

# Survey: Spring rains eased fire fears

BY MICHAEL KOHN

Oregon Capital Bureau  
Significant rainfall this spring noticeably greened up the Oregon countryside and appears to have calmed nerves across the state, according to a survey about wildfire danger conducted in June by the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center.

The survey, conducted from June 2-11, found that 60% of respondents felt wildfire was a threat to their local communities. In May 2021, that number was 68%.

The wildfire perception survey interviewed 1,446 Oregon residents 18 or older. The survey sought to gauge how concerned Oregon residents are heading into what officials have warned could be a dangerous wildfire season.

In mid-May, Gov. Kate Brown warned that this year's fire season could be extreme due to drought and climate change. But May and June were relatively cool and wet in the Pacific Northwest, lowering drought levels across the region.

Oregon's only remaining swath of exceptional drought — the highest level of drought according to the U.S. drought monitor — is in an area straddling Crook and Jefferson counties.

"Considering the extremely wet spring, it is not a major surprise that when asked about their area of Oregon, Oregonians' concern for wildfire has decreased a bit since May of last year," according to a statement from the polling group.

While the fear of fire danger in the short term has been slightly lowered, 88% of respondents expect wildfires to increase during the next 10 years. Nine out of 10 Oregonians (92%) see wildfires as a serious threat to "people living in Oregon."

However, not as many people believe they are in harm's way. Just six out of 10 respondents (60%) see wildfire as a very or somewhat serious threat in their communities. Five out of 10 people (53%) see wildfires as a direct threat

to themselves and their families.

When asked about their greatest concerns over the impacts of fire, most Oregonians (83%) said they were worried about the health impacts of smoke. Loss of wildlife and fish habitat registered as the second-highest level of concern among Oregonians, with 82% saying they had great or moderate concern.

Nearly eight out of 10 (79%) respondents had moderate or great concern about the loss of public forestland.

"We already lost so many trees to logging, we should try to save as many as we can," said Mande Seeley, a Deschutes County resident.

Another Deschutes County resident, Robin Johnson, said the best way to deal with fires is for fire officials to attack and extinguish them instead of letting forest fires burn naturally.

"The fires can quickly get out of control, so they need to be managed," Johnson said. "In addition, the smoke impacts larger portions separate

from the fire causing respiratory issues, and the fire may take out habitat."

Survey results show that 75% of Oregonians agree with Johnson. The remaining respondents lean toward or agree with, the idea of allowing a wildfire to burn out naturally.

A respondent from Polk County, who declined to be named, was blunter when it comes to managing wildfire: "We just can't let our state burn to the ground," she said.

Just how many Oregonians have had to evacuate due to wildfire? According to the survey, 19% of respondents said they have evacuated their homes due to wildfire. Some 43% of respondents said they have an evacuation plan in place.

*The Oregon Values and Beliefs Center is an independent, nonpartisan organization. The center partnered with Pamplin Media Group and the EO Media Group, which owns the Baker City Herald. The survey has a margin of error of about 2.5%.*



AI Crouch/Submitted Photo, File  
**The Indian Creek fire burns in Malheur County in August 2020.**

## Pendleton airport passenger traffic up 32% in first half of 2022

Traffic below pre-pandemic peak

BY JOHN TILLMAN

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Air travel at Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, Pendleton, was up in the first half of this year compared to last.

Departing and arriving passengers were higher every month in 2022 than in 2021. Enplanements were up 31.6% and deplanements were up 32.5% for the six-month period, according to data from the city.

There were no delayed or canceled flights during the Fourth of July weekend, according to Boutique Air's records, despite widespread chaos in the national air transport system.

Steve Chrisman, Pendleton economic development director and interim airport manager, Erica Stewart, administrative

specialist, reported Boutique in 2021 had 4,108 boardings and 3,994 disembarkations.

The first six months of last year saw 1,725 passengers deplane and 1,803 board. In the first half of this year, 2,372 passengers departed and 2,285 arrived.

Former airport manager John Honneman provided figures for previous years of Boutique's service. The effect of the pandemic on flights was dramatic, dropping from 561 boardings in January 2020 to 58 in April.

Passenger numbers have not yet recovered to their pre-pandemic peak of 642 enplanements in October 2019. That year, 6,763 passengers boarded.

Enplanements fell to 3,565 in 2020, then rose to 4,108 in 2021. If the trend for the first half of this year continues, 2022 could register more than 5,400 boardings.

## New poll shows reasons for Republican optimism in Oregon legislative races

BY JULIA SHUMWAY

Oregon Capital Chronicle

SALEM — Republicans haven't controlled any branch of Oregon government since Barack Obama's first campaign for president — but they're bullish this year about their legislative chances.

An internal poll memo produced for the national Republican State Leadership Committee and shared with the Capital Chronicle suggests that Republicans have a "rare opportunity" to win in November, thanks to low opinions of President Joe Biden and Oregon's Democratic leaders.

"Voters across Oregon have had enough and view Republican state legislators as the

remedy to get the state out of a downward spiral and back on the right track," committee spokesman Zach Kraft said in a statement.

All 60 House districts and 30 Senate districts are new this year following last year's post-census legislative redistricting. Legislative Democrats controlled redistricting, and independent analyses like Dave's Redistricting website suggest the new districts disproportionately benefit Democratic candidates.

But polls, both the internal poll released by Republicans and earlier public surveys, show that a majority of Oregon voters aren't pleased with the state's direction. More than

57% of the 600 likely voters surveyed by national GOP polling firm Cygnal between June 28-30 said the state was on the wrong track.

When asked about generic legislative candidates, nearly 35% said they would definitely vote for a Republican, and another 12% said they would probably vote for the Republican. The same numbers were 10.5% and 32% for Democrats, giving Republicans a nearly 5-point lead on generic legislative ballots.

About 52% of respondents said they disapproved of the job legislative Democrats were doing, and 57% said government would work better with a more partisan balance.



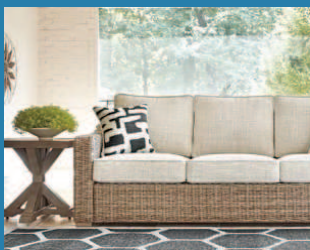
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