

HAIL STORM POUNDS WALLOWA COUNTY



Nicole Bellows/Contributed Photo

This photo, submitted by Nicole Bellows, of Lostine, shows unique storm clouds rolling through Wallowa County on Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022. "I had never seen anything like it. My husband is from Kansas and his remark was, 'If I was in Kansas I would say it's a tornado. It was moving fast and headed northeast,'" Bellows said.

Storm leaves trail of damage, injuries

BY ANDREW CUTLER
AND PHIL WRIGHT

Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Bruce Eien said he remembers feeling a sense of déjà vu Thursday, Aug. 11, in the aftermath of the severe weather storm that rolled through Wallowa County.

"It looked like how people were walking around after 9/11 — in a daze," he said. "That's exactly what it was."

The Enterprise resident, who has family that lives in Wallowa, where much of the damage from large hail was centered, was touring the county to look at the damage in the aftermath of the storm.

"We were driving around, checking on all of the people we knew," he said, "making sure they were OK."

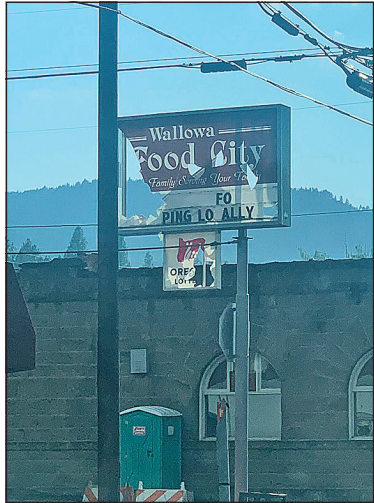
Earlier in the day, the National Weather Service in Pendleton issued a severe thunderstorm warning for much of Wallowa County until 5 p.m. Aug. 11.

The warning included 2-inch sized hail and winds up to 50 mph. Camden Plunkett, a meteorologist for the weather service, said there were reports of baseball-sized hail in the county.

"For the hail that was received in Wallowa County, we are leaning toward tennis-ball sized hail up to 2½ inches," he said. "We did also have some reports of ping pong ball-sized hail about 1.5 inches in La Grande as well."

Plunkett said his office did hear about multiple injuries as a result of the hail, something Eien said he's heard while he was in Wallowa as well.

"We are hoping everyone is all right," he said, adding the county



Left: Large hail wrecked this sign Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, at Wallowa Food City, 302 E. First St., Wallowa. Right: A Wallowa home sustained significant damage to its exterior following a severe storm that rolled through Wallowa County on Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022. The storm produced tennis-ball sized hail, according to the National Weather Service office in Pendleton.

also received "frequent lightning strikes."

Staff at Wallowa Memorial Hospital, Enterprise, confirmed the hospital treated "multiple" patients for injuries from the hailstones. Staff also reported how unusual this was, with one commenting she has lived in Eastern Oregon more than 40 years and this was a first for her.

Eien said around 4 p.m. the power went out in Enterprise and about the same time, his wife received a text from her parents in Wallowa.

"We lost everything," he recalled the text saying. "We immediately got in the car. We didn't know what that meant."

Eien said as they reached Wallowa, the damage sharpened into focus — cars with shattered wind-



Bruce Eien/Contributed Photo

shields, downed trees and homes with severe damage.

"There was a tree that hit a house, some trees in front of the high school went over," he said. "Telephone lines, power lines went down."

According to the Pacific Power website, 887 customers were without power following the storm.

The outage was first reported shortly before 4 p.m. "We have crews working around the clock to restore services to all those affected," the Pacific Power website says. "We estimate power will be restored by 5 a.m."

Power also is out to about 13 customer in the Minam area. The outage was also reported shortly before 4 p.m. and is expected to be restored around 5 a.m.

Power was out in other parts of the county, according to Pacific Power's Twitter feed.

More than 5,300 customers in Enterprise and Wallowa were without power late in the afternoon. The cause of the outage was severe storm damage, according to the utility's Twitter feed. Power was restored in Enterprise and Joseph before 8 p.m. on Wednesday.

Plunkett said the storm was a perfect chain of events to cause the large hailstones.

"We had really strong updrafts and then we had really strong wind shear that allowed an organized supercell thunderstorm to develop," he said.

The storm took about 90 minutes to pass through the county, Plunkett said, and once it crossed into Idaho, the storm weakened significantly.

