

# Waiting on Mother Nature

Anthony Lakes Ski Area needs quite a bit of snow to open

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — When you run a ski area, the term “record high temperature” might as well be one four-letter word.

A couple of early fall storms whitened the slopes at Anthony Lakes Ski Area, but that promising start devolved into a period of unseasonably mild temperatures, said Chelsea Judy, marketing director for the resort in the Elkhorn Mountains west of North Powder.

“I wouldn’t call it a (snow) base yet,” she said on Dec. 2.

That was just a day after the temperature rose to 54 degrees at the Baker City Airport, breaking the previous record high, for the first day of December, of 53 set in 2013.

But Judy pointed out that at Anthony Lakes, with the highest base elevation (7,100 feet) among Northwest ski areas, the transition to full-fledged winter can be, and often is, rapid.

“A couple of good storms” can sometimes be enough to kick off the ski season, she said.

And it looks as though

those storms are brewing in the North Pacific.

The National Weather Service is forecasting a series of strong storms to push into Northeastern Oregon this weekend and into next week.

A preliminary forecast suggests 2 or more feet of snow could fall at Anthony Lakes through Wednesday, Dec. 15. The snow base was 5 inches on Dec. 9.

Typically, the resort needs about 2 feet of snow to start running the lift, although a deeper base is required to fully open all the downhill runs.

If conditions permit, the ski area would be open daily, except for Christmas Day, from Dec. 18 through Jan. 2, closing at 1 p.m. on Christmas Eve (with \$5 off lift tickets that day).

With snow scarce across Oregon and the Northwest until now, Judy said she expects skiers and snowboarders will be eager to make their first runs when the weather allows.

“We’re definitely expecting pretty big numbers as soon as we’re able to open,” she said. “We’re all excited to ski.”

Judy pointed out attendance was up at ski areas across the nation last winter, a trend industry officials attributed in part to people looking for outdoor activities

during the pandemic.

On the viral front, Judy said this winter should be different from the last at Anthony Lakes.

Barring any new state-imposed restrictions, the plan is to open the lodge as usual this winter and have a normal parking system, she said.

Last winter, by contrast, Anthony Lakes encouraged visitors to use their vehicles as a staging spot, and although restrooms were available, the lodge was otherwise closed.

Although face masks will be required indoors, they will not be mandated in lift lines, as was the case last winter, Judy said.

One change from last winter that will carry over to 2021-22 is on the Nordic side.

Judy said the mobile Nordic “outpost” — a converted trailer — will again be parked in the Elkhorn Crest trailhead lot about a quarter-mile east of the lodge, just off the highway. The outpost will have Nordic trail passes and hot drinks, among other services.

The Anthony Lake Guard Station, which formerly served as the Nordic center, now is available for overnight rentals during the winter, an option that was popular last year, Judy said.

The trailhead parking lot has more space for vehicles



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

**A couple inches of snow covered the slopes at Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort on Sunday morning, Dec. 5, 2021. The ski area, in the Elkhorn Mountains west of North Powder, needs about 2 feet of snow for a partial opening.**

than the site near the guard station, she said.

## New options for new skiers and riders

The gentle slope near the lodge where fledgling skiers and boarders hone their technique has a new look.

And a new name — Alice’s Wonderland.

The ski area has replaced

the “carpet,” which conveyed skiers up the hill, with a covered conveyor nicknamed the Caterpillar (hence the reference to Lewis Carroll’s beloved fantasy tale).

Judy said visitors whose skills surpass the challenge of Alice’s Wonderland can move on to the Mad Hatter Handle Tow, previously

known as just the handle tow. The Mad Hatter also accesses the Rabbit Hole terrain park for beginning skiers and riders.

Future characters, in the same theme, are in the works.

Alice’s Wonderland, as distinct from “Alice in Wonderland,” honors Alice Trindle, a Baker County native and lifelong Anthony Lakes skier, and longtime ski school instructor and member of the board of directors for Anthony Lakes Outdoor Recreation Association.

Trindle recently stepped down from her board role but remains an integral member of the ski school, where she started teaching in 1978.

