

# Spring rains put wheat at risk of fungus growth

BY JOHN TILLMAN  
East Oregonian

ADAMS — Umatilla County's exceptionally heavy spring rains put at risk what could be a bumper wheat crop. After a nearly disastrous drought last year, the water deficit has not only been made up, but some areas have already suffered from fungus growth.

"There are problems with the moisture," said wheat rancher Bud Schmidt, former Athena mayor. "Wheat can get foot rot, and you have to spray. Or it can sprout in the head. In some lower elevations, I've seen fallen down wheat. That's a sign of the fungus."

Growers are applying quite a bit of rust fungicide, Oregon State University soil scientist Don Wysocki noted. He works at the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center near Adams.

"When you get a lot of moisture and good yield, it's beneficial to rust," he said. "At this crop stage, growers can't apply fungicide themselves. Some put it on earlier, but this late you have to apply by air, either helicopter or fixed wing airplane."

At a minimum aerial application costs \$14 to \$20, Wysocki said.

"But at today's prices that's only about 2 bushels of wheat," he observed. "The return on investment is there."

The popular soft white winter wheat variety Magic is more susceptible to rust than other strains, Wysocki explained. Many growers are treating their Magic crops with fungicide.

"Magic has yielded well," he said. "With 2-gene Clearfield production system, Magic can use Beyond herbicide. You have that option, if done earlier. It's too late now."

On balance this year has been a blessing, Wysocki continued.

"Only once or twice in a lifetime have growers seen high prices and high yield," he added. "They don't come along very often in a 40-year career. This is the kind of year in which growers end up retooling. They can afford to buy new equipment and keep it running for a long time."

Implement dealers should do well, Wysocki concluded.

No rain is in the Pendleton 10-day forecast by the Weather Channel.



A wet spring has eased drought concerns for wheat farmers, but the moisture increases the threat of fungus and other problems that reduce the value of the crop.

Associated Press, File



Philip Kamrass/Associated Press, File

Oregon State Police reported 338,330 background checks requested for gun purchases in 2021, according to a report. The total fell below the number requested in 2020 but was still higher than those for the years 2017-2019.

## OSP may renew investigations of people who fail gun checks

BY NOELLE CROMBIE  
The Oregonian

Momentum is building to reinstate a state police task force that investigates people who try to buy guns but fail background checks.

The mass shootings in Uvalde, Texas, and Buffalo, New York, and local and national calls for further gun restrictions have drawn attention to the absence of the unit.

Gov. Kate Brown has told Oregon State Police Superintendent Terri Davie to "immediately" look into ensuring the investigations are getting done.

State police also may seek additional money from the state to reinstate the unit, said Brown's spokesperson.

The agency quietly dissolved the team in late 2020, a casualty of staffing shortages.

Retired state Senior Trooper Dan Swift worked on the unit and said doing away with it was a mistake.

"This was something Oregon was doing right," said Swift, who worked out of the agency's Salem field office and retired in early 2020. "It's actually kind of a model. We can make a difference using the laws we have."

The unit formed seven years ago by then-Gov. John Kitzhaber in the aftermath of the 2014 shooting at Reynolds High School in Portland. A 15-year-old freshman, Jared M. Padgett, shot and killed a 14-year-old student, wounded a teacher, then fatally shot himself.

Padgett used an AR-15 rifle that he had taken from home.

Advisers to Kitzhaber at the time said the governor's directive stemmed from a desire to ensure police were enforcing existing gun laws. The governor, they said, saw the move as a way to push for additional gun-related restrictions.

That meant following up when someone who shouldn't have a gun tried to buy one. The unit focused on the misdemeanor crimes of lying on the federal background check form and trying to buy a gun illegally.

State police assigned five troopers to field offices in Portland, Salem, Springfield, Roseburg and Bend — among the busiest regions in the state for gun sales.

When background checkers with state police denied a gun purchase over a violent misdemeanor or stalking conviction, an outstanding warrant or any one of a dozen other disqualifiers, they sent the cases to the unit.

William Rosen, managing director of state policy and government affairs for Everytown for Gun Safety, a national gun control advocacy organization, said following up on denied gun sales is important work that most states don't bother to tackle.

Ten other states have laws or policies requiring police to follow up on denied gun sales, he said. Pennsylvania reported nearly 5,000 convictions of people who tried to buy guns illegally over a two-decade period starting in 1999.

Rosen pointed to one 2008 federally funded study showing that up to 30% of people who try to buy a gun and fail a background check are arrested within five years.

"Not in every case does it mean that someone

is going to commit a crime but certainly every case warrants an investigation, a knock on the door, some questions about what is going on here," Rosen said.

In Oregon, the troopers' investigations typically involved a time-consuming process of poring over federal and out-of-state court records for criminal convictions that in some cases were so old they were archived, Swift said.

He would track down the person to ask if they knew they were prohibited from buying a gun — interactions he said sent a message that police took seriously any attempt to circumvent state and federal gun laws.

