

ODF begins fire season in Northeast Oregon District

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — A drier than normal spring and stretches of warmer than normal weather has prompted the Oregon Department of Forestry to begin fire season on private forest lands in Northeast Oregon.

Fire season began at 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, June 9, for forest and rangelands protected by ODF's Northeast Oregon District.

"We've been seeing fire conditions and behavior that is more indicative of mid to late July recently," Joe Hessel, ODF Northeast Oregon forester, said. "The fuel moisture of our dead fuels is already at a point where they will readily burn, and it won't be long before our grasses have cured."

The fire season declaration places fire prevention restrictions on landowners and public. Additionally, fire prevention regulations on industrial logging and forest management activities are also in place.

"By declaring fire season, we can put measures in place to prevent human-caused fires," Hessel said. "We're already seeing fires caused by lightning, so we need to use the tools we have to minimize other ignition sources."

Lands affected include private, state, county, municipal, and tribal lands in Union, Baker, Wallowa and Umatilla counties along with small portions of Malheur, Morrow and Grant counties within the



Oregon Department of Forestry/Contributed Photo
Firefighters in July 2020 take on the Schoolcraft Fire 15 miles southwest of Ukiah. Fire season began at 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, June 9, 2021, for forest and rangelands under the protection of Oregon Department of Forestry's Northeast Oregon District.

Northeast Oregon Forest Protection District. This area encompasses approximately 2 million protected acres.

"In a normal season, we would have experienced spring moisture which typically delays the start of fire

season until later in June," he said. "This season, significant amounts of moisture have been absent. We've already had substantial fires on the landscape and it's time to do everything we can to mitigate fire starts."

County adopts burn bans amid drought

A non-agricultural burn ban began on Tuesday, June 8, to be followed by a ban to include agricultural burns on June 16

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County announced its annual nonagricultural burn ban went into effect at noon Tuesday, June 8, and an open burn ban to include agriculture would go into effect Wednesday, June 16.

According to a press release, the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners adopted the bans in a June 8 meeting "in response to serious drought related conditions in Umatilla County."

The bans include all unincorporated areas of the

county but excludes lands belonging to the state of Oregon, the federal government, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and areas that are in rural fire districts, the press release said.

The burn ban effective June 8 prohibits burn barrels, yard and garden debris piles and small-scale residential burning, the press release said. The ban effective June 16 adds agricultural burning to the list of prohibited activities.

Delaying the open burn ban until June 16 "will give

(smoke management) permit holders time to conduct" last-minute burning, the press release said. Smoke management permit holders are required to check for burn day status by calling 541-278-6397 or by visiting the Umatilla County website or its smoke management Facebook page.

Residents wanting to learn more about the burn ban or to report illegal burning can call the Umatilla County Planning Department at 541-278-6252 or Umatilla County Dispatch 541-966-3651 after 5 p.m. and on weekends.

Hermiston judge retires from military after 33 years of service

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian



Hill

SALEM — Umatilla County Circuit Court Judge and Oregon National Guard Brigadier General Daniel Hill retired from his position in the military on Saturday, June 5, according to a press release.

Hill's service ended with a small ceremony at the Major General George White Headquarters of the Oregon Military Department in Salem, the press release said.

"It was nice to see folks I hadn't seen for a while and go through the ceremony that I missed last year," Hill said.

He was scheduled to retire a year ago, but the ceremony was delayed due to COVID-19. The ceremony, which was brief and small due to COVID-19 restrictions, included an introductory statement from Adjutant General Michael Stencil. Hill then received the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit and the Oregon National Guard Exceptional Service Medal, he said.

Hill, of Hermiston, served in the military for

33 years, mostly with the Oregon National Guard, before he finished a tour as assistant

to the chief counsel of the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C. He added that he would have served longer had his tour not ended in May 2020.

"Had I been given an option and a promotion, I would have stayed," he said. "But I had a great ending. It was natural timing to retire at that point."

