

# Minam River project adds 4,600 acres

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, along with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Manulife Investment Management’s timberland business, completed the first phase of the Minam River Wildlife Area project, adding more than 4,600 acres of public land to the state’s wildlife area system.

“The significance of this acquisition cannot be overstated,” said Curt Melcher, director of ODFW. “An opportunity to protect such a large swath of diverse habitat does not come along very often. ODFW has pursued opportunities to permanently protect this property since the 1960s. This acquisition would not have been possible without the leadership and funding from RMEF, as well as a strong partnership with Manulife.”

The first phase funding primarily came from RMEF and the Wildlife Restoration Program, a federal excise tax on guns and ammunition.

To complete the second phase, ODFW is working to secure additional funding through a U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Legacy program grant, which will be matched with previously secured RMEF funds to purchase the remaining 10,963 acres.

“We thank and congratulate our partners for conserving this landscape that is so important for elk, mule deer, birds, fish and other wild-



Flowers bloom along the Minam River just before sunrise in this undated photo. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife announced in November 2021 the completion of the first phase of the Minam River Wildlife Area project, adding more than 4,600 acres of public land to the state’s wildlife area system.

David Jensen/Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

life,” said Kyle Weaver, RMEF president and CEO. “While we pause to celebrate this accomplishment, we know there is still much to do to complete Phase Two of the project that covers nearly 11,000 more acres.”

This project will permanently protect crucial winter range for elk and deer. It will also continue to provide habitat for salmon, bull

trout and other Oregon Conservation Strategy species, including white-headed woodpecker, Rocky Mountain tailed frog and several priority bat species.

Once completed, the 15,573-acre property will be managed by ODFW as the Minam River Wildlife Area, the fifth-largest wildlife area in the state. The Fish and Wildlife commission approved the purchase

earlier this year.

Located about 30 miles northeast of La Grande in Wallowa and Union counties along the Minam River, the property is currently managed by Manulife Investment Management.

In addition to creating new public recreational access for hunting, fishing and other activities, the Minam River Wildlife Area will also improve access to Wallowa-Whit-

man National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands.

“ODFW will manage the property as a working landscape utilizing limited livestock grazing as well as active forest management in partnership with the Oregon Department of Forestry to improve forage conditions for wildlife,” said Nick Myatt, ODFW East Region Manager.

Recreation opportunities on the new property could include hunting, fishing, hiking, birdwatching, horseback riding, kayaking and other activities. The proposed Minam River trailhead will be established on the border shared with the Minam State Recreation Area and the wildlife area. A footbridge over the Minam River is being considered to facilitate improved public access to the historic Minam River Trail, which travels for 6 miles through the property. The trail connects recreationists to the Wallowa Mountains and Eagle Cap Wilderness in the neighboring National Forest.

Public access will be allowed from April 1 to Nov. 30 so disturbance on deer and elk is limited during the sensitive winter period. Access along the Minam River Trail will be allowed year-round.

As with other state wildlife areas, ODFW will pay fire protection fees and “in-lieu” of property taxes to maintain county tax revenues. Future management will be determined through the adoption of a Wildlife Area Management Plan.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area