Plunkett said the expected 50 mph wind gusts did not materialize. There were reports of 60 mph gusts at the La Grande/Union County Airport.

"We did not have any confirmed wind gusts in Wallowa County," he said.

Severe weather is not expected in the county over the next several days, but Wallowa County could see some isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon on Aug. 12.

Plunkett also said there is not a lot of data available on supercells in Wallowa County. The last recorded event was a tornado with a rating of EF2 that hit June 11, 1968. EF means "enhanced Fujita scale," and a 2 on the scale means gusts of three seconds of 111-135 mph. The Western Regional Climate Center, he said, reports that tornado came with golf-ball sized hail.

Drazan: Declare state of emergency for homeless crisis

BY CLAIRE RUSH

The Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND — The Republican candidate for governor, Christine Drazan, on Monday, Aug. 8, called for declaring a state of emergency on homelessness in Oregon as she seeks to distinguish herself in a three-way race.

Drazan's unveiling of her state of emergency proposal was included in a campaign issue road-map. Much of the plan released Aug. 8 contains points the former Oregon state representative and House minority leader has discussed before, like repealing Measure 110, the 2020 ballot measure that decriminalized possession of small amounts of hard drugs including methamphetamine and heroin.

Drazan named homelessness as a top priority in her campaign and said declaring a state of emergency would allow for bureaucratic "barriers to be broken down so that people can begin to work together more effectively."

"We have the opportunity right now with a lot of different stakeholders who are throwing a lot of money at this problem," Drazan told The Associated Press. "But what we're missing is really a central point of focus and leadership that can coalesce all those efforts."

Drazan's campaign said the emergency declaration would "accelerate the rollout of addiction and behavioral health supports and provide additional funding as needed."

Drazan's release makes no mention of abortion. The issue has become a potential liability for GOP candidates following the Supreme Court's decision to remove constitutional abortion protections by

overturning Roe v. Wade. A majority of Oregon voters favor abortion rights and Drazan is pro-life.

Drazan is among three gubernatorial candidates on Oregon's November ballot. She is running against the Democrat Tina Kotek, a former state House speaker, and the unaffiliated candidate Betsy Johnson. Johnson served as a Democratic lawmaker in the state house and senate from 2000 to 2021 before resigning and leaving the party to run as an independent.

Wrestling with homelessness

Grappling with intersecting housing and homelessness crises, Oregon lawmakers earlier this year approved a budget that includes \$400 million to address both issues amidst a growing number of people without housing across the state.

Portland declared a state of emergency on homelessness in 2015 and has extended it five times since then. The measure, now set to expire in 2025, reduces the bureaucratic red tape surrounding the creation of homeless shelters.

Despite the city's years-long emergency measure, the estimated number of people experiencing homelessness spiked 25% in the Portland area between 2020 and 2022, according to point-in-time counts reported to The Department of Housing and Urban Development. Further south on the California state line, largely rural Jackson County reported an increase of 72% during the same period.

Oregon's homelessness crisis has been fueled by a housing shortage, the coronavirus pandemic and the highest drug addiction rate of any state in the nation. Federal data from the latest National Survey on

Drug Use and Health found that 9% of teens and adults in Oregon had illicit drug use disorders in 2020.

The state has wrestled with a debate over the best way to reduce homelessness. Some business groups have called for more encampment sweeps and stricter enforcement of anti-camping ordinances, while others want more investment in social services and affordable housing.

"We have to provide flexibility in shelter space, we have to provide the right kinds of shelter space based on the populations we have out there," Drazan said. "We can't give up on anybody and we cannot allow this to continue."

Homelessness and housing are also top issues for the two other candidates in Oregon's gubernatorial race.

Candidates' stance

Kotek, the Democratic candidate, has said she would form a special emergency management team to work on the issues, in addition to issuing an executive order on her first day in office to create a 10-year plan to build more homes in urban, suburban and rural areas.

In 2020, while serving as speaker in the Oregon House, Kotek also called for a statewide emergency declaration for homelessness. Drazan was the House Republican minority leader at the time during a short session that was adjourned early and marred by political tensions after Republicans in the House and Senate staged a walkout to protest a climate change measure.

Kotek's campaign described Drazan's state of emergency proposal as a "stunning reversal."

"Instead of helping find solutions

to the housing and homelessness crisis, she pushed her caucus to flee the state and kill nearly every bill that was introduced, including bills on homelessness," said Katie Wertheimer, communications director for Kotek's campaign.

