

USDA, Interior Department gear up for 'dangerous' wildfire year

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press



The National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, predicts 2021 will be another above-average year for wildfire potential in the West.

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Department of the Interior are gearing up for what's expected to be one of the most intense fire years in recent history.

"May is wildfire awareness month, but these days, it seems as if the fire season is the entire year," Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior, told reporters in a press call on May 13.

The National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, predicts 2021 will be another above-average year for wildfire potential in the West.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told reporters he's "troubled" the signals suggest the U.S. is "headed into yet another very dangerous fire year."

Jeff Rupert, director of the Interior's Office of Wildland Fire, agreed 2021's fire outlook is bad. Nationwide, 550,000 acres are currently burning, and the Southwest already has five large, active fires in mid-May.

More than 90% of the West is experiencing some level of drought, according to agency data. Rupert said he expects the worst fires across California, where drought is acute, but he also anticipates

wildfires will hit the Pacific Northwest in June, July and August.

"The drought now is worse than this time last year, and the fire potential across the West is worse," he said.

In 2020, more than 10.3 million acres burned across the U.S., a record year and more than 50% higher than

the 10-year average.

Haaland and Vilsack told reporters what their agencies are doing to gear up for the season.

The Department of the Interior's land management agencies and USDA are combining resources for a record-sized firefighting team for this time of year,

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection/Contributed Photo, File

including 15,000 firefighters, more than 500 helicopters, 91 single-engine airtankers, up to 34 airtankers, 360 pieces of heavy equipment and more than 1,600 engines.

These resources will supplement state and local forces.

Vilsack said USDA and Department of Interior staff

have been identifying regions where they think the highest fire risks are and pre-positioning people and supplies at those locations.

2021 will probably be better than 2020 in at least one way, said USDA staff. Firefighters who wanted to get vaccinated were able to do so this year, which

could relieve some pressure surrounding COVID-19 protocols.

Firefighting last year was a nightmare, agency leaders said, because of social distancing and safety requirements related to COVID-19.

"It was incredibly stressful," said Patty Grantham, acting director of fire and aviation management at USDA's Forest Service.

Haaland said her agency will seek to reduce wildfire risk by confronting climate change, promoting strategic fuels management, investing in new science and technology, hiring personnel, empowering communities to help reduce fire risk, and building stronger partnerships with Native American tribes.

Vilsack said he's hopeful President Biden's American Jobs Plan will pass Congress. It would invest billions of dollars in forest restoration, fuels management and post-wildfire restoration.

But the Jobs Plan, also known as Biden's infrastructure package, is controversial and lacks bipartisan support because it would increase corporate taxes.

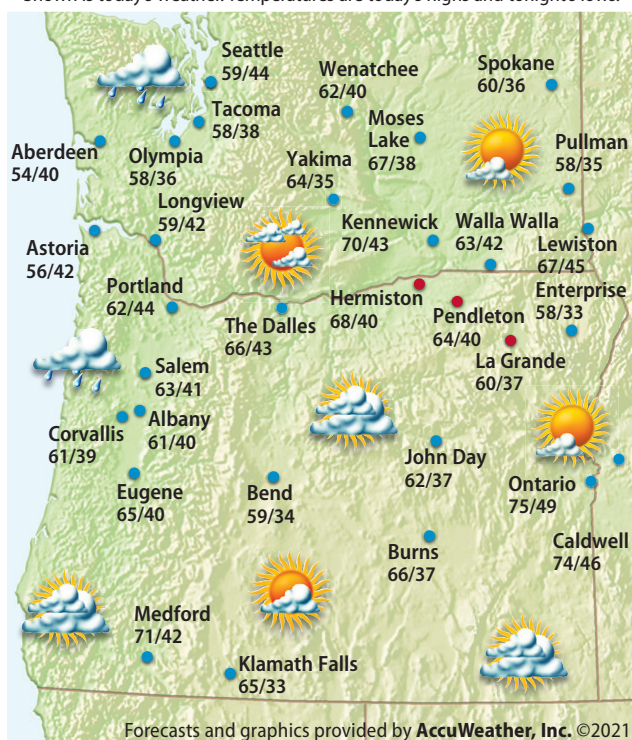
Regardless of what happens with the infrastructure plan, Vilsack said the Forest Service will request more money from Congress to fight wildfires.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Cooler; breezy this morning	A shower in the afternoon	Variable clouds, showers around	Cloudy with showers around; cool	Cloudy, a shower possible; cool
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
64° 40°	61° 37°	65° 42°	63° 42°	67° 44°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
68° 40°	67° 38°	72° 45°	71° 47°	74° 47°

