

# Wildland firefighters get rappel training

By STEVEN MITCHELL

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Helicopters hovering over the Malheur National Forest are a telltale sign that fire season has arrived in Grant County.

Last week, the Grant County Regional Airport was the jumping-off point for essential training for a select group of wildland firefighters as the U.S. Forest Service hosted its yearly rappel certification training course.

Roughly 60 returning rappellers from Oregon and Idaho dangled from helicopters hundreds of feet in the air to practice rappelling, a method of descending rapidly using ropes and climbing hardware. They also participated in mock-ups and reviewed emergency procedures.

Adam Kahler, a national rappel specialist who started as a rappeller in Grant County in the early 2000s, said the training from May 2-7 was one of two annual recertification events the U.S. Forest Service hosts each year. There's also a rookie training in Salmon, Idaho.

Rappel-trained firefighters are an elite group. According to Kahler, there are just 300 Forest Service rappellers nationwide.

Last week's training was



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

A firefighter participates in a training May 5, 2022, during the U.S. Forest Service's national rappel certification training at the Grant County Regional Airport near John Day.

for veteran rappellers. Some, Kahler said, were coming back for their 15th year, while others were coming back for their second or third season.

The training session, he said, is a chance not only to come back and do crew training but it also provides an opportunity for multiple crews — rappellers, helicopter spotters and pilots — to work together again.

Kahler said a rappel crew's specialty is roping into small,

remote, quick-response fires.

All of the training is standardized. So, when a crew is called out, depending on the location, they can be on a fire in as little as an hour. That's why the training is so important between the multiple crews, Kahler said.

"(Rappelling) is just a very quick, efficient way to get people on the ground where they need to be," he said.

Kahler said the rappel crews do not bring on new

firefighters. Instead, they look for experienced firefighters who bring a solid skill set with them.

When the Forest Service dispatches a crew to a remote area, they have limited supervision.

Typically, he said, each crew is between two and four people, and they go out in the woods and make decisions on their own.

"We're looking for very experienced, very fit people," Kahler said.

# Wolves kill 1 calf, injure 2 others in Baker County

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

RICHLAND — Wolves from the Cornucopia pack killed a calf north of Richland last week and injured two other calves in the same area about two weeks ago, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

ODFW biologists on May 5 investigated both cases, which happened in the same area.

In the case of the dead calf, ODFW staff found the carcass of the approximately 225-pound calf on a 5,400-acre public land grazing allotment managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

The carcass was mostly eaten, but most of the hide was intact, according to an ODFW report. Biologists estimated the calf died about a day earlier, on May 4.

They skinned the carcass and found bite scrapes on the outside and back of the calf's right rear left above the leg, with underlying trauma up to 1 inch deep to the muscle tissue. There also was trauma to the right shoulder and throat.

"The location and depth of trauma is consistent with wolf attack injuries on calves this size," according to the report.

In the second incident, a rancher found two injured calves while working cattle gathered on a private pasture. Both calves survived and are healing.

One calf was about 3 weeks old, weighing 75 pounds, and the other was about 8 weeks old and weighed about 100 pounds.

Biologists examined injuries to both calves that they estimated had happened about two weeks earlier.

Biologists shaved portions of the calves' hides. One calf had bite scrapes up to an inch-and-a-half long on the inside and outside back of its left rear leg. The other calf had bite scrapes up to an inch long on the outside of the right rear leg, and an infected wound, with multiple bite punctures, on the left rear hock.

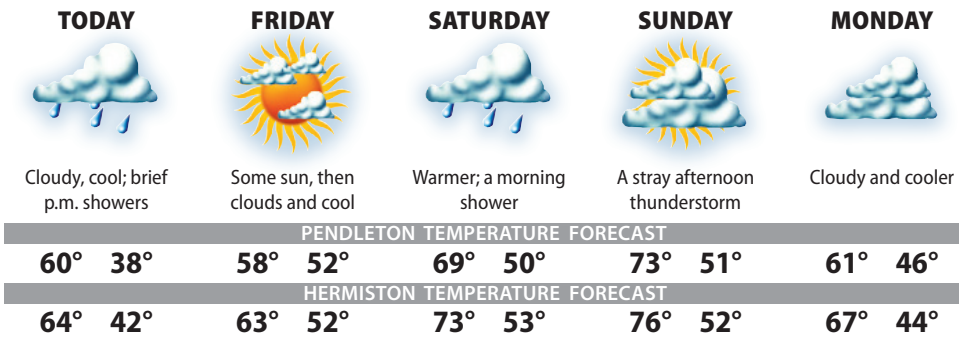
The wounds were consistent with wolf attacks on live calves, according to ODFW.

