

# Observatory expansion complete in Sunriver

Expansion first phase in a \$5 million upgrade of the nature center

By KYLE SPURR  
The Bulletin

BEND — The Oregon Observatory at the Sunriver Nature Center already has the most telescopes available for public viewing in the United States, but now it has more space for other attractions.

A major expansion of the NASA-affiliated observatory was completed last week, and visitors have been able to enjoy more room and shorter waits to use six new telescope locations.

“Even before we did the expansion, we were the largest public viewing facility in the country,” said Bob Grossfeld, observatory manager. “Now we expanded that capability and allowed for people to have more space to move around and look at telescopes.”

The expansion is the first phase in a \$5 million upgrade of the nature center.

The second phase is scheduled to start in 2023. It will feature a 7,700-square-foot Discovery Center that will include a planetarium theater with a full projection system and seating for up to 94 visitors. The center also will build an 1,800-square-foot pavilion on the back of Lake Aspen.

Abby Rowland, executive director of the nature center, said more than \$2.5 million has been raised

so far through donations and grants, enough to complete the first phase and plan for the future developments.

“The whole purpose for the campaign is to broaden our reach and to serve as a platform for science education,” Rowland said. “Having the newly expanded observatory starts us on the path for that.”

Rowland said the nature center has outgrown its campus. The nature center and observatory were built in 1984 and designed to accommodate 5,000 to 10,000 visitors each year. But the number of visitors has increased to about 50,000 annually.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the observatory would draw about 400 people on busy nights.

Rowland expects to see those numbers return next summer, the peak season at the observatory.

A recent designation from the International Dark-Sky Association also is expected to bring more visitors to the observatory, Rowland said. The association named Sunriver a Dark Sky Friendly Development of Distinction, one of about 170 distinctions across the world.

The expanded observatory will be able to welcome the growing number of visitors, including those drawn there because of the Dark Sky designation, Rowland said.

“We are growing into our reputation,” she said.

The expanded observatory will host a private grand opening Tuesday, Sept. 28, for the donors



Dean Guernsey/Bend Bulletin

Bob Grossfeld, observatory manager, adjusts a telescope in the new addition at the Sunriver Nature Center & Observatory on Friday, Sept. 24, 2021.

involved in the project. Most of the walls in the new space remain bare, but the observatory staff has several plans for new exhibits.

Grossfeld said a meteorite exhibit in the nature center will move to the expanded observatory, and future exhibits will feature

rockets and antique telescopes.

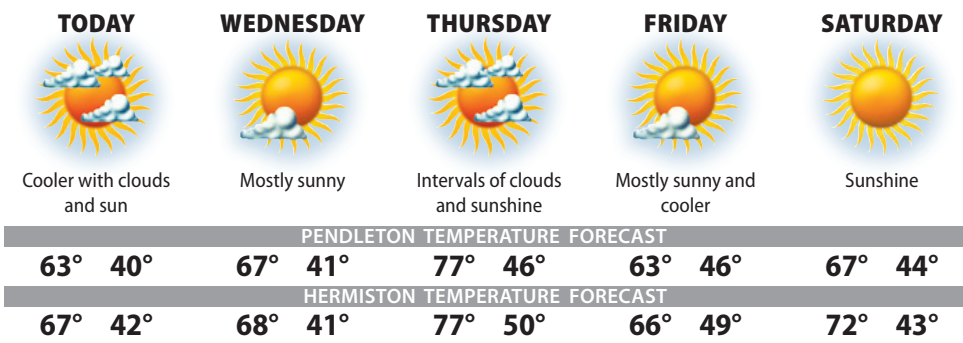
“There’s a lot more exhibit space out there than we ever had before,” Grossfeld said. “We have a bunch of blank walls to play with to put hands-on exhibits and some informational exhibits.”

A motivation for expanding the observatory was to welcome more

grade school field trips and university research teams, Grossfeld said. The pandemic canceled most field trip opportunities this year, but Grossfeld is looking forward to working with students in the future.

