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WILDFIRE SEASON

Spring storms could mitigate wildfires

Last year was a record fire season for Umatilla National Forest

By EMRY DINMAN
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

PENDLETON — With summer just a month away, officials overseeing the Umatilla National Forest are cautiously optimistic that conditions this year appear to be less conducive to fire than in 2021.

Three massive fires in the Blue Mountains — the Green Ridge Fire, Lick Creek Fire and Elbow Creek Fire — that sparked last July burned through roughly 150,000 acres of the national forest land over the course of months before they were finally contained.

The Green Ridge Fire, which was started July 7 by a lightning strike, continued to smolder until mid-October.

The record-breaking 2021 fire season that blanketed the Walla Walla Valley in smoke was accompanied by record-breaking drought and heat.

Early indications say the summer of 2022 will be warmer and drier than average, but the chance of a severe heat wave akin to the one that smothered the Pacific Northwest in late June and early July 2021 is unlikely, said Washington climatologist Nick Bond.

"It would be quite surprising to have anything of that magnitude come up this year," Bond said.

April storms also helped blunt droughts in many areas of Washington and Oregon, although not quite enough to overcome a deficit since the beginning of the year.

Coupled with a summer that is predicted to be hotter and drier than normal, along with grass growth accelerated by recent precipitation, conditions are still ripe for an active, if not record-breaking, fire season.

Lingering drought conditions

The risk of a significant fire season lingers in part due to years of drought conditions exacerbated by a particularly dry 2021, said Forest Supervisor Eric Watrud during a May 9 meeting with Walla Walla County commissioners.

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Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

A motorist splashes through flooded Tutuilla Road near Southwest Nye Avenue, Pendleton, on Sunday, May 29, 2022, where overflowing Patawa and Tutuilla creeks come together.

A wet weekend

Heavy rain, flooding creeks affect Pendleton residents, businesses

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Tutuilla and Patawa creeks near and through Pendleton crested their banks Sunday, May 29, flooding yards and businesses and prompting the city to close access to roads.

The National Weather Service in Pendleton on May 28 issued a flood watch for much of Northeastern Oregon due to hours and hours of steady rainfall, which swelled area creeks and filled McKay Reservoir. The NWS on May 29 reported the following 24-hour precipitation totals from May 28:

- Pendleton at Eastern Oregon Regional Airport: .74 inches.
- Hermiston Municipal Airport: .51 inches.
- Meacham: .57 inches.
- Adams 4W: .99 inches.
- Echo: .40 inches.

John Pappas, of Pendleton, was at Store Y'r Stuff Mini Storage, 1225 S.W. Tutuilla Road, to keep an eye on his camping trailer. He said he was there around 12:30 p.m. when the water was coming through, so he moved the trailer to a higher spot. About an hour-and-a-half later, he said



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Water from swollen Tutuilla Creek washes over the driveway of property belonging to Dennis and Debbie Davis on Sunday, May 29, 2022, in Pendleton.

he might have to move it again.

The crew at neighboring Kelly Lumber Supply Inc., 1211 Tutuilla Road, hustled to move trailers from the back of their property where rushing water was more than 2 feet deep.

Jason Kelly said Tutuilla Creek has flooded the property before, but nothing like what was happening May 29.

He waded out into the stream flowing along the property to install a battery on a

fifth-wheel trailer to get its hydraulics working. The effort proved fruitful, and he and his son, Jaden Villa, were able to hook up the trailer to a Dodge Ram pickup and haul it out of the flood.

Villa trudged out as well and poured muddy water from his boots.

High waters were surrounding nearby homes on the west side of Tutuilla Road,

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USS Oregon joins the U.S. Navy

May 28 was day one in the Navy for the new fast attack submarine

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

GROTON, Conn. — A new USS Oregon on Saturday morning, May 28, officially joined the U.S. Navy during commissioning ceremonies at Submarine Base New London in Groton, Connecticut.

The Navy put the ceremonial commissioning of ships on hold for two years because of the coronavirus pandemic and only recently resumed the tradition.

The nuclear-powered fast attack submarine will be the first U.S. Navy ship to carry the Beaver State's name since 1893, when the battleship USS Oregon was launched.

The Virginia-class submarine was built at an estimated price tag of just less than \$3 billion by Groton-based General Dynamics Electric Boat Co. After its launch and sea trials, the commissioning marks the official beginning of its U.S. Navy service.



Chief Petty Officer Joshua Karsten/U.S. Navy/Contributed Photo

Crew members of the Virginia-class fast attack submarine USS Oregon stand at attention Saturday, May 28, 2022, during a commissioning ceremony for the ship in Groton, Connecticut. SSN 793 is the third U.S. Navy ship launched with the name Oregon and the first in more than a century.

Each Virginia-class submarine has had an official sponsor, a woman with a connection to the vessel's namesake state. Their role is to bring good luck to the submarine and crew, with duties including breaking a bottle of champagne over the hull of the submarine and

giving the first order after a commissioning.

While still in the White House, First Lady Laura Bush sponsored the USS Texas and First Lady Michelle Obama carried the role for the USS Illinois. In April, First Lady Jill Biden was the sponsor of

the USS Delaware, also a Virginia-class submarine.

The sponsor of the commissioning of the USS Oregon is Dana Richardson of Corvallis, the wife of former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral John Richardson.

Built to kill nuclear missile subs

The USS Oregon commissioning was the first traditional ceremony since 2019, before the pandemic hit the United States. Two Virginia-class submarines — the Delaware and the Vermont — were commissioned to join the Navy and public commemorations occurred later.

The 377-foot-long USS Oregon soon takes to sea to hunt — and if necessary, kill — Russian and Chinese "boomers," the nickname for all ballistic missile submarines that can launch nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Russians main missile submarine, the Borei-class, carries 16 RSM-56 Bulava nuclear ballistic missiles.

The Oregon fires Mk-48 torpedoes that move at 63 mph. Unlike

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