

Cool spring keeps mosquitoes at bay

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER COUNTY — Water and mosquitoes can be a combustible combination, and this spring has been a decidedly damp one in Baker County.

But the other element in the equation — temperature — has not been favorable for the bloodsucking bugs, said Matt Hutchinson, who manages the local tax-funded district tasked with controlling mosquitoes.

Although there's plenty of standing water around for mosquito eggs to hatch in and grow into larvae, the chilly temperatures that have prevailed for most of April and May have slowed the insects' progression into biting (in the case of females) adults.

"Mosquito production was a lot lower when it's cold like that," said Hutchinson, who oversees the Baker Valley Vector Control District.

The 200,000-acre district includes most of Baker, Bowen and Keating valleys.

The average high temperature during May was almost 6 degrees below average at the Baker City Airport.

April's average high was nearly 7 degrees cooler than average.

The chilly spring has kept standing water, whether from rainfall or from flood irrigation, relatively cool.

The warmer the water, the faster



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald, File

Standing water serves as a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

mosquitoes move through their larval stages, Hutchinson said.

Floodwater mosquitoes, which make up the bulk of the bugs locally early in the season, laid their eggs last fall.

Conditions changed rapidly starting in early April, transitioning from an unusually dry start to the year, Hutchinson said.

"It's been an interesting spring," he said.

Hutchinson and his seasonal staff spend most of their time during the spring applying products that kill mosquito larvae — a process known, appropriately, as larviciding.

The goal, Hutchinson said, is to minimize the population of adult mosquitoes, since they cause all the

itchy problems in the district.

With several relatively warm days during the second half of May — of the five days during the month that topped 70 degrees, four happened in the second half, including a monthly maximum of 84 on the 26th — the workload increased.

"We've been pretty busy with the larviciding the last couple weeks," Hutchinson said. "The adult numbers have been low, but we're starting to notice a few with the warmer weather."

Although the soggy spring has increased the amount of submerged acreage in the district, Hutchinson said the ongoing drought, with irrigation water likely to be in short supply, could result in a moderate mosquito population this summer.

Mosquitoes can also breed in small water sources, including bird-baths, discarded tires and almost anything else that can hold water for sustained periods.

Hutchinson recommended residents check their property for such potential breeding spots.

Trapping and testing

In addition to controlling mosquito numbers, Hutchinson and his crew maintain a series of traps across the district — baited with carbon dioxide, the same gas we exhale, which is how the bugs find us.

Hutchinson collects mosquitoes from those traps regularly and sends the dead bugs to a testing laboratory at Oregon State University in

Corvallis, where the mosquitoes are tested for West Nile virus.

Mosquitoes can transmit the virus to people through bites. West Nile virus has been found in mosquitoes in Baker County every year in the past decade except 2018 and 2020.

In 2021, the virus was detected in 19 batches of mosquitoes trapped in the Baker Valley Vector Control District. One person and one horse were also infected, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Hutchinson said he didn't have any information about the one human case.

Most people infected with the virus have no symptoms, according to the state health officials, but about 20% will have symptoms such as a fever, headache, body aches, vomiting, diarrhea or a rash.

In rare cases the virus can be fatal.

Although floodwater mosquitoes tend to be most numerous in the district early in the summer, a different species, the culex tarsalis, a permanent water mosquito, is much more likely to carry West Nile virus, Hutchinson said.

When adult mosquito numbers reach certain thresholds, based on public reports and trapping totals, Hutchinson can use both truck-mounted foggers and aircraft to spray a pesticide that kills adult mosquitoes.

More information about the Vector Control District is available at www.bvvc.org/ or by calling 541-523-1151.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

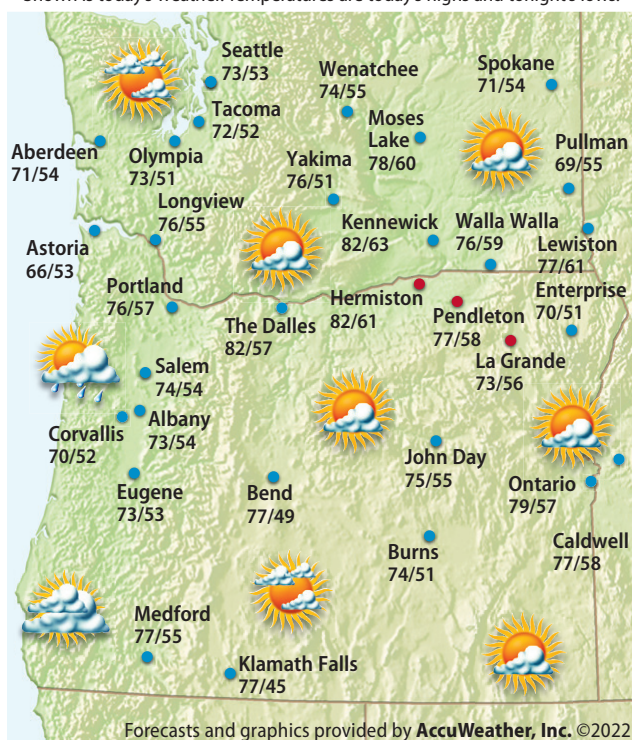
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TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly sunny and pleasant	Some brightening	Cloudy	Cloudy	Breezy with periods of rain

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
77°	58°	75°	56°	80° 61°
83°	62°	74°	58°	
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
82°	61°	81°	59°	85° 65°
88°	65°	80°	59°	

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	71°	53°
Normals	76°	51°
Records	103° (1931)	35° (1901)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.01"
Month to date 1.14"
Normal month to date 0.32"
Year to date 9.80"
Last year to date 4.02"
Normal year to date 7.16"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	73°	55°
Normals	80°	52°
Records	102° (2016)	41° (1988)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.04"
Month to date 0.36"
Normal month to date 0.18"
Year to date 6.15"
Last year to date 2.23"
Normal year to date 4.56"

WINDS (in mph)

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

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	5:07 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:42 p.m.
Moonrise today	12:44 p.m.
Moonset today	1:45 a.m.