"Not only would he not have gotten a gun," Swift said, "there would have been a follow up knock at the door by a state trooper."

But state police leaders questioned the unit's value given the agency's chronically stretched staffing, its mandate to patrol the state's highways and the generally low prosecution rates for the low-level crimes the troopers focused on.

A 2018 federal report spotlighted how three states, including Oregon, handle denied gun sales. Some prosecutors told the U.S. Government Accountability Office that the cases require significant effort and in turn "may offer little value to public safety compared to other cases involving gun violence."

Prosecutors in Oregon said the crimes were typically difficult to prove since the prospective buyer may have not intentionally tried to skirt the law.

As a result, the unit found itself on the chopping block over the years and in 2020, Davie eliminated the team, returning the troopers to patrol and referring those investigations to local police.

That year, troopers referred 297 cases to local prosecutors for review. Last year, the number dropped to four.

It's unclear the extent to which local police picked up where the state police left off.

State police track the data but required a public records request before they would release the numbers; the agency's review of The Oregonian's request for the information has been pending for more than a week.

A spot check of prosecutors' offices shows a drop in cases referred for review.

In Clackamas County, for instance, prosecutors say the referrals related to the denied gun purchases made about 5% of the office's misdemeanor caseload through the end of 2020. The office has received one referral so far this year.

The Lane County District Attorney's Office saw a similar pattern. In 2020, the office saw 75 cases related to denied gun purchases. Last year, prosecutors received a total of seven.

Grants Pass Police Chief Warren Hensman said his officers review reports of gun purchase denials and follow up when warranted.

But he said he'd prefer the work be returned to the state police. He said troopers have the expertise and statewide reach and his agency is already juggling competing demands for officers' time.

"We are struggling with homelessness, drug addiction, theft, domestic violence is through the roof," he said.

## Report: Fires, heat waves cause 'climate anxiety' in children

BY CLAIRE RUSH

Associated Press/  
Report for America

PORTLAND — Oregon health officials say the impacts of climate change, including more devastating wildfires, heat waves, drought and poor air quality, are fueling "climate anxiety" among young people.

Their findings have been published in a report that highlights youth feelings of distress, anger and frustration about perceived adult and government inaction.

In a briefing on Tuesday, June 14 hosted by the Oregon Health Authority, three young people spoke about how climate change has affected their mental health.

High school student Mira Saturen expressed the terror she felt when the Alameda Fire swept through the area near her hometown of Ashland in southwestern Oregon in September of 2020. The blaze destroyed more than 2,500 homes.

"It was a terrible and stressful couple of days as details about the fire trickled in," said the 16-year-old. Her fears were heightened by the fact that her father works for the fire department. "He was out fighting the fire for over 36 hours, which was super scary for me."

Gov. Kate Brown in March 2020 directed OHA to study the effects of climate change on youth mental health. In its report, the agency says its research was "designed to center the voices of youth, especially tribal youth and youth of color in Oregon."

The report underlines that marginalized communities are more likely to experience adverse health effects from climate change, and notes that "emerging research is showing similar disproportionate burdens in terms of mental health."

Te Maia Wiki, another high school student in Ashland, touched on this.

"For me, it's important to mention that I'm Indigenous," she said. The 16-year-old's



Lisa Chambers/Bootleg Fire Incident Command-Contributed Photo, File

In this photo provided by the Bootleg Fire Incident Command, columns of smoke from the Bootleg Fire rise behind a water tender in Southern Oregon on Friday, July 16, 2021.

mother is Yurok, an Indigenous people from Northern California along the Pacific coast and the Klamath River.

"In my mother's generation, when she was growing up, she would go to traditional ceremonies and have smoked salmon that was fished traditionally by our people on our river which we have fished at since time immemorial," Wiki said. "In my lifetime, eating that fish, seeing that smoked salmon in our ceremonies, is scarce. This is a full spiritual, emotional and physical embodiment of how I am stressed out by this and how this impacts me."

OHA partnered with the University of Oregon Suicide Prevention Lab to review literature, conduct focus groups with young people, and interview professionals from the public health, mental health and educational sectors. The interviews were conducted shortly after the extreme heat

wave that slammed parts of Oregon in the summer of 2021.

While focusing on Oregon, the report underlines broader concerns about youth mental health in the United States amidst growing rates of depression and suicide nationwide.

Climate change and the coronavirus pandemic have further exacerbated an already alarming youth mental health crisis. The number of high school students reporting persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness increased by 40% from 2009 to 2019, according to a Surgeon General's Advisory issued in December. Citing national surveys, the same advisory noted that suicide rates among young people ages 10-24 increased by 57% between 2007 and 2018.

Despite the crisis, study participants also expressed a sense of resilience.



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Intermountain  
Realty, Inc.

James Dunlap, Broker  
Cell: 541.403.0433  
Gregory Sackos, Principal Broker  
1425 Campbell Street  
Baker City, OR 97814  
Office: 541.523.4434  
[www.intermountainland.com](http://www.intermountainland.com)