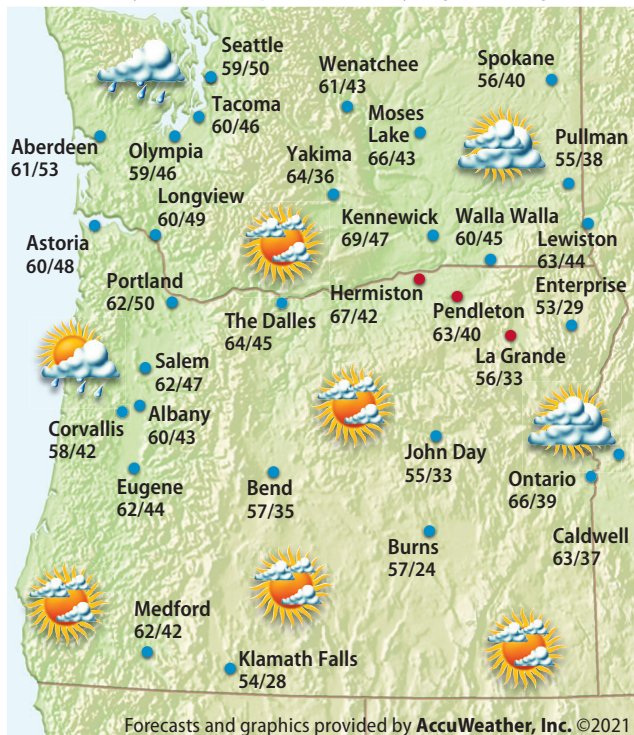
“We expect that to go back to normal,” Grossfeld said. “Hopefully sooner rather than later.”

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

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



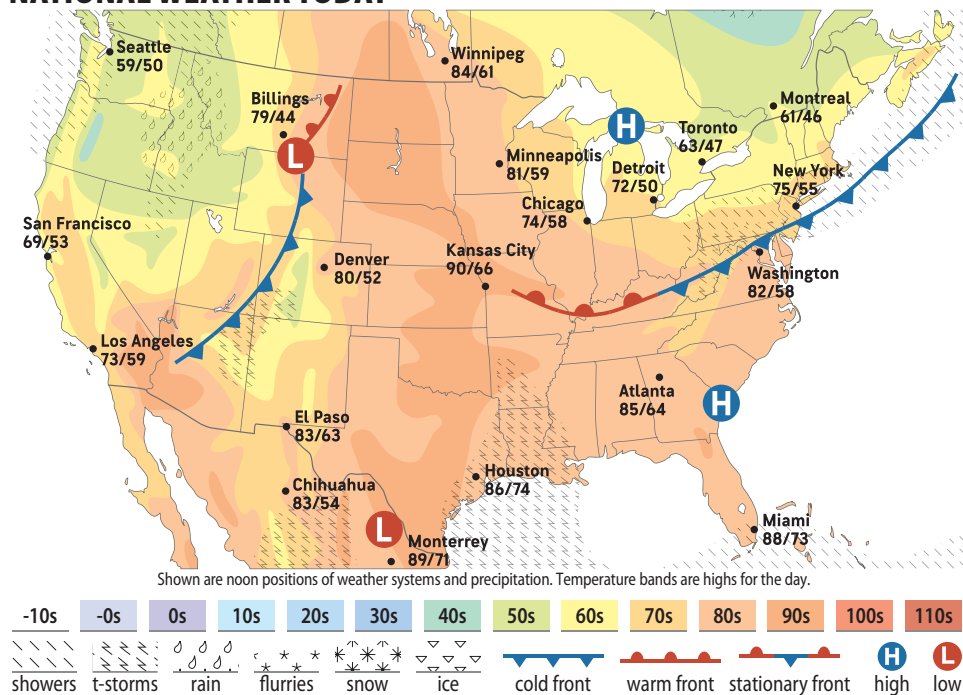
## ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.	
TEMP.	HIGH LOW
Yesterday	76° 58°
Normals	74° 47°
Records	91° (1967) 27° (1911)
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m. Trace
Month to date	0.30"
Normal month to date	0.49"
Year to date	4.67"
Last year to date	8.82"
Normal year to date	9.14"
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.	
TEMP.	HIGH LOW
Yesterday	75° 60°
Normals	77° 45°
Records	89° (1952) 30° (1945)
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m. Trace
Month to date	0.16"
Normal month to date	0.30"
Year to date	2.09"
Last year to date	1.73"
Normal year to date	5.61"
WINDS (in mph)	
Today	Wed.
Boardman	WSW 10-20 SW 4-8
Pendleton	WSW 10-20 W 4-8
SUN AND MOON	
Sunrise today	6:50 a.m.
Sunset tonight	6:41 p.m.
Moonrise today	10:58 p.m.
Moonset today	2:40 p.m.
Last New First Full	
Sep 28	Oct 6 Oct 12 Oct 20

