

# Reviews of pilot program largely positive

By **RONALD BOND**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — A pilot program by Hancock Forest Management on some of its Northeastern Oregon campsites is receiving an overall positive response.

The natural resource group started researching fee camping in 2019, and in that summer and the spring of 2020, began charging rental fees on a handful of its sites for overnight use, according to region manager Joe Justice.

There are 22 sites enrolled through the camping reservation company Hip Camp.

Justice said since 2017, “Hancock Natural Resource Group’s NE Oregon forests have been a part of the Access and Habitat Program through Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. This has allowed Hancock to maintain open recreational access to the public while still maintaining safety protocols on our property and meeting our fiduciary responsibility to our clients.”

Hancock began researching fee-use camping in 2019 “with the idea that they would be primarily used by hunters during archery season starting in September through rifle season ending in November,” Justice said.

“The original pilot program’s goal was to gain a better understanding of what hunter’s desired in a campsite, what the price point should be, and the amenities we would want to provide,” Justice said. “The intent of this program is

to enhance a hunter’s experience by providing the opportunity to drive into and park their vehicle in an area that has no drive-in access for day use, and allow hunters to take better advantage of early hours in the day to start their hunt.”

Justice said all the sites Hancock rented in 2021 were in the Sled Springs hunting unit north of Wallowa.

“Historically, there were campsites on the property. Therefore, we opted to select those historical locations for our sites as we knew they were more likely to be used,” he said of which sites Hancock elected to rent out. “Prices were set on presumed desirability of each site, and the amount of people that each site could hold. The highest priced sites are located inside the vehicle travel management area, which allows a camper to drive to the campsite but not hunt in a motor vehicle. Many of the sites are very large and can accommodate many campers. These large sites are priced higher for this reason. We did learn in the pilot that hunters desired lower price points for smaller groups. Based on that feedback, we now have several sites for rent that are smaller and at a lower price point.”

The prices of the 22 sites, according to hipcamp.com, range from \$35 per night to as much as \$300 per night at two locations — Mud Springs and Howard Butte. Half the sites run for \$75 or less a night, and nine of those run for \$50.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald, File

**A pilot program by Hancock Forest Management on some of its Northeastern Oregon campsites is receiving an overall positive response.**

Seven more sites are at \$100.

Price has been the most-discussed point with users, Justice said, but on the whole the project, he said, has been well-received.

“In general, the feedback has been positive,” he said. “Most feedback we have received has been on price. Last year, we offered larger sites that could accommodate more people at a higher price point. However, some have indicated that they would prefer smaller campsites at a lower price. Based on that feed-

back, we have added those types of sites to the program to better accommodate user’s needs.”

The sites still are free for day use. Hancock does monitor the sites, and will ask someone camping overnight who hasn’t made a reservation to make one or leave.

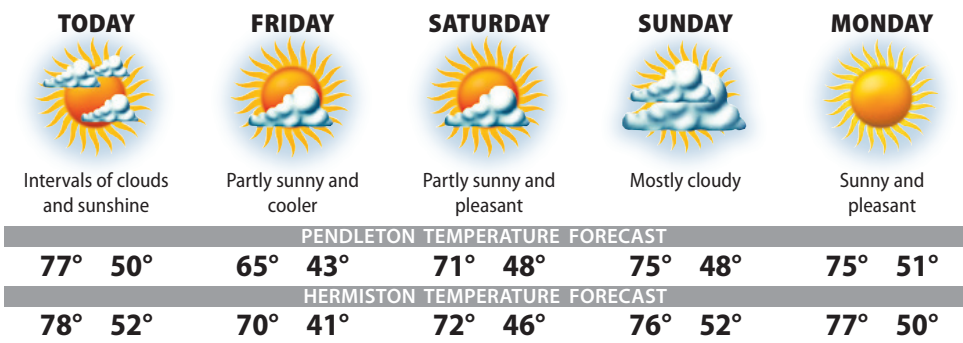
“Hancock managed lands are private property. Unlike most private property in Oregon, our lands are open to the public for a variety of recreational activities. If a member of the public chooses to disregard the rules we have in place

that help maintain safety on our lands and for our recreational users, we can take legal action if necessary. This is extremely rare. Most members of the public are respectful and appreciate the opportunity to recreate on our properties.”