Johnson, the independent candidate, has called for creating more designated camping areas and emergency shelters. Like Drazan, Johnson supports repealing Measure 110, which decriminalized possession of small amounts of hard drugs.

"I will end the tent cities," Johnson said in an email in response to Drazan's proposals. "We don't need more plans. We need action from a new governor who's going to get stuff done."

Oregon is a blue state largely known for the liberal city of Portland. But vast swaths of it are rural and conservative, and registered unaffiliated voters outnumber both Democratic and Republican voters, according to the latest data from the Oregon Secretary of State.

Drazan is hoping to become Oregon's first Republican governor since 1987, as the GOP seeks to capitalize on soaring inflation and dissatisfaction with the party in power.

But abortion could complicate GOP efforts to win statewide races, as the hot-button issue has energized Democratic voters following the overturning of Roe v. Wade.

In the first major test of public sentiment after the Supreme Court decision, voters in conservative Kansas last week rejected a ballot measure that would have curbed abortion rights. While abortion remains legal in Oregon, the issue could potentially draw more Democratic voters to the polls in mid-term elections that historically result in the president's party losing seats.

Judge unseals Trump home search warrant

BY MICHAEL BALSAMO, ZEKE MILLER
AND ERIC TUCKER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The FBI recovered documents that were labeled "top secret" from former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, according to court papers released Friday, Aug. 12 after a federal judge unsealed the warrant that authorized the unprecedented search this week.

A property receipt unsealed by the court shows FBI agents took 11 sets of classified records from the estate during a search on Monday, Aug. 8. The property receipt is a document prepared by federal agents to specify what was taken during a search.

The seized records include some that were marked as classified and top secret. The court records did not provide specific details about the documents or what information they might contain.

In a statement Friday, Trump claimed that the documents seized by agents at his Florida club were "all declassified," and argued that he would have turned over the documents to the Justice Department if asked.

While incumbent presidents have the power to declassify information, that authority lapses as soon as they leave office and it was not clear if the documents in question have ever been declassified. Trump also kept possession of the documents despite multiple requests from agencies, including the National Archives, to turn over presidential records in accordance with federal law.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Reinhart, the same judge who signed off on the search warrant unsealed the warrant and property receipt Friday at the request of the Justice Department after Attorney General Merrick Garland declared there was "substantial public interest in this matter," and Trump backed the warrant's "immediate" release. The Justice Department told the judge Friday afternoon that Trump's lawyers did not object to the proposal to make it public.

In messages posted on his Truth Social platform, Trump wrote, "Not only will I not oppose the release of documents ... I am going a step further by ENCOURAGING the immediate release of those documents."

Trump himself has been given at least some of the records the government was seeking to unseal, but he and his lawyers have declined, so far, to make them public.

The Justice Department's request is striking because such documents traditionally remain sealed during a pending investigation. But the department appeared to recognize that its silence since the search had created a vacuum for bitter verbal attacks by Trump and his allies, and that the public was entitled to the FBI's side about what prompted Monday's action at the former president's home.

"The public's clear and powerful interest in understanding what occurred under these circumstances weighs heavily in favor of unsealing," said a motion filed in federal court in Florida on Thursday.

The documents could disclose unflattering information about Trump and about FBI scrutiny of his handling of sensitive government documents right as he prepares for another run for the White House. During his successful 2016 campaign, he pointed frequently to an FBI investigation into his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, over whether she mishandled classified information.

Several news organizations separately petitioned Reinhart to release all of the documents relating to the search given the high level of public interest.

To obtain a search warrant, federal authorities must prove to a judge that probable cause exists to believe that a crime was committed. Garland said he personally approved the warrant, a decision he said the department did not take lightly given that standard practice where possible is to select less intrusive tactics than a search of one's home.

In this case, according to a person familiar with the matter, there was substantial engagement with Trump and his representatives prior to the search warrant, including a subpoena for records and a visit to Mar-a-Lago a couple of months ago by FBI and Justice Department officials to assess how the documents were stored. The person was not authorized to discuss the matter by name and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Neither Trump nor the FBI has said anything about what documents the FBI might have recovered, or what precisely agents were looking for.

FBI and Justice Department policy cautions against discussing ongoing investigations, both to protect the integrity of the inquiries and to avoid unfairly maligning someone who is being scrutinized but winds up ultimately not being charged.