

Lostine Canyon project passes halfway point

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

LOSTINE CANYON — Despite past controversy, hard work and uncertain weather, the Lostine Corridor Public Safety Project is well underway, just past the halfway point in efforts to remove hazard and diseased trees, improve public safety, and improve forest resources in the area.

“It’ll be completely dependent on what the weather does for us,” said David Schmidt, owner of Integrated Biomass Resources in Wallowa, which successfully bid on the timber harvest portion of the stewardship contract in September 2018.

The harvest is slated to conclude Feb. 28, 2023, he said, though it could qualify for an extension.

But the logging must be done under “winter conditions,” said Jim Zacharias, a member of the Wallowa Resources Board of Directors.

Schmidt said those conditions require 6 inches of frost or 12 inches of snow on the ground for logging equipment to operate on.

The approximately 2,110 acres of timberland along 11 miles of the Lostine River is being thinned of hazard trees and underbrush to make the area safer for recreationists and residents of the Lostine Canyon. The hazard trees appear the greatest threat to public safety, the experts said on Thursday, March 4, during an interview in the canyon.

“The Forest Service spends an abundance of time and effort trying to keep this corridor open safely to



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain
A cut-to-length harvester operated by Tom Zacharias, of Pro Thinning Inc., of Joseph, falls, limbs and cuts a tree into standard 16-foot lengths in just minutes on Feb. 25, 2021, on the Lostine Corridor Public Safety Project.

the public,” said Mark Moeller, U.S. Forest Service assistant fire management officer. “That consists primarily of falling hazard trees that present a danger to the public.”

A decision memo by the Forest Service dated in 2017 included photographs of those hazard trees that had fallen on tables in campgrounds and across roads, backing up the Forest Service claim of the necessity of their removal.

In addition to tree removal, the project also includes installing a helicopter pad, re-decking the bridge at Lake Creek and removing slash left-

over from the logging work. Some of the slash will be burned, while some will be masticated — ground into mulch for the forest floor. Some slash will be left for use by campers as firewood.

“The purpose of this project is to reduce the risk of these forest stands in the corridor to future insect and disease impacts (such as falling trees), which, in turn, reduces the risk to the people who use this corridor, the improvements in the corridor to private land and the resource in the canyon including the riverfront,” said Matt Howard, of the Oregon



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain
Logs cut to 16-foot lengths await loading onto log trucks alongside the road on Feb. 25, 2021, in the Lostine Canyon.

Department of Forestry’s Wallowa Unit.

In addition to public safety, the timber harvest portion of the stewardship contract is seen as a benefit both for safety against wildfires and economically.

Moeller estimated there would be a total of 4 million board feet of timber harvested. Pro Thinning Inc., operated by Zacharias’ sons Tom and Seth Zacharias, has been contracted to do the harvesting.

“This number is a ‘total,’ and lumber is only one of numerous forest products that may be produced out of this total,” Moeller said.

The smaller logs are going to Schmidt’s IBR mill in Wallowa, while larger “saw logs” will be sold on the open market. Schmidt said some are going to Jim Zacharias’ Jay Zee Lumber in Joseph, some to the Boise-Cascade mill in Elgin, some to Woodgrain in La Grande and some to Idaho Forest in Lewiston, Idaho.

Nils D. Christoffersen, executive director of Wallowa Resources, said the project has been sought for more

than 15 years.

“When I chaired the county’s first community wildfire protection plan processes back in 2005-06, this area was one of four areas that emerged as the highest priorities based on the risk of fire, and the potential consequence that a wildfire would have on people’s lives, our community and a wide range of environmental values at risk,” Christoffersen wrote in an email.

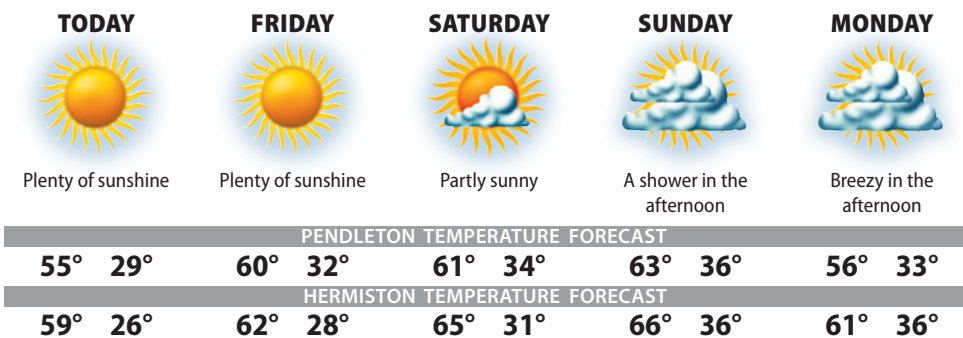
“That risk assessment, and the potential consequences in the Lostine Corridor, have not changed — if anything they have risen. If a fire broke out in the corridor last summer, when the parking lots were filled beyond capacity (from recreationists) and hundreds of additional cars were parked along the side of the road, it could have been catastrophic. Evacuation routes would have been clogged, and access by firefighting crews blocked.”