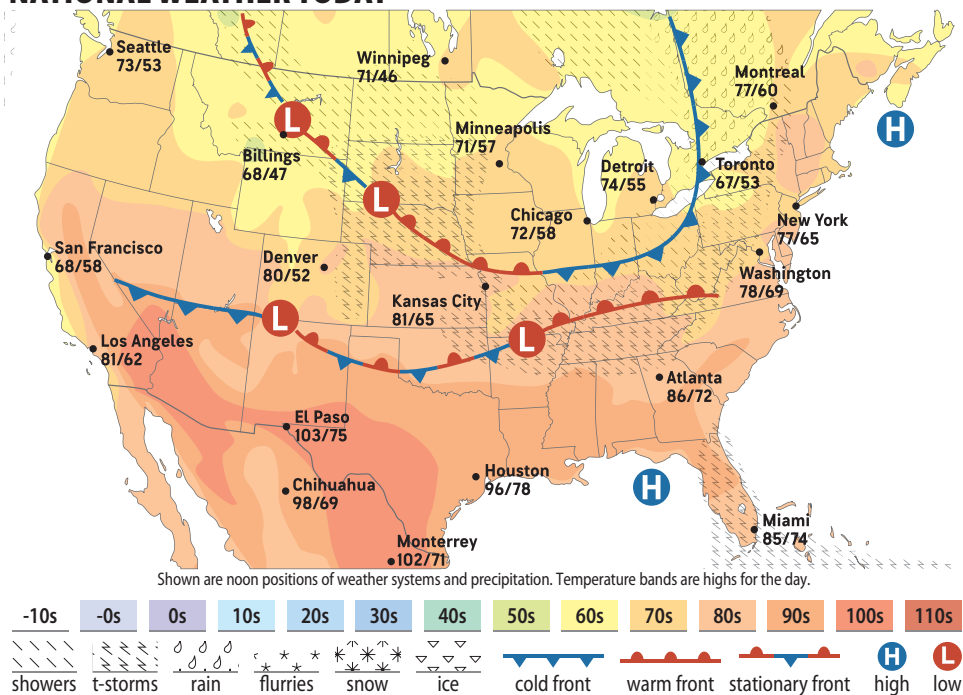
First Full Last New

June 7 June 14 June 20 June 28

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 110° in Cotulla, Texas Low 29° in Angel Fire, N.M.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



PRAIRIE CITY

Sawmill to reopen in early July

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

PRAIRIE CITY — The parent company of the Prairie Wood Products sawmill in Prairie City intends to reopen the facility in early July and plans on hiring roughly 50 employees.

The D.R. Johnson Lumber Co., Prairie Wood's parent company, announced in a press release that the sawmill will host a job fair at Chester's Thriftway in John Day on Monday and Tuesday, June 13 and 14, from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. According to the press release, the company is looking to fill a variety of jobs, from maintenance and production to management roles in human resources.

The wages, the press release states, will be "highly competitive" with a "robust" benefits package.

The Prairie City mill was purchased in 1976 by the D.R. Johnson Lumber Co. Two years later, the family-owned company added a stud mill and planer. Then, in the late 1980s, the company installed a co-generation power plant at the Prairie



Richard Hanners/Blue Mountain Eagle

The Prairie Wood Products sawmill in Prairie City closed in 2008. The company announced it plans to reopen in early July 2022.

Wood Products mill.

The sawmill, which operated successfully in Prairie City for more than 30 years and employed upwards of 100 people who worked two different shifts, shuttered in 2008 amid a housing market crash that led to a lack of available sawlogs.

D.R. Johnson restarted the mill in early 2009 but shut it down permanently by the end of the year. The

cleanup of the mill, which sits at the west end of Prairie City, concluded in 2019. Since then, much of the mill equipment has remained, along with the co-gen plant.

In the mill's heyday, Don (D.R.) Johnson expanded the facility's capacity by adding a computerized stud mill in 1981. In the late 1980s, Johnson followed that up by installing the co-gen power plant at the mill.

IN BRIEF

Oregon parks commission to meet in Enterprise

ENTERPRISE — The Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission announced Wednesday, June 1, it will tour local sites and convene June 14-15 at the Cloverleaf Hall in Enterprise.

On June 14, commissioners will tour Wallowa Lake State Park and Iwetemlaykin State Heritage Site starting at 8 a.m., followed by a work session and training at Cloverleaf Hall at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds in Enterprise.

On June 15, commissioners will convene an executive session at 8:30 a.m. at the same location to discuss real estate and legal issues. Executive sessions are closed to the public.

A business meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. and will be open to the public.

Anyone may attend or listen to the business meeting; instructions on how to listen will be posted on the commission web page prior to the meeting. The business meeting includes time for informal public comment related to any items not on the agenda. Registration is required to speak at the meeting, and is available online at bit.ly/registerjunecommission. Time per speaker is limited to three minutes. Written public comments must be submitted by 5 p.m. June 13 to chris.havel@opr.d.oregon.gov.

The full agenda and supporting documents are posted on the commission web page at www.oregon.gov/opr/CAC/Pages/CAC-oprc.aspx.

— 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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