Hancock continues processing feedback on the sites to determine how it will handle them in the future.

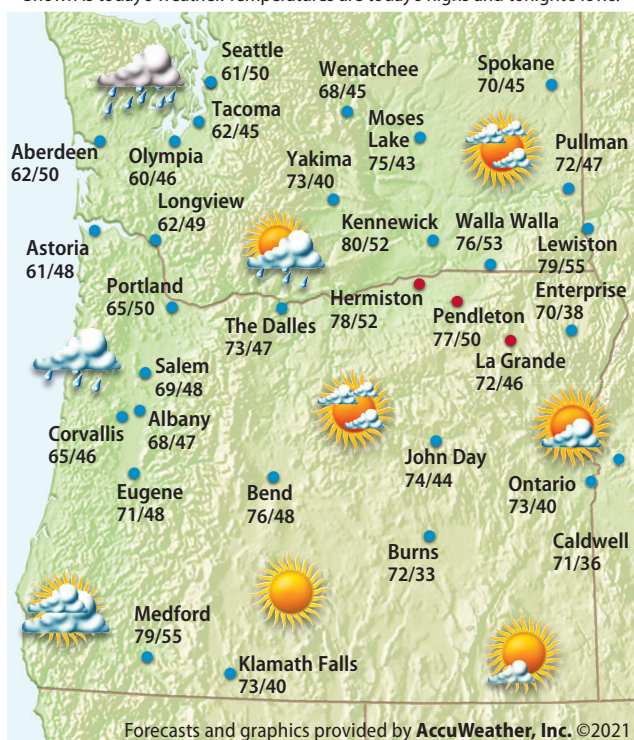
“As we receive feedback on our sites, we will be able to adjust to meet the needs and wants of those using the sites,” Justice said.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

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



## ALMANAC

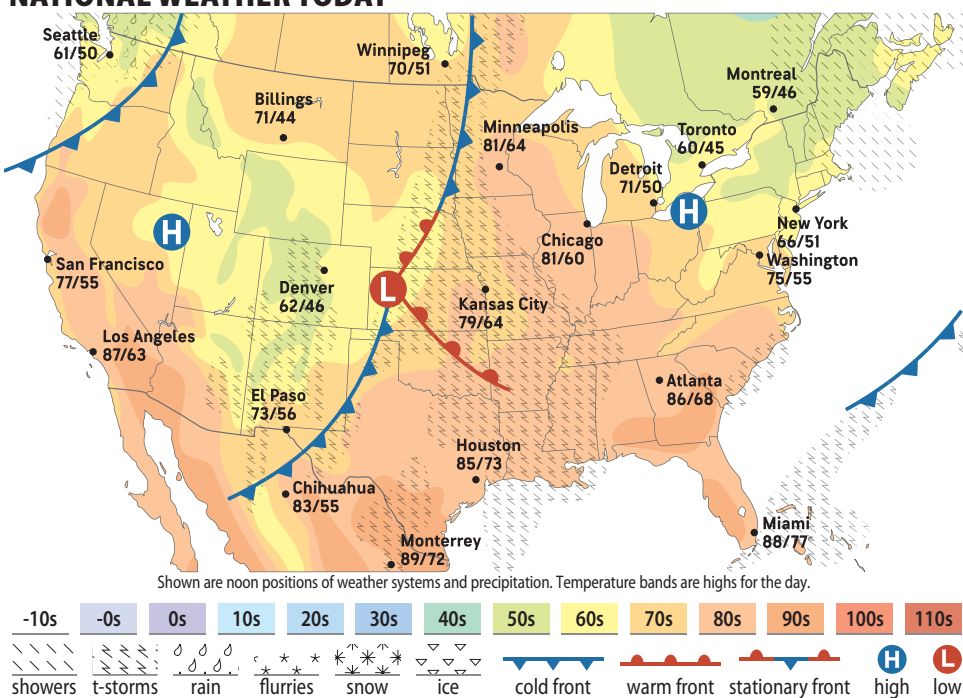
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	66°	44°
Normals	73°	47°
Records	93° (1932)	28° (1919)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.62"	
Normal month to date	0.53"	
Year to date	4.99"	
Last year to date	8.82"	
Normal year to date	9.18"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	68°	47°
Normals	76°	44°
Records	93° (1967)	25° (1985)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.71"	
Normal month to date	0.34"	
Year to date	2.64"	
Last year to date	1.73"	
Normal year to date	5.65"	
WINDS (in mph)		
Today	Fri.	
Boardman	SW 4-8	NNE 4-8
Pendleton	WSW 6-12	NW 4-8
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	6:52 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	6:37 p.m.	
Moonrise today	none	
Moonset today	4:14 p.m.	

