

New law would ban bias offenders from public wilderness

By ISABELLE TAVARES
Columbia Insight

SALEM — When Chad Brown, Navy veteran and fly fisherman, parked his car before setting out to a river, he never expected he'd return to find his brake lines cut. But they had been.

His apparent offense? Being a Black man fishing in Oregon.

Brown — who recounted his experience with backwoods bias for Columbia Insight in 2020 — was one of more than 20 Oregon residents who testified earlier this month before an Oregon Senate committee on bias they've experienced in outdoor spaces.

On April 8, Oregon's Senate Energy and Environment Committee approved legislation that safeguards the public from bias and hate crimes committed on public lands. People convicted of a bias crime on public lands or waters will not be allowed in those areas for up to five years.

Their permits, licenses and tags would be revoked for the same period for crimes committed while angling, taking shellfish, hunting or trapping.

"There are people in my district who are afraid to go to a state park, to get on a river in a boat," Sen. Lew Frederick, D-Portland, told Salem's *Statesman Journal*. "They



Renee Patrick/Contributed Photo

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believe if someone decides to harass them because of their race, their ethnicity, nothing will happen."

The Oregon State Police, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Oregon State Marine Board have expressed support for the bill.

"The conservation community cannot be silent on issues of justice, equality and access to the outdoors," said Kevin Gorman, executive direc-

tor of Friends of the Columbia Gorge, in a press release. "At a time when hate and bias crimes are increasing around the country, including here in the Pacific Northwest, we can and must do better."

Outdoor recreation 'a risky endeavor'

A bias crime, or hate crime, is propelled by bias against someone based on their race, color, religion, gender

identity, sexual orientation, disability or national origin. People convicted of a first- or second-degree crime fall under the new bill.

The legislation comes at a time when hate crimes have spiked to their highest levels in more than a decade, according to a 2020 FBI report, and when public attention, in particular, has been focused on hate crimes against members of Asian communities.

In Oregon, reported bias crimes between January and April 2020 rose 366%, according to Oregon Public Broadcasting.

The bill allows courts to sentence violators to community service, including habitat restoration and maintenance of recreation facilities.

Robin Morris Collin, professor at Willamette University College of Law, testified that public harass-

ment can not only be harmful to those experiencing the behavior, but to those witnessing it.

"These actions may exclude Black, indigenous and people of color and others including LGBTQI persons, and these effects ripple outward to others who observe and avoid these behaviors," Morris Collin said. "The combined effect makes public outdoor recreation a risky endeavor for those who do not want to confront these behaviors or the contexts in which they may become vulnerable."

Next steps

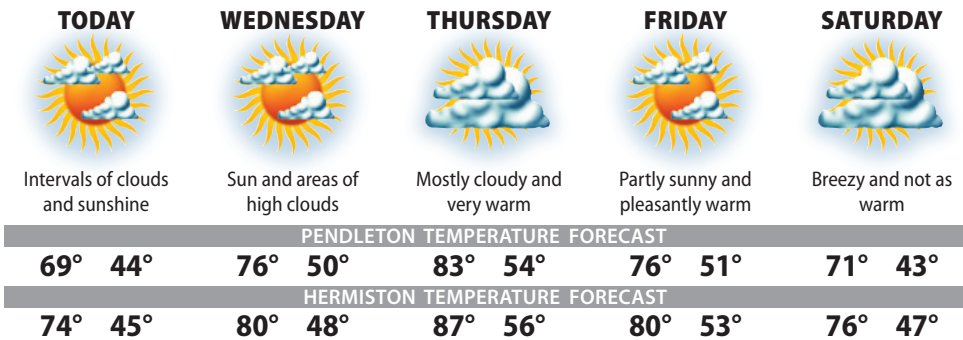
If passed into law, it's unclear how the bill would be enforced.

But violators can't roam too far. Oregon is one of 48 states that participate in the Wildlife Violators Compact, according to Shannon Hurn, deputy director of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"This Compact allows for the revocation of a license(s) to occur across all of the participating states," said Hurn during public testimony. "This prevents individuals from just applying outside the state where the criminal act occurred, and continuing to participate and harvest wildlife in other states."

