



Vale District Bureau of Land Management/Contributed Photo  
**The Willowcreek fire burns in northern Malheur County on Wednesday, June 29, 2022.**

## Danger:

*Continued from Page A1*

Although the fire danger rating is high on BLM ground, Crouch noted that the agency has yet to impose restrictions on campfires.

Nor has the Forest Service.

That's in sharp contrast to 2021, when a dry spring resulted in an abnormally early start to fire season and to its associated regulations on public lands in Northeastern Oregon.

This year, Crouch said, "those late spring rains put a lot of moisture in the ground and greened things up."

Both Crouch and Goodrich agree that the 2022 fire season is more typical for the region, in that the fire danger, rather than rising to extreme levels even before the summer solstice, is beginning to rise only as July nears its middle.

"It feels more like a typical season from the 1990s or early 2000s," Goodrich said.

Between 1999 and 2010, about 80% of the wildfires on the Wallowa-Whitman started between July 15 and Aug. 15, he said.

Although he said statistics haven't been updated for the past five years, he suspects that there have been more fires in

the first half of July than in the past, and that the fire season has extended a bit later into late summer and early fall.

Fire danger remains moderate in most of Northeastern Oregon.

The energy release component, an estimate of how fast a fire would spread based on moisture levels in fuels, is below average in each of the six geographic zones that the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center monitors.

The numbers, which briefly went above average in late June before dropping again due to widespread rain in early July, have been rising again for the past several days.

In addition to the increasing fire danger, Goodrich and Crouch are tracking weather patterns that bring thunderstorms to the region.

That's a crucial factor, since lightning in most years ignites about 80% of the fires on public land.

(The percentage is generally lower on private land, where human-caused fires are more common.)

In the meantime, Crouch said the grasses and sagebrush that fed the Willowcreek fire will continue to be a source of easily burned fuel.

"Our fuel loading in the grasses is much higher than it was last year," he said.

## CCS:

*Continued from Page A1*

CCS has staff shortages everywhere, as do most counseling services in Oregon, Lindsay explained. But the situation is more acute in Umatilla County due to the transition from the county's former provider, Lifeways, to CCS.

"We could ask clinicians to work 60 hours a week," she said, "but then they're already burnt out. Case load is not the killer. Issues are now more complex ... stress and the pandemic have led to deeper struggles than three to four years ago. We are working more closely with law enforcement and first responders."

The Oregon Legislature recently allocated funds that raise pay and may help alleviate staffing issues, Lindsay said.

"But even after more staff is hired, it can take two to three months before they start work," she noted. "They have to give notice to their present employer, then might take some time off and finally need to go through orientation here. But I do see some hope on the horizon."

### Those in need face obstacles

Tammy Fisher, 64, said she suffers from mental and physical health conditions. She said she lives on Social Security Disability Insurance and recently moved to Pendleton from Washington state.

Fisher contacted CCS to set up an appointment. Since she hadn't been a patient with Lifeways or CCS for the past two years, the provider did not have her records.

"I was told I would have to have a mental health intake appointment before I could receive services," Fisher said. "I understand the need for intake assessment, but I was told the next appointment wasn't available until January in Umatilla County. The records from my Washington provider for the last two years could be transferred, but that wasn't an option."

Fisher has been trying to cope while waiting for an intake assessment at CCS.

She said she was running low on medications. In the Tri-Cities and Hermiston she had found general practitioners unwilling to write mental health prescriptions.

Fisher made an appointment with a local family practice doctor, hoping to get a refill prescription for her medications on Tuesday, July 12.

"Even though it was my first appointment," Fisher said, "she will write my prescriptions until I can get in the CCS system."

With her medications issue solved, Fisher said she still needs counseling. Her only alternative to mental health clinicians is a hospital emergency room.

"If I have a bout of severe depression, then I have to go the ER," she said. "But they don't do much unless you're suicidal."

Fisher faces waiting five months for assessment and admission to clinical services. She said something needs to be done to help individuals get services on a timely basis in Umatilla County.

### 'Situation is nothing new'

Umatilla County Board of Commissioners is aware of the issue and working on addressing it.

"The commissioners meet with Kimberly every four to six weeks," said John Shafer, Umatilla County commission board chair. "The situation is nothing new. It was occurring under Lifeways. We're monitoring the delays. They're improving, but not enough yet."

The county is increasing CCS funding by \$750,000 during the next three years, largely to hire more clinicians, Shafer noted. The county allocated \$200,000 in fiscal year 2021-22 and plans on boosting that to \$250,000 in each of the next three fiscal years.

Shafer also said the problem is not unique to CCS.

"It's statewide, but a situation we don't want to be in," he said. "It's not just a shortage of clinicians. Demand for mental health services has risen. Job losses during the pandemic led to a spike in daytime drinking, other addictions and depression."

## Pendleton Run



Photos by Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

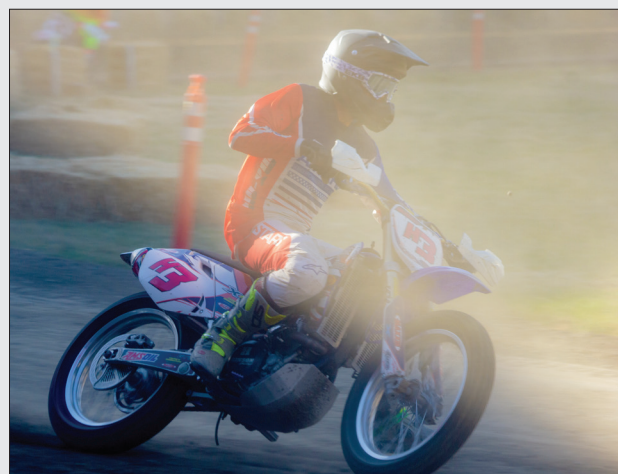
**Motorcyclists race in the Summer Chute Out III on Saturday, July 16, 2022, in the Pendleton Round-Up Arena.**



**A stunt motorcyclist flies through the air Saturday, July 16, 2022, in the Pendleton Round-Up Arena for the Pendleton Run motorcycle event.**



**Dan Stanley, 50, from Washington, gets ready for motorbike racing in the Summer Chute Out III on Saturday, July 16, 2022, on the track in the Pendleton Round-Up Arena.**



**A racer speeds across the dirt track Saturday, July 16, 2022, during the Summer Chute Out III in the Pendleton Round-Up Arena.**



Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

**The audience watches Summer Chute Out III dirt bike races Saturday, July 16, 2022, on the track in the Pendleton Round-Up Arena.**



**Motorcyclist Kenan Duncan from Washington, left, poses for a photo Saturday, July 16, 2022, in Pendleton after competing in the Summer Chute Out III, right, in the Pendleton Round-Up Arena. He said he has been racing since he was 5 years old.**



**Adam McNabb, left, and his father Ron McNabb, right, pose for photos Saturday, July 16, 2022, in Pendleton where they competed in motorbike races in the Summer Chute Out III on the track in the Pendleton Round-Up Arena. The pair are from Boise, Idaho, and have been racing and traveling together since Adam was a child.**



**Motorcyclists prepare to race Saturday, July 16, 2022, at Summer Chute Out III in the Pendleton Round-Up Arena during the Pendleton Run.**