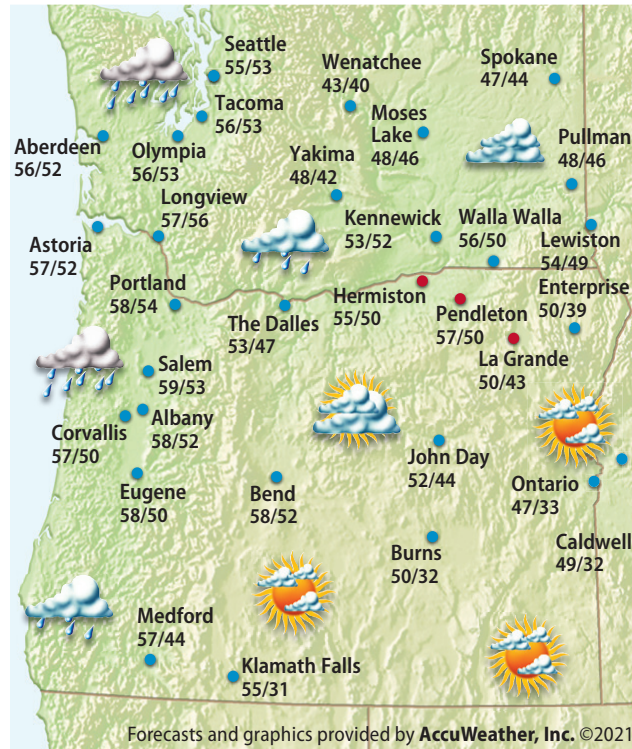
TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Cloudy and mild	Partly sunny and warm	Cloudy and mild with a shower	Considerable cloudiness	A stray afternoon shower

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
57°	50°	64°	46°	53° 37°
55°	50°	62°	45°	59° 42°

HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
57°	44°	61°	43°	61° 41°

## 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	59°	45°
Normals	45°	31°
Records	71° (1892)	1° (1993)

## PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	1.24"
Normal month to date	1.21"
Year to date	7.27"
Last year to date	12.25"
Normal year to date	11.53"

## HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	60°	42°
Normals	46°	31°
Records	67° (1933)	4° (1993)

## PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	1.14"
Normal month to date	0.92"
Year to date	5.06"
Last year to date	3.94"
Normal year to date	7.39"

## WINDS (in mph)

Boardman	ESE 3-6	WSW 6-12
Pendleton	S 6-12	WSW 6-12

## SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:11 a.m.
Sunset tonight	4:15 p.m.
Moonrise today	12:00 a.m.
Moonset today	1:14 p.m.

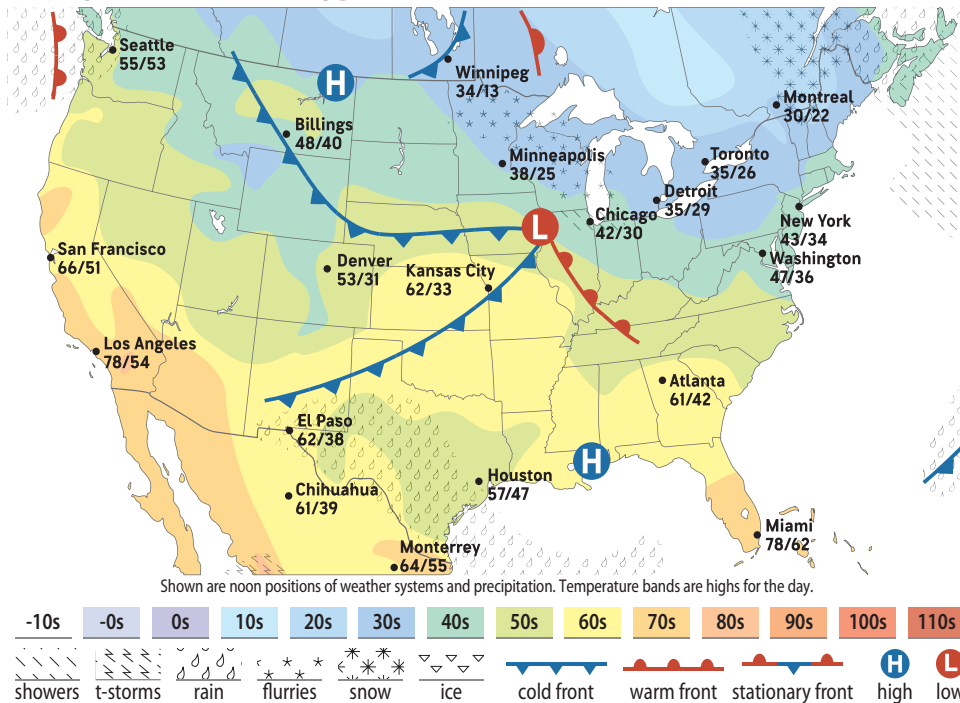


## NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 86° in Fallbrook, Calif. Low -7° in Gothic, Colo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Storytelling critical for ranching, journalist says

By GEORGE PLAVEN  
Capital Press

PENDLETON — By her own admission, Ashley Ahearn is all hat and no cattle.

