

OSP seeks information on poisoning of eight Oregon wolves

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Oregon State Police are asking for the public's help in identifying individuals responsible for the poisoning of the Catherine Wolf Pack earlier this year in Eastern Oregon.

Oregon State Police in a press release reported Fish and Wildlife Division troopers received information in February from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife about a dead, collared wolf. Troopers responded to the area and found five dead wolves — three males and two females. It was later determined the wolves were from the Catherine Pack, with all known members present and deceased.

The wolves were southeast of Mount Harris, within Union County. Troopers and ODFW personnel with the assistance of a helicopter searched the area for anything of evidentiary value and found a dead magpie in the vicinity of the dead wolves.

The five wolves and magpie were collected and transported to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Forensics Lab in Ashland to determine the cause of death.

Fish and Wildlife troopers again received information in March from ODFW personnel of an additional wolf collar emitting a mortality signal in the same general location. A search of the area located a deceased female wolf, a skunk and a magpie, all close to the scene. All animals were collected and immediately submitted to the USFWS

lab for testing. The female wolf was dispersing from the Keating Pack.

Fish and Wildlife Troopers were initially hampered in investigating the scene due to snow levels and inclement weather. Troopers continued searching over the next few weeks as snow melted and found evidence of suspected poisoning. The evidence was submitted for testing and analysis.

In April, the USFWS submitted its examination reports with findings consistent with poisoning as the cause of death for all six wolves, the skunk and two magpies. Lab results also indicated the suspected evidence confirmed a poisonous substance.

It is unlikely that the two magpies or the skunk died from consuming flesh from the poisoned wolves, according to OSP's Stephanie Bigman, who is captain of government and media relations.

"I don't believe they died from eating the wolves. They probably died from eating the poison," she said, adding that she knows information about the case she cannot share with the public.

Two more collared wolves were found dead in Union County after the initial incidents. In April, a deceased adult male wolf from the Five Points Pack was located west of Elgin, and in July, a young female wolf from the Clark Creek Pack was located northeast of La Grande.

In both cases, the cause of death was not readily apparent. Toxicology reports confirmed the pres-



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife/Contributed Photo, File

Oregon State Police are seeking the public's help, now that its investigation into the poisoning of eight wolves in Eastern Oregon has stalled out.

ence of poison in each wolf. Based on the type of poison and the locations, the death of the young female wolf may be related to the earlier six poisonings, according to OSP.

Bigman said the wolf from the Five Points Pack died from a poison not similar to the type which killed the seven other wolves.

"It is different enough that it could be a different incident," she said.

ODFW spokesperson Michelle Dennehy said the poisonings are "terrible news," and the agency

hopes someone from the public will come forward with information to help solve the case.

"The poisoning of an entire pack is significant," she said. "We'll have a clearer picture on how that affects the overall (wolf) population after we complete our winter surveys this year."

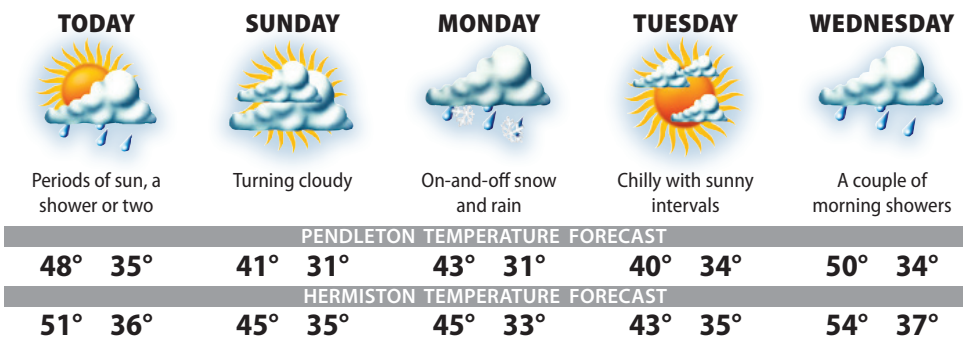
There were 173 known wolves in Oregon at the end of 2020. In addition to the eight poisonings, another wolf was poached in September in the Skull Creek drainage of the Willowa-Whitman National Forest in Eastern Oregon.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife also culled six wolves from the Lookout Mountain pack over the summer in Baker County. The wolves had repeatedly attacked livestock.