Howard, of the ODF, agreed. Earlier he noted that it’s not “if” wildfire comes to the area, but “when.”

“We’re a fire-dependent ecosystem; we have wildland fires in this county every year. The Lostine Corridor is not free from that,” he said, noting that “fire-dependent” means fire helps maintain forest health.

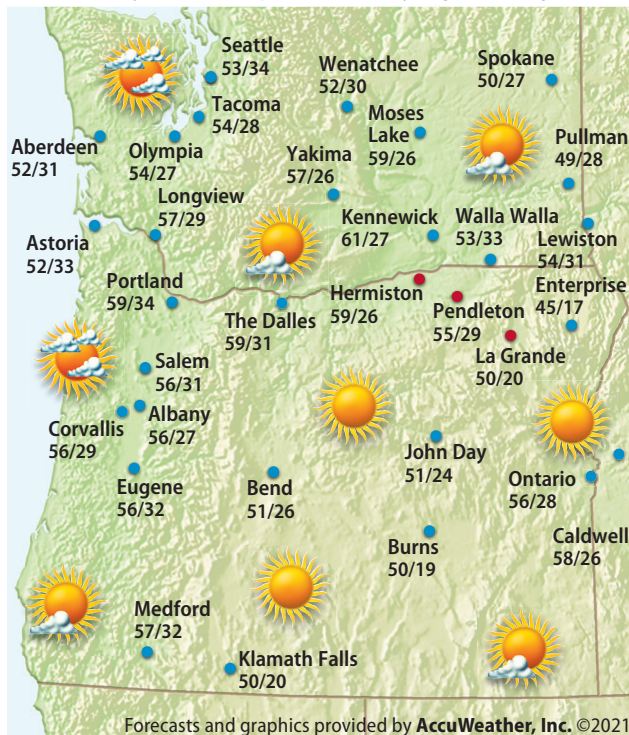
“As long as summer thunderstorms keep rolling through, we’re going to have fires, and fire’s a normal part of the ecosystem,” Howard said. “When we say ‘fire-dependent,’ we mean our forests depend on that as part of their normal cycle.”

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



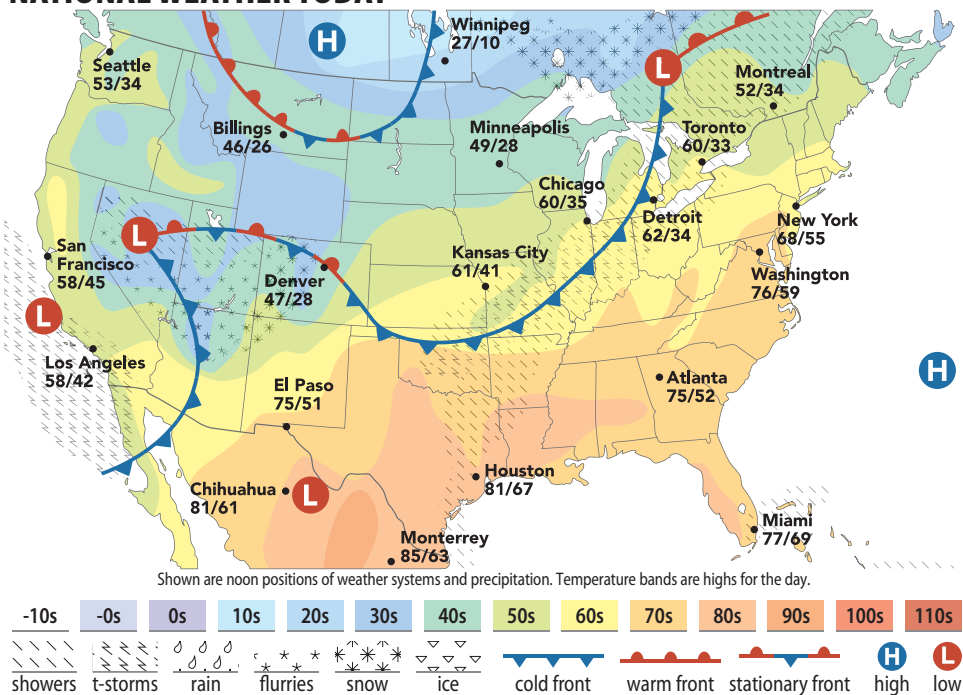
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	52°	28°
Normals	54°	34°
Records	76° (2015)	16° (1948)
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	
Month to date	0.04"	
Normal month to date	0.37"	
Year to date	3.06"	
Last year to date	4.32"	
Normal year to date	2.88"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	55°	24°
Normals	56°	33°
Records	73° (2015)	15° (1948)
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	
Month to date	0.04"	
Normal month to date	0.32"	
Year to date	1.12"	
Last year to date	0.38"	
Normal year to date	2.56"	
WINDS (in mph)	Today	Fri.
Boardman	W 3-6	WSW 3-6
Pendleton	NW 6-12	NW 4-8
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	6:15 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	5:56 p.m.	
Moonrise today	6:01 a.m.	
Moonset today	4:10 p.m.	
New	First	Full
Mar 13	Mar 21	Mar 28
		Apr 4