The agency also is investigating a report of another possible wolf attack reported on Saturday, May 7, at a property on Skinner Road at the northeast part of Keating Valley.

A calf was injured in that area about two weeks ago, but the animal survived.

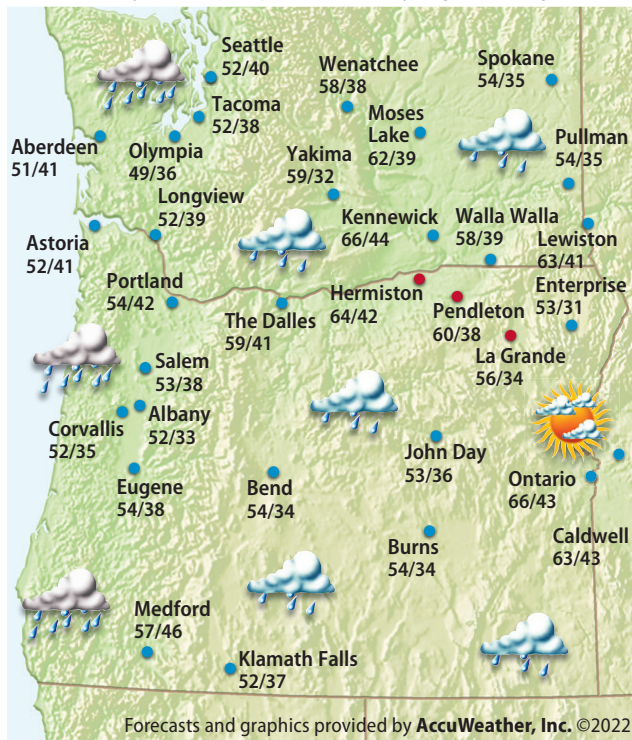
A separate wolf pack, the Keating pack, uses that area, according to ODFW.

## 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	62°	36°
Normals	71°	45°
Records	98° (1931)	28° (1911)

**PRECIPITATION**  
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"  
Month to date 0.99"  
Normal month to date 0.47"  
Year to date 6.61"  
Last year to date 3.81"  
Normal year to date 5.81"

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

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	65°	32°
Normals	76°	45°
Records	95° (1993)	29° (1999)

**PRECIPITATION**  
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"  
Month to date 0.68"  
Normal month to date 0.27"  
Year to date 4.57"  
Last year to date 1.99"  
Normal year to date 3.82"