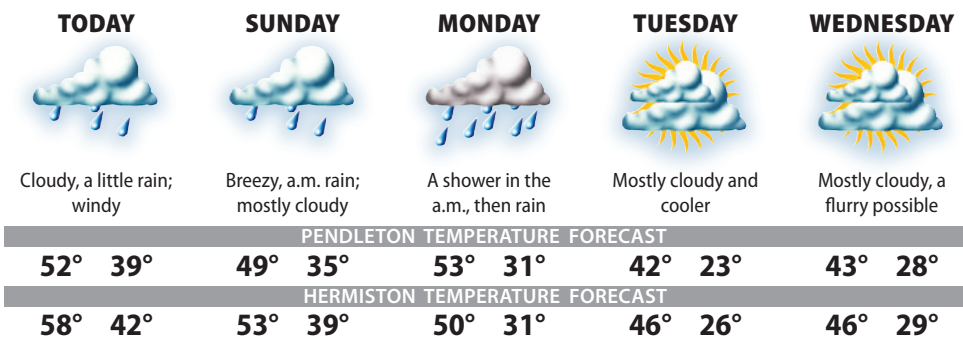
## Supporting locally owned businesses

In place of Anthony Lakes’ previous half-price Thursday lift ticket promotion, the resort is offering \$25 lift tickets on Thursdays — the usual price is \$45 — for visitors who bring a receipt showing they had spent at least \$40 in the previous week at a locally owned restaurant or shop in Baker, Union, Grant or Wallowa counties.

“We’re encouraging people to get out and shop locally,” Judy said.

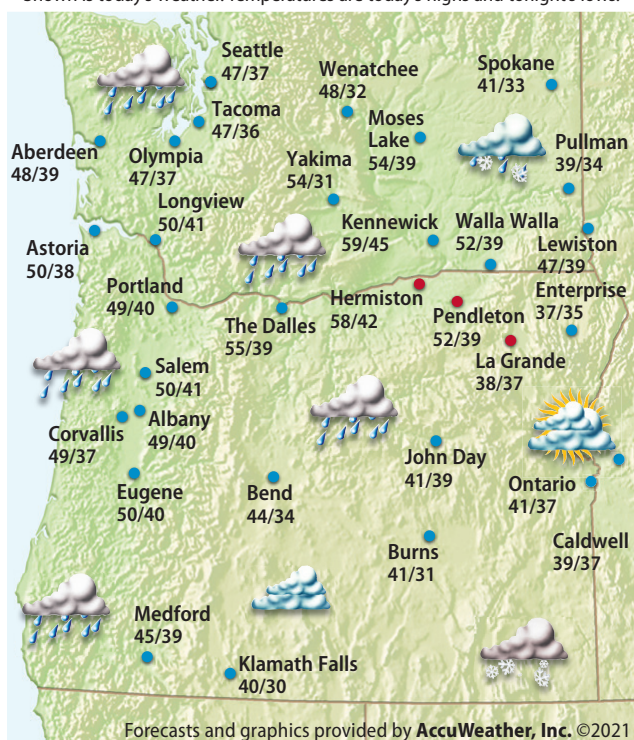
She encourages people to check the resort’s website, anthonylakes.com, for the latest snow conditions, schedules and other updates.

## 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	45°	33°
Normals	41°	28°
Records	67° (1933)	-13° (1972)

**PRECIPITATION**  
24 hours ending 3 p.m. Trace  
Month to date 0.24"  
Normal month to date 0.45"  
Year to date 7.62"  
Last year to date 12.27"  
Normal year to date 12.18"

**HERMISTON** through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	49°	31°
Normals	42°	29°
Records	68° (2014)	-11° (1972)

**PRECIPITATION**  
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"  
Month to date 0.04"  
Normal month to date 0.32"  
Year to date 5.11"  
Last year to date 3.94"  
Normal year to date 7.84"

**WINDS** (in mph)

Today	Sun.
Boardman SW 12-25	SW 7-14
Pendleton SSW 15-25	WSW 8-16

**SUN AND MOON**

Sunrise today	7:26 a.m.
Sunset tonight	4:11 p.m.
Moonrise today	12:57 p.m.
Moonset today	none

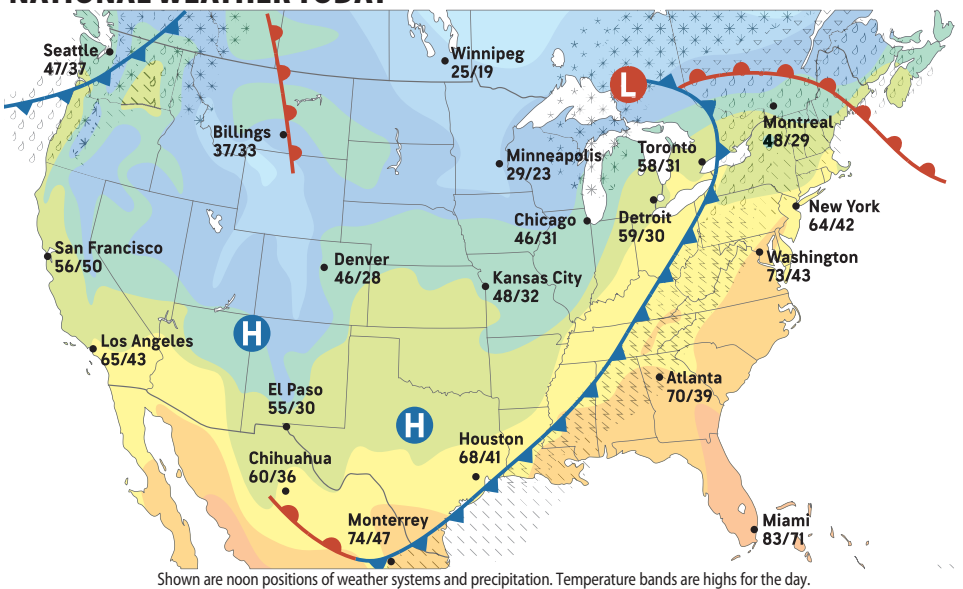
Full Last New First  
Dec 18 Dec 26 Jan 2 Jan 9