OREGON FORECAST

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



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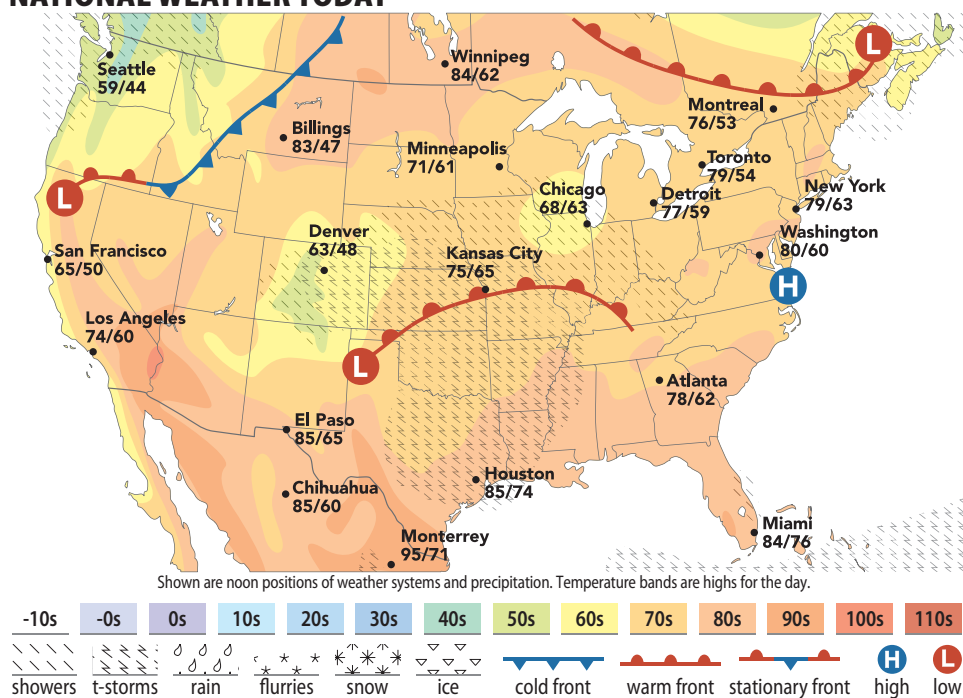
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	80°	57°	
Normals	71°	47°	
Records	97° (2008)	33° (1917)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace		
Month to date	0.26"		
Normal month to date	0.66"		
Year to date	3.82"		
Last year to date	6.20"		
Normal year to date	5.77"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	84°	66°	
Normals	73°	47°	
Records	95° (2008)	34° (1943)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.18"		
Normal month to date	0.62"		
Year to date	1.46"		
Last year to date	0.90"		
Normal year to date	4.61"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	Wed.		
Boardman	WSW 10-20	W 4-8	
Pendleton	W 10-20	W 6-12	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	5:21 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	8:23 p.m.		
Moonrise today	10:55 a.m.		
Moonset today	1:44 a.m.		
First	Full	Last	New
May 19	May 26	June 2	June 10

NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 102° in Laredo, Texas Low 25° in Sunset Crater, Ariz.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Supermoon total lunar eclipse will be visible over the Northwest in May

By JAMIE HALE
The Oregonian/OregonLive



The supermoon sets behind some southwest Pendleton homes in April 2020.

PORTLAND — A lunar eclipse this month will be a little more special than usual, occurring as the moon makes one of its closest approaches to the Earth all year.

The supermoon total lunar eclipse will take place in the early morning hours of May 26, and most of the event will be visible from the Pacific Northwest, according to astronomers.

A total lunar eclipse takes place when the Earth lines up directly between the sun and the moon, with the Earth's shadow completely covering the moon. During a lunar eclipse the moon turns a vivid shade of red — an effect of refracted sunlight — before darkening completely.

This year's total lunar eclipse will officially begin at 1:47 a.m. May 26 as viewed from Pendleton, according to Time and Date, with the total eclipse beginning around 4:18 a.m. Totality is expected to last about 14 minutes before the shadow begins to

gradually fade.

Those watching the event may notice the moon appear to be slightly larger than normal. In fact, this will be the closest a full moon will get to the Earth all year, coming within 222,023 miles of our planet. A full moon that close is often called a "supermoon," as it looks a little bigger and brighter than normal.

Stargazers hoping to watch the supermoon total lunar eclipse this month will need to first check the forecast to make sure it will be visible at all, as cloudy skies would

block it from view. If visible, you'll want to find a place with a good, unobstructed view of the sky and look for the moon over the south to southwest horizon.

There's no need to use binoculars or a telescope to see the eclipse, but it could be a fun way to watch the moon up close as the Earth's shadow falls across it.

The eclipse will be visible across most of the Western U.S., though viewing will be the best for Hawaii, the South Pacific and Australia, according to NASA.

IN BRIEF

'Oli' names took top spots for boys and girls in 2020

PORTLAND — Few people will look back fondly on the year 2020, with the possible exception of one group — new parents.

How can you not remember with joy when your little baby went from being an inside person to an outside person, even if the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic meant your outside person spent most of its time indoors?

But the real question — did these pandemic babies get pandemic baby names? Did Oregonians decide to call their bundles of joy "Corona" or "Mask"?

Well, not in droves, it appears.

Last week, the Social Security Administration released its list of top baby names in the country and in each state. So, how did the names stack up to previous years?

It was a big year for little buddies who go by "Oli."

Olivia took the No. 1 spot for the girl category, with 207 new humans receiving that name in Oregon. Oliver took No. 1 for boys,

with 234 new little Olivers.

Both names in the top spot shouldn't come as a surprise. Oregonians have been pumping out little Olis for some time.

Oliver was No. 1 in 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016, while Olivia was No. 1 in 2019 and 2016 and No. 2 in 2018, 2017 and 2015, switching off with juggernaut Emma.

For girls, coming in behind Olivia were Amelia (160 babies), Charlotte (149), Emma (148, in a major upset) and Evelyn (133).

For boys, after Oliver were Liam (189 babies), Henry (187), Noah (186) and William (167).

(Nationally, Elijah made the top five for boys, and Ava and Sophia for girls, but none of those three placed that high in Oregon.) Otherwise, the list didn't contain too many surprises, except maybe the seeds of a Beatles revival — 117 babies were named Eleanor in 2020, 70 were named John, 60 were named Lucy and 40 each were named George, Harrison and Jude.

No Pauls or Ringos made the top 100, but keep an eye out for 2021.

— The Oregonian

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