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 99° in Zapata, Texas Low 14° in Stanley, Idaho

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## Judge stays couple’s discrimination suit

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — A federal judge has stayed a lawsuit Oregon couple brought who challenged a USDA loan forgiveness program for allegedly discriminating against white farmers.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Patricia Sullivan has put the litigation on hold to “avoid unnecessary, duplicative government action” because the plaintiffs, Kathryn and James Dunlap, are already represented in a class action lawsuit against the \$4 billion debt relief program.

The judge said the “interests of judicial efficiency weigh in favor of a stay” because it would “not unduly prejudice plaintiffs, nor would it present tactical disadvantages to plaintiffs.”

The Dunlaps, who farm near Baker City, are among several growers across the U.S. who have claimed white farmers were unlawfully excluded from the loan assistance program, which Congress passed as part of

COVID-19 relief legislation earlier this year.

Under the program, farmers who are Black, Native American, Asian, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander are eligible for payments of up to 120% of their USDA loans, which critics argue violates equal protection under the law.

“Farmers and ranchers who are white are ineligible for loan assistance, regardless of their individual circumstances,” according to the complaint filed by the Dunlaps, who have otherwise qualifying USDA loans for cattle and farm equipment.

The USDA argued their lawsuit and similar ones must be stayed because a class action case has been certified in Texas that already represents their interests while also enjoining the debt relief program.

The Dunlaps objected to the stay, arguing the class action may not adequately represent their interests, but the judge said she would follow the example of federal courts in several other states that have put similar cases on

hold. The Texas class action lawsuit “involves the same defendants, general claims, and request for relief as in the present case,” she said.

However, the judge said the Dunlaps can ask to lift the stay if they opt out of the class action lawsuit, which they and other farmers are trying to do. The couple are among a group of 12 farmers who’ve filed a motion to opt out of the Texas case because they “should be allowed to pursue their chosen claims, with their chosen counsel, in their chosen forums.”

These farmers argue the class action complaint more broadly attacks USDA programs for alleged racial discrimination while they are specifically targeting the loan forgiveness program. The class action lawsuit also includes different legal theories, they claim.

The USDA opposes their motion, arguing the Texas lawsuit is the type of class action litigation that seeks broad injunctive relief on constitutional grounds from which individual members cannot opt out.

## IN BRIEF

### U.S. alleges farmer defrauded federal insurance program

SPOKANE — The United States has filed a civil enforcement action against an Eastern Washington farmer alleging a multi-year scheme to defraud the federally backed crop insurance program.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Washington in a press release Tuesday, Sept. 28, announced filing the complaint against Rick T. Gray and one of his

companies, Gray Farms & Cattle Co. LLC, of Prosser, in U.S. District Court. According to the press release, “Gray made tens of thousands of dollars through hidden and undisclosed wheat sales while falsely claiming a wheat production loss thereby obtaining over \$500,000 in crop insurance loss indemnity payments, all of which were fully backed by the United States Department of Agriculture through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation.”

The insurance program

helps farmers nationwide.

According to the complaint, Gray in 2015 concealed more than half of the wheat production of companies he owned and/or controlled by falsely claiming to crop insurance loss adjusters that those companies sold approximately 21,000 bushels of wheat for approximately \$130,000, when in actuality his companies sold more than 35,000 bushels of wheat for about \$184,000 more in hidden and undisclosed wheat sales.

— EO Media Group

## CORRECTION

The Page A11 story “Teing off for a good cause,” published Tuesday, Sept. 28, had the wrong date listed for the event. The disc golf tournament is Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 2-3.

**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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