State police is asking anyone with information about the poisonings to contact the Turn-In Poachers Hotline at 1-800-452-7888, or email TIP@state.or.us referencing case number SP21-033033.

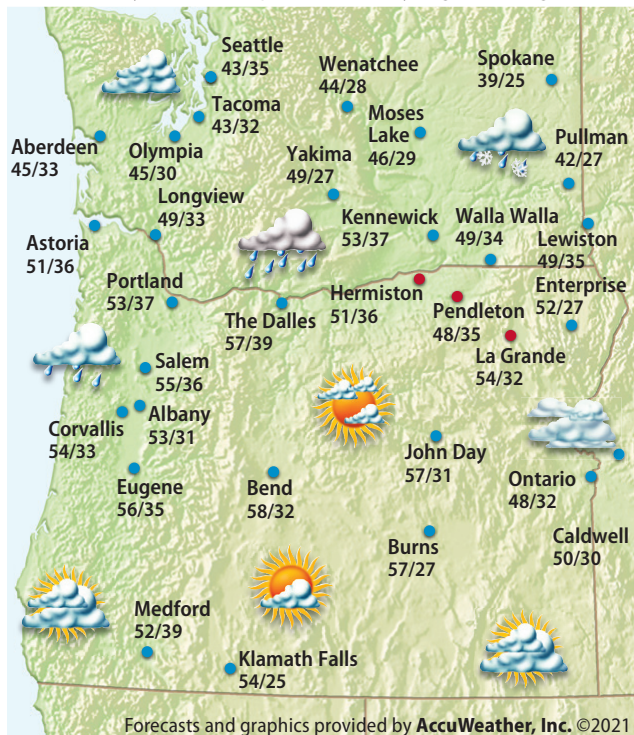
— *Capital Press reporter George Plaven contributed to this report.*

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	48°	29°
Normals	43°	29°
Records	64° (1975)	10° (2013)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.00"
Normal month to date 0.14"
Year to date 7.38"
Last year to date 12.26"
Normal year to date 11.87"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	50°	27°
Normals	44°	29°
Records	70° (2007)	11° (1985)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.00"
Normal month to date 0.10"
Year to date 5.07"
Last year to date 3.94"
Normal year to date 7.62"

WINDS (in mph)
Today Sun.
Boardman WSW 6-12 WSW 3-6
Pendleton WSW 7-14 WSW 6-12

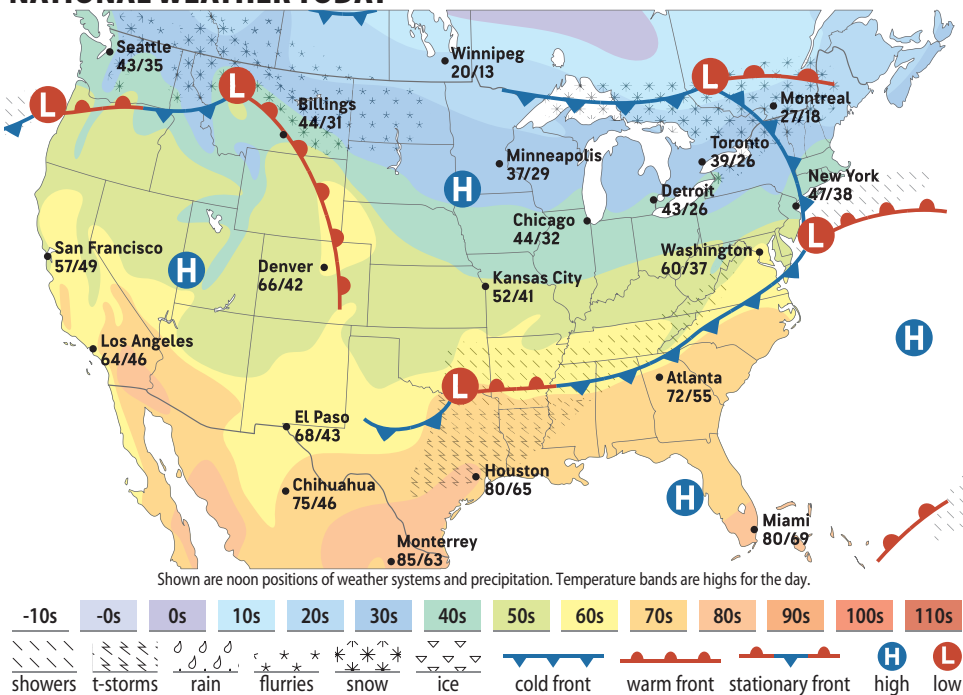
SUN AND MOON
Sunrise today 7:19 a.m.
Sunset tonight 4:12 p.m.
Moonrise today 7:56 a.m.
Moonset today 4:31 p.m.