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 95° in Carrizo Springs, Texas Low -16° in Estcourt Station, Maine

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Environmental group sues Army Corps over pollution from Columbia River dams

By GEORGE PLAVERN  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — An Oregon environmental group is suing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, claiming the agency pollutes the Columbia River with heated water, oil and other toxic chemicals at three hydroelectric dams between Portland and the Tri-Cities in southeast Washington.

Columbia Riverkeeper filed the lawsuit on Dec. 8. It alleges the Corps has failed to obtain permits regulating pollutants discharged into the Columbia River at The Dalles, John Day and McNary dams, in violation of the federal Clean Water Act.

Miles Johnson, senior attorney for Columbia Riverkeeper, said the dams are making the river too warm for endangered salmon and steelhead.

“Our runs of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia Basin are in serious trouble,” Johnson said. “It’s really disappointing to see the Army Corps refuse to even comply with our basic laws for protecting clean water.”

According to the lawsuit, pollution is occurring daily at the dams, threatening the health and survival of anadromous fish.

Columbia Riverkeeper initially sued the Corps in 2013 over discharges. The lawsuit was dropped a year later after the agency agreed to apply for Clean Water Act permits through the Environmental Protection Agency.

Those permits still have not been issued seven years later, Johnson said.

“We don’t think anyone, especially the federal government, is above the law,” he said. “We’re asking for the Army Corps to follow the law and reduce pollution going into the river.”

Matt Rabe, spokesper-

son for the Corps’ Northwest Division, said the agency applied for the EPA permits in 2015 and takes its Clean Water Act obligations seriously.

“Our team is working tirelessly to find solutions that balance all of the purposes of the system, including the needs of fish and wildlife, flood risk management, navigation, power generation, recreation, water supply and water quality,” Rabe said.

Water temperature is one of the “pollutants” regulated by the EPA under the Clean Water Act. Both Oregon and Washington have established a maximum temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit for the Columbia River to protect salmon and steelhead runs.

Temperatures higher than 68 degrees can cause stress and disease among salmonids, leading to significant die-offs.

A recent EPA report for the Columbia and Snake rivers concluded that water temperatures regularly exceed 68 degrees at the dams between July and October.

Johnson said Clean Water Act permits could address this problem several ways. They might require the Corps to improve fish ladders at the dam, or draw down the reservoirs during the warm summer months to keep cooler water moving quickly through the system — rather than sitting stagnant and absorbing sunlight.

However, Rabe said that though the pools behind the lower Columbia River dams are considered reservoirs, they are largely not storage reservoirs but rather run-of-river facilities.

“This limits our ability to impact water temperatures by drawing down water levels in the spring,” he said.

Other users of the Columbia River system have ques-

tioned the temperature standard for salmon, arguing it is not realistically achievable and threatens the dams’ continued operations for navigation, hydropower and water supplies.

Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, said the temperature standard adopted in Oregon and Washington is setting the dams up for failure.

Northwest RiverPartners is a group based in Vancouver, Washington, that advocates for hydroelectricity, transportation and agriculture within the Columbia River system.

Looking at the EPA’s report released last year, Miller said water coming into the system from farther upstream was already warmer than 68 degrees — suggesting there is nothing dam operators can do to meet the target.

While the lawsuit does not specifically mention breaching dams, Miller said unachievable temperature standards could be used as a mechanism to further argue for dam removal.

“I think it gets at the motivation they’re going for,” he said.

Scientific research into the effect of dams on river temperatures is also mixed. In 2002, the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Washington, published a study indicating dams might actually offer a degree of protection, since it takes longer for larger bodies of water to heat than smaller waterways.

Combined with producing carbon-free electricity, Miller said productive hydroelectric dams should be part of the solution to combating climate change and keeping waters cool for fish.

**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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