August of second-degree murder, first-degree assault with firearm enhancements, and second-degree unlawful firearm possession.

Orozco and a former co-defendant were accused of fatally shooting Lance Terry and wounding David Eaton near downtown Dayton on the night of July 7, 1996. Orozco’s co-defendant, David Delarosa, cut a deal to avoid prosecution in return for providing testimony for the state.

Orozco fled after the killing to Mexico, where he was apprehended and returned to Washington in

2016. He has been housed at the Washington State Penitentiary in lieu of \$2 million bail, which was revoked upon his conviction in August 2019.

Walla Walla County Superior Court Judge Scott Wolfram sentenced Orozco to the high end of the range — 192 months, or 16 years, on count one, with an additional five years for firearm enhancements; 123 months, or just over 10 years, for count two, with another five years added for firearm enhancements; and 12 months on count three.

The first two will run consecutively and the third concurrently. Upon release, Orozco will have two years of community supervision, which was the maximum allowed in 1996.

The sentence was longer than anticipated for some.

Columbia County Prosecuting Attorney Dale Slack said a records custodian

BRIEFLY

Bail raised to \$5M for man accused of luring girls online

BEND — A judge raised bail to \$5 million Wednesday for a 41-year-old Bend man who allegedly posed as a teenage boy online to seek explicit photos from dozens of girls around the country.

Keith Fyten was arrested in November 2019 on a 95-count indictment and warrant at Chicago’s O’Hare Airport as he returned from the Netherlands, heading back to Bend, Deschutes County sheriff’s deputies revealed Wednesday.

A Deschutes County Circuit Court indictment of Fyten was unsealed Wednesday, listing 28 counts of luring a minor and 67 counts of using a child in a display of sexually explicit conduct, KTVZ-TV reported. The indictment alleges incidents between July 2014 and May 2018.

Fyten’s alleged online luring efforts included at least 16 underage girls in Cen-

tral Oregon, who were asked over Facebook Messenger to send sexually explicit photos or videos of themselves, sheriff’s Detective Sgt. Jayson Janes said.

The investigation dates back to October 2017, when the sheriff’s office received a report of sexually explicit photos of underage girls being distributed, Janes said.

Detectives obtained internet service provider and Facebook information that led them to Fyten, who had moved to the Netherlands in 2018.

The detective looked through Fyten’s social media history and found he’d communicated with numerous underage females throughout the United States.

Law enforcement agencies around the country were asked to help locate and interview other underage females related to the case, Janes said.

It wasn’t immediately known if Fyten has a lawyer.

— 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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