First Full Last New
Dec 10 Dec 18 Dec 26 Jan 2

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 89° in Zapata, Texas Low 4° in Gold Butte, Mont.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Oregon farmworkers challenge exclusion of agricultural workers from overtime pay

By **JAMIE GOLDBERG**
The Oregonian

SALEM — Two Oregon farmworkers and a Salem-based nonprofit filed a petition with the Oregon Court of Appeals on Tuesday, Nov. 30, challenging the validity of state regulations that exclude agricultural workers from overtime pay.

Farmworkers Javier Ceja and Anita Santiago and nonprofit organization Mano a Mano contend in the petition that the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries has no statutory authority to exclude farmworkers from overtime pay and claim that the regulations were adopted without consideration of the health and wellbeing of agricultural workers.

The petition contends that Oregon law hasn't had a categorical exemption preventing the labor bureau from making rules to limit hours of work and require overtime pay for agricultural workers since 2017 and that the bureau's current rules are a product of an outdated statute. It also contends that the state agency failed to evaluate whether overtime pay was necessary to the health and

wellbeing of farmworkers in adopting its rules.

The petition asks the court to declare the regulations unlawful.

Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle said Nov. 30 that she has always supported overtime pay for farmworkers, but it wasn't until recently that the bureau was informed that a change in Oregon law had given it more authority over setting agricultural overtime requirements.

Hoyle said the bureau had been in the process of working with farmers and workers to enact changes to the overtime rules and that she believes the lawsuit could delay those efforts.

"Unfortunately, this lawsuit will halt that work and will delay our ability to get farmworkers their overtime wages," Hoyle said in an emailed statement. "The legal filing makes it so that we are precluded from communication with stakeholders and now all communications must be handled through the Department of Justice."

Ceja said in the petition that he has worked in the Oregon agriculture indus-

try for 40 years and has often been asked to work 11 or 12 hours per day without overtime pay. Now in his 70s, Ceja said the years of working long hours without financial security have impacted his health and he now deals with high blood pressure and stomach issues.

"Is it fair for farmworkers to not be paid time and half for our challenging work?" Ceja said in a statement provided by his lawyers at the Oregon Law Center. "I dream that I can see the day that farmworkers are not treated differently from other workers because they are farmworkers."

Petitions requesting judicial review of administrative rules are common.

While the majority of hourly employees in the United States receive time-and-a-half pay for the hours they work beyond 40 hours a week, farmworkers were intentionally excluded from that mandate back when the Fair Labor Standards Act passed in 1938.

In recent years, however, a handful of states have extended overtime protections to farmworkers.

IN BRIEF

Three people die in head-on crash

THE DALLES — Two women from Condon and a man from McMinnville died Tuesday, Nov. 30, in a fiery head-on crash.

Oregon State Police reported the troopers and emergency personnel at approximately 5:24 p.m. responded to the report of a head-on collision in the eastbound lanes of Interstate 84 near milepost 89, about 3

miles east of The Dalles.

The preliminary investigation, according to state police, revealed Colin Leas, 32, of McMinnville, was driving a Subaru Forester west on the eastbound lanes and crashed head-on into a Kia Sorrento. Both vehicles became fully engulfed in flames immediately after impact.

Jessica Treadwell, 35, of Condon, was driving the Sorrento, and Lorena Sparkman, 56, also of Condon,

was a passenger. Oregon State Police reported Leas, Treadwell and Sparkman all suffered fatal injuries.

The crash resulted in the closure of eastbound lanes of I-84 for approximately two-and-a-half hours.

The Dalles Police Department, Wasco County Sheriff's Office, Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue and Oregon Department of Transportation also responded to the crash.

— *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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