**WINDS** (in mph)

Today	Fri.
Boardman WSW 7-14	WSW 7-14
Pendleton WSW 4-8	W 6-12

**SUN AND MOON**

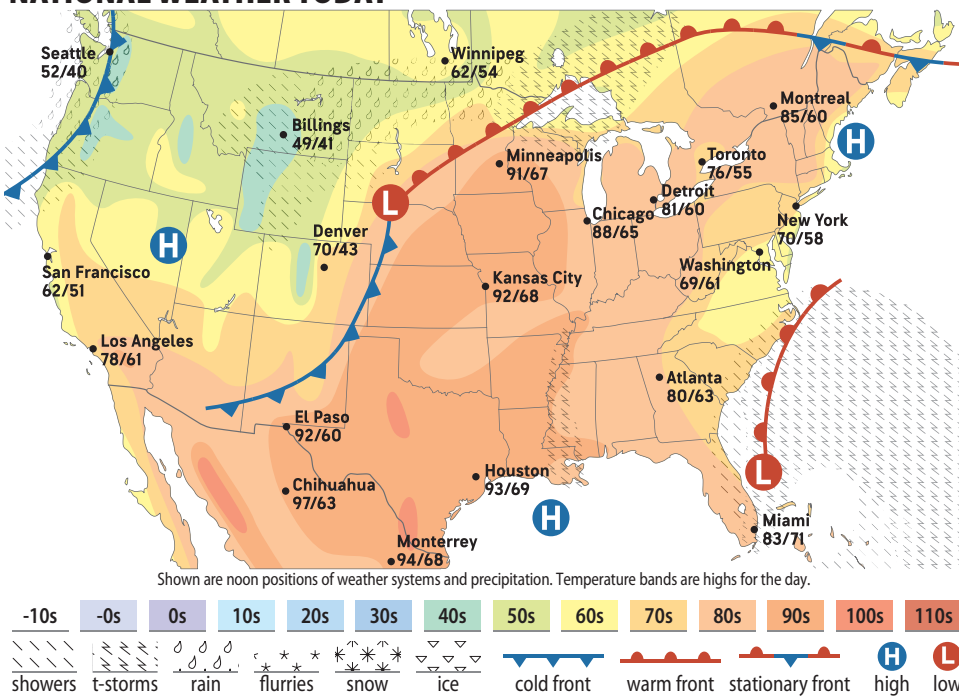
Sunrise today	5:28 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:16 p.m.
Moonrise today	4:16 p.m.
Moonset today	4:01 a.m.

Full May 15, Last May 22, New May 30, First June 7

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 104° in Presidio, Texas Low 10° in Bodie State Park, Calif.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Spring snowstorms transform Northeastern Oregon snowpack

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — April showers couldn't completely make up for a meager winter snowpack in the mountains of Northeastern Oregon.

But the month put on a pretty fair rally.

And so far May has maintained the momentum, with snow falling not only in the mountains but also, most recently on Sunday, May 8, and Monday, May 9, in the valleys.

A persistent weather pattern over the past month that has pushed cool storms through the region regularly, laden with Pacific moisture, has transformed a paltry snowpack into one that, in some places, has soared well above average.

Statistics illustrate how stark the reversal has been.

During March, which in many years is the snowiest month at higher elevations, the water content in the snow — the statistic that best predicts summer water supplies — dropped at 13 of 17 measuring sites around the region. The water content was below average at all of those places by the end of March.

But the storms of April had a profound effect.

At High Ridge, for instance, in the northern Blue Mountains near Tollgate, the water content at the start of April was 17.8 inches — 74% of average.

By month's end the water content had risen to 21.6 inches. More notably, that figure was 177% of average.

A similar trend prevailed at some other sites:

- Moss Springs above Cove — 76% of average at the end of March.
- Bald Mountain, near Moss Springs — 59% to 109%.
- Mount Howard, near Wallowa Lake — 84% to 106%.
- Aneroid Lake, Eagle Cap



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

A trail sign on the east side of Anthony Lake barely cleared the snow on Sunday, May 8, 2022.



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Fresh snow mantled the trees around the Anthony Lake Guard Station, on the north shore of Anthony Lake, on Sunday, May 8, 2022.

Wilderness south of Wallowa Lake — 61% to 74%.

Jason Yencopal, Baker County emergency management director who also does snow surveys, plodded through the drifts to a meadow just east of Anthony Lake on the first day of May. He measured 64 inches of snow — up from 49 inches at the end of March.

The water content rose during April from 19.5 inches — 61% of average — to 25.5 inches, 91% of average.

One damp month can't end the region's drought, to be sure.

As of May 3, all of Northeastern Oregon was in either moderate, severe or extreme

drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

(The monitor uses a five-level rating system — abnormally dry, and four categories of drought, moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional.)

Most of Baker County remains in extreme drought, with a small part on the western side, and much of the Panhandle, in severe drought.

Phillips Reservoir in Sumpter Valley, which supplies irrigation water for more than 30,000 acres in Baker Valley, is holding just 12% of its capacity.

Thief Valley Reservoir, near North Powder, is full, and Unity Reservoir in southwestern Baker County is 92% full.

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