Before then, he served as state judge advocate, the Oregon National Guard's top legal position. He was appointed to the position in 2015 while maintaining a role as circuit court judge for Umatilla and Morrow counties.

Hill went into active duty for the Army as a lieutenant with the Judge Advocate General's Corps in 1987. Four years later, he joined the National Guard, according to news reports. In 2005, Hill was the task force staff judge advocate during Hurricane Katrina in

New Orleans. A year later, he deployed to Camp Phoenix in Kabul, Afghanistan, where he served on the task force Phoenix Five.

Hill said the people he served with is what he will remember most about his time in the military.

"You remember certain things," he said, "like large dust storms in Kabul, Afghanistan, traveling through Kabul in a small convoy of Ford Rangers. Or sitting in the New Orleans area area post-Katrina as Rita was coming in. But it's the people around you. It's all about the people you're working with, the people you're helping, the people you're serving."

Hill received several awards for his military service, including the Bronze Star Medal for his work on crime and corruption issues in Afghanistan, according to news reports. He also received a Meritorious Service Medal with three Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters and the Army Commendation Medal, the press release said.

Hill said he will continue to serve as a circuit court judge for the indefinite future.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Hermiston foundation awards grants

HERMISTON — The Greater Hermiston Community Foundation announced grants to six nonprofits and one city ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 for its 2021 grant cycle.

The endowment fund uses investment earnings on donations to the fund for grants to community projects and nonprofits in the greater Hermiston area.

Awards for 2021 were as follows:

- Domestic Violence Services, \$1,600.
- Cat Utopia, \$1,000.
- Good Shepherd Healthcare System Emergency Department, \$1,100.
- Eastern Oregon Mission, \$3,300.
- City of Echo, \$5,000.
- Hermiston Senior Center, \$2,000.
- Trucare Pregnancy Resources, \$1,000.

"Today is a special day for the Foundation and all the donors who have contributed to the endowment fund," Greg Harris, president of the Greater Hermiston Community Foundation, said in a news release. "With their help, in just over three years, we are now able to assist many great projects in the greater Hermiston community."

For more information visit www.greaterhermiston.com.

Hermiston food truck pod to close for construction

HERMISTON — Hermiston's food truck pod on the corner of Orchard Avenue and Third Street will temporarily close for construction starting July 1.

Patrick Hunt, owner of Southern Twain BBQ at



Nate Rivera/Contributed Photo

Seniors at the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center, Hermiston, show off a check from the Greater Hermiston Community Foundation.

the pod, said construction could last up to six weeks.

The food pod was started as a pilot program by the city of Hermiston in 2019. While the city council received positive feedback overall, participating food truck owners said there were other truck owners who were only interested in joining the pod if there were water and sewer hookups provided, similar to an RV park.

Construction scheduled for July will add utilities, as well as additional shade and other improvements.

In a post on Facebook announcing the closure, Hunt said it has been taking about a month for people to get food permits from Umatilla County Public Health, so if new food trucks want to join the pod once it reopens, now would be a good time to submit paperwork.

Sunset Elementary to get new leader

HERMISTON — Sunset Elementary School Dean of Students Erin Andreason will be promoted to principal of the school next year, according to a news release from the Hermiston School District.

Andreason has worked at elementary schools in Hermiston for 14 years, including at Rocky Heights Elementary and Sunset.

She will replace Principal Jerad Farley, who is leaving Sunset to work at the district offices as director of elementary instruction.

The news release also stated Director of Human Resources Jake Bacon will continue overseeing human resources for the district, but his title will change to assistant superintendent.

Sandy mayor visits Pendleton on listening tour

PENDLETON — Sandy Mayor Stan Pulliam is on a swing through Eastern Oregon as he explores running for governor in the 2022 election.

Pulliam earlier this spring announced he is considering a run for the state's top office and would embark on a listening tour across Oregon.

Pulliam's Pendleton session to listen to the public is Saturday, June 12, 10 a.m. to noon, at Roy Raley Park, 1205 S.W. Court Ave.

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