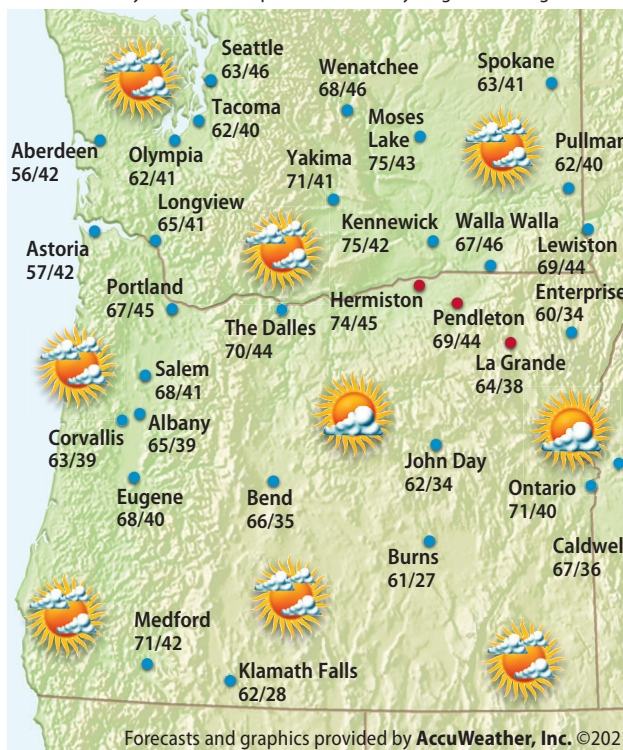
It's not known when the bill will be scheduled for a full vote of the Oregon Legislature.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



ALMANAC

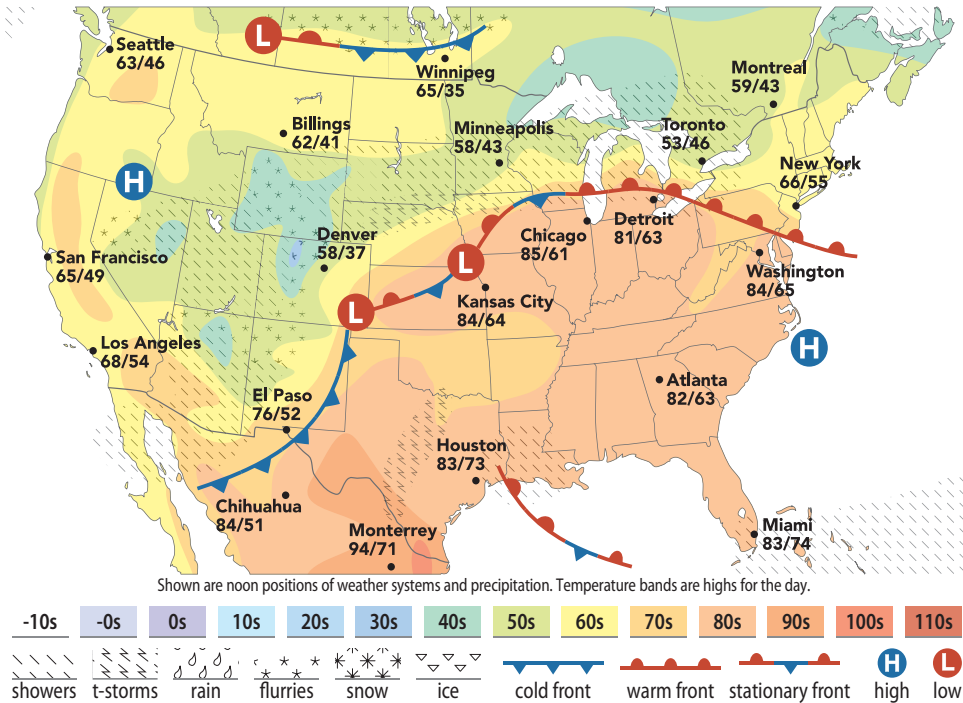
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	61°	45°
Normals	65°	41°
Records	86° (1904)	25° (1924)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.21"	
Normal month to date	1.00"	
Year to date	3.55"	
Last year to date	5.06"	
Normal year to date	4.96"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	67°	45°
Normals	68°	41°
Records	84° (2013)	25° (2008)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.08"	
Normal month to date	0.74"	
Year to date	1.28"	
Last year to date	0.51"	
Normal year to date	3.85"	
WINDS (in mph)		
	Today	Wed.
Boardman	WSW 7-14	SW 6-12
Pendleton	W 7-14	W 6-12
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	5:49 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	7:57 p.m.	
Moonrise today	9:08 p.m.	
Moonset today	6:22 a.m.	
	Last	New
	May 3	May 11
	May 19	May 26

NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 97° in Zapata, Texas Low 14° in Truckee, Calif.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



B.1.1.7 variant now responsible for most COVID-19 cases in Oregon

By AIMEE GREEN
The Oregonian

SALEM — The more contagious B.1.1.7 variant of the coronavirus has now become the dominant strain in Oregon, and is helping fuel a fourth surge in COVID-19 despite 4 out of every 10 Oregonians having received at least one dose of vaccine, public health officials say.

B.1.1.7 was first detected in December 2020 in the U.K. as it sent COVID-19 cases skyrocketing and some studies say led to an increase in more serious disease, including a 55% increase in death. A definite answer is still unclear, however, with at least two other studies finding B.1.1.7 didn't result in more hospitalizations or severe cases.

"As the governor has said repeatedly, this really is a race between vaccination and the spread of COVID, especially the spread of the B.1.1.7 variant, which we believe now is a majority of cases in the state," Oregon Health Authority Director

Patrick Allen told a group of lawmakers last week.

Officials warned the American public in February that they expected B.1.1.7 to become the dominant strain in the U.S. by March, and one study found the variant was doubling in cases every 10 days. On April 7, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced it had become the dominant strain in the U.S. — with some estimates pinning it at 50% more contagious than the previous most common strain in the country.

It took roughly two more weeks — after the CDC's April 7 announcement — before Oregon officials concluded B.1.1.7 was accounting for most cases in Oregon, as well.

Oregon Health Authority spokeswoman Erica Heartquist said there's a weekslong lag in data reporting.

In the third week of March, B.1.1.7 accounted for 8% of cases analyzed for variants. A week later, that tripled to 24% and rose to 30% by the following week.

The next week — April 4 to 10 — B.1.1.7 made up an eye-opening 53% of all cases where genomic sequencing testing had been done. That's the latest data state officials have available.

Officials say they can't extrapolate with certainty to say that by April 10 B.1.1.7 was accounting for 53% of all coronavirus cases in Oregon, because only about 3% of cases in Oregon are analyzed for variants. But the rapid rise in B.1.1.7 cases has led Oregon officials to feel confident in saying B.1.1.7 is dominating — surpassing strains first identified in California.

"This has very real implications for the surge that we appear to be entering now," said Heartquist, in an email.

New cases over the past two weeks have been accelerating faster in Oregon than in any other state in the country — with a 63% increase in the past two weeks, according to *The New York Times'* ranking of states. Oregon ranks 25th overall in new cases per capita over that same time period.

IN BRIEF

Oregon surpasses 300 COVID-19 hospitalizations, new restrictions possible

SALEM — Oregon has surpassed a trigger that could bump a dozen counties into the most extreme category of business and social restrictions meant to curb the spread of COVID-19.

On Monday, April 26, the state reported 319 hospitalizations, more than the 300 Gov. Kate Brown set as the limit to keep counties out of the "extreme risk" category in her four-level system of restrictions.

Brown is expected to announce early this week which counties will move into "extreme risk." New restrictions will take effect on April 30.

In those counties, restaurants and bars would have to close indoor dining, gyms and indoor entertainment will have to significantly reduce capacity, and social gatherings will be restricted.

Last week, Brown called Oregon's

COVID-19 statistics "horrifying."

On April 26, they were worse: Oregon now ranks first among the 50 states and Washington, D.C., on a *New York Times* analysis of where cases are increasing the fastest.

The state is third nationwide for where hospitalizations are increasing the fastest, behind Montana and Washington.

Oregon's Grant County ranks third in the country for number of cases per 100,000 residents, with 103. Umatilla County ranks first in the nation for counties where hospitalizations are increasing the fastest.

And several Oregon clusters rank on the paper's list of the nation's worst. They include outbreaks at Lighthouse Pentacostal Church in Island City, with 236 cases, an Amazon fulfillment center in Troutdale, with 180 cases, and Salem Hospital, with 158 cases.

Oregon counties expected to move into "extreme risk" are: Baker, Clackamas, Columbia, Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Linn, Marion, and Polk.

— Salem Statesman Journal

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