A journalist for National Public Radio, Ahearn has lived and worked in major cities, including Boston, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., while covering the environment and natural resources. Four years ago, she and her husband moved to rural Eastern Washington, where she now helps move cows for local ranchers in her spare time.

But Ahearn insisted she is no rancher. Her passion is storytelling, and she is producing a podcast series about women ranchers for Idaho Public Radio.

Ranchers need to tell their stories, Ahearn told the annual Oregon Cattlemen’s Association convention, which ran Sunday through Tuesday, Nov. 21-23, in Pendleton, especially as more consumers veer toward vegetarian and vegan diets they see as more environmentally sustainable.

“The story that needs to get out is the other side of ranching, and the commitment to the land,” Ahearn said on Nov. 22.

Since swapping city life for sagebrush country, Ahearn

said she has witnessed firsthand how ranchers care for their land and animals. Riding through pastures, she can identify by sight which areas are grazed and which aren’t, and adapt management practices on the fly.

It has influenced her own reporting, causing her to see ranching through a different lens. Yet for some reason, she said not as much of that story seems to get through to the media clearly.

Part of the issue, Ahearn said, is most journalists are based in cities — that’s where the jobs are, after all. But they don’t often venture into rural areas except during a natural disaster, or a crisis like the 2016 occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Oregon.

The practice, known as “parachute journalism,” can lead to instances where news and communities are presented out of context to millions of people.

“You show up as an outsider in a strange community, you don’t necessarily speak the language and you’re on deadline,” Ahearn said. “Now that I live in a rural community and

I see journalists coming into the community—who will be the ones who talk to the journalists?”

Often, she said, the ones who talk may have extreme views that don’t reflect the broader reality. It can be harder to find other voices on the ground to challenge their claims, without knowing where to find them.



Ahearn

“There are so many divisions in this country right now, and I do think the media has contributed to that,” Ahearn said.

With the narrative on beef changing in the country, and startups in Silicon Valley investing in alternative meat technology, Ahearn said it is “game on” for ranchers, who need to be active telling their stories through the mainstream media and social media.

Ahearn said she sees food as an opportunity to rebuild some of the broken connections between ranchers and consumers — highlighting their commitment to stewardship.

“I think we’ve lost some of that connection,” she said. “I do think it starts with storytelling.”

## IN BRIEF

### Oregon lifts outdoor mask mandate

SALEM — Oregonians no longer must wear masks in public outdoor settings, state health officials said Tuesday, Nov. 23, lifting a COVID-19 pandemic mandate in place nearly three months.

The state has since late August required that everyone wear a mask in a public, outdoor space where social distancing isn’t possible, regardless of vaccination status.

The decision to lift the mandate reflected the state’s success cutting cases and hospitaliza-

tions, said Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen.

But, Allen made clear, the road to a full recovery is still long.

People should expect to keep wearing masks indoors “for some while,” Allen said, at least into next year. “We don’t know enough to be able to set a useful target at this time.”

“We are not yet at a point where we can consider relaxing mask guidelines for indoor settings,” Allen said. “We’re still dealing with limited hospital capacity for all patients.”

— 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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• Karrine Brogotti

541-963-3161 • kbrogotti@eomediagroup.com

### Multimedia Consultants:

541-564-4531

• Melissa Barnes

541-966-0827 mbarnes@eastoregonina.com

• Audra Workman

541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com

### Business Office

• Dayle Stinson

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Commercial Print Manager: Holly Rouska

541-617-7839 • hrouska@eomediagroup.com