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 99° in Cotulla, Texas Low 21° in Daniel, Wyo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Pasco school bus driver killed in attack in front of children

By CAMERON PROBERT  
Tri-City Herald

PASCO — A Pasco school bus driver died after being stabbed Friday, Sept. 24, in front of a busload of children.

The bus driver was picking up students after classes ended for the day at Longfellow Elementary School, when a man got on the bus, said Pasco police.

It's not yet clear when or why the man boarded the bus. Police were called at 3:09 p.m. for reports of a stabbing at 301 N. 10th Ave.

After the driver was assaulted, he apparently lost control of the bus, drove over

a curb and a sidewalk before hitting some bushes and a tree at the school.

Paramedics rushed him to a Tri-Cities hospital but he died, said police.

The attacker was waiting for police to arrive and cooperated with authorities as he was arrested, said Police Capt. Bill Parramore.

Children in the bus and others outside the school were taken back inside after the attack on the bus. None of them were hurt, Parramore said. Parents were called by the school to come pick them up.

“We are devastated by the tragic loss of one of our own,” Pasco Superintendent Michelle Whitney said in a statement to

employees Friday night. “Our focus right now is on supporting our students and staff who are deeply impacted by this tragedy,” she wrote.

The Pasco School District sent school district counselors to Longfellow and the transportation office to support students and staff.

Counselors were available on weekend and Monday, Sept. 27, at both locations to provide support for students and employees.

The bus was in the turnaround lot along North Ninth Avenue about three blocks north of the Fiesta Foods grocery. The bus was leaking diesel fuel as a result of the crash.

## IN BRIEF

### Rumors of fight at high school football field unfounded

WALLA WALLA — Authorities said a supposed large fight at Walla Walla High School's football field wasn't much of a fight at all — in fact, there was no fight.

Walla Walla County Sheriff's deputy Richard Schram said the rumor of the large fight breaking out at Wa-Hi's scrimmage fields Thursday, Sept. 23, just was not true.

“There was no fight there,” Schram said. Schram said communications likely were picked up from the sheriff's office's tactical channel on local scanner radios.

Local law enforcement agencies were doing training.

“This was a (staged) scenario and nothing in real life that had happened,” Schram said.

Schram added the student resource officer, who is a sheriff's office employee contracted through the Walla Walla School District, was at Wa-Hi all day Sept. 23 and would've noticed such a brawl.

### Federal grant to give four fire departments a boost

UNION COUNTY — Firefighters with four departments in Union and Wallowa counties soon will have extra breath and be lighter on their feet.

The Imbler Rural, Elgin Rural, La Grande Rural and Joseph fire departments have been awarded a \$344,000 federal grant for the purchase of approximately 50 new air packs and 100 new air tanks.

The air packs and tanks will replace models that are becoming outdated. The tanks are made of lighter material and able to hold more oxygen, allowing firefighters to combat blazes for nearly twice as long as they do now.

Local firefighters with older tanks generally have 25 minutes of oxygen when fighting fires. The upgraded tanks will provide fighters with about 45 minutes of oxygen, Patterson said.

Patterson led the effort to get the “Assistance to Firefighters” grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The Elgin Rural, Imbler Rural, La Grande Rural and Joseph fire departments are selecting a company to buy the equipment from. The new packs and tanks will be compatible with the more modern ones most other fire departments in Union and Wallowa counties already have, allowing firefighters with different departments to borrow air tanks.

It will be at least two months before the fire departments have the new equipment.

— Walla Walla Union-Bulletin and EO Media Group

**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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