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday’s National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 94° in Zapata, Texas Low -6° in Stanley, Idaho

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



RV campers will pay a little more at some Oregon state parks in 2021

By **JAMIE HALE**
The Oregonian/OregonLive

SALEM — It will get a little more expensive to hook up your recreational vehicle at Oregon’s busiest campgrounds this year.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department announced a \$3 increase for electric and full hookup campsites at select state parks, in effect during the busy camping season from May 28 to Sept. 6.

The fee increase comes as the parks department continues to anticipate big revenue losses due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Last year, the department laid off 47 full-time employees and 338 seasonal employees as officials estimated a \$22 million budget shortfall by June 2021. Park officials now estimate the budget shortfall will total \$20 million.

The Monday, March 8, announcement comes just before the one-year anniversary of the closure of all Oregon state parks at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The loss of revenue as parks remained closed in the spring, coupled with losses of Oregon State Lottery

funds — which in large part fund the parks department — led to the shortfall.

“Our visitors and staff have weathered a rough 12 months,” parks Director Lisa Sumption said in a news release. “Our park staff, operating with fewer employees because of a revenue shortfall that prevented us from hiring our usual seasonal staff, have rallied and are looking forward to the coming months.”

Aside from the pandemic, Oregon’s state parks system suffered from devastating wildfires that swept across the state last summer, as well as brutal wind, rain and ice storms this winter. As the state’s busy camping season approaches, a few popular campgrounds remain closed.

Most campsites across the state have either reopened or are scheduled to reopen following closures caused by the pandemic, including Devils Lake and Cape Blanco state parks on the Oregon Coast, which recently announced their reopenings.

An out-of-state camping surcharge, implemented during the pandemic, ended on March 1 and will not be in effect this year.

Public health precau-

SOME STATE PARKS TO SEE INCREASE

Here is the full list of state park campgrounds that will see \$3 fee increases for electric and full hookup RV sites:

- Bullards Beach State Park
- Cape Blanco State Park
- Cape Lookout State Park
- Champoeg State Heritage Area
- Detroit Lake State Recreation Area
- Devil’s Lake State Recreation Area
- Fort Stevens State Park
- Harris Beach State Park
- Jessie M. Honeyman Memorial State Park
- L.L. Stub Stewart Memorial State Park
- La Pine State Park
- Nehalem Bay State Park
- Silver Falls State Park
- South Beach State Park
- Sunset Bay State Park
- Tumalo State Park
- Valley of the Rogue State Park
- Wallowa Lake State Park
- William M. Tugman State Park

tions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 remain in place at state park campgrounds.

IN BRIEF

Patrols to increase at Malheur County’s Snively Hot Springs

VALE — The Bureau of Land Management Vale District and local officials will soon be taking stricter measures to protect the visitor experience and natural resources at Snively Hot Springs day use area along the Owyhee River, according to a press release.

BLM law enforcement rangers, Malheur County sheriff’s deputies and Oregon State Police will increase patrols of the site beginning on Friday, March 19, and citing those violating the site rules or law governing public lands.

“We want to keep the hot springs open for the public to use and enjoy, but if people continue to ignore the rules and engage in criminal behavior, we will have to look at other options,” Malheur Field Manager Pat Ryan said. As a day use area, the hot springs is closed to use from sunset to sunrise, and camping is

always prohibited in and around the site.

“These rules have been in effect for some time, but have been lightly enforced,” Vale BLM Law Enforcement Ranger Stephanie Cox said. “Going forward, we will be strictly enforcing the nighttime closure. Those found in violation will be issued citations for trespassing and/or federal violation notices.”

Littering, illegal drug use, including marijuana, underage drinking, and driving under the influence are prohibited on public lands. Other behaviors, such as nudity, can be considered causing a hazard or nuisance.

“The BLM wants you to enjoy our public lands, but to do so responsibly — pick up your trash, stay on maintained roads and know the rules and possible restrictions before you visit an area,” Malheur County Undersheriff Travis Johnson said.

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