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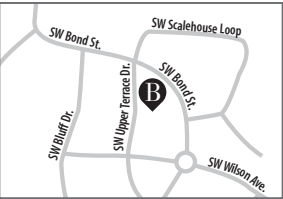
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LOCAL, STATE & REGION



Central Oregon Fire Information/Submitted photo
A firefighter works on the Rosland Road Fire northwest of La Pine in July 2020.

Central Oregon to get \$41M in federal funding for wildfire resiliency

BY MICHAEL KOHN
The Bulletin

Efforts to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest landscapes in Central Oregon will receive \$41.3 million in funds over the next three years from President Joe Biden's bipartisan infrastructure bill, according to a document released by the U.S. Forest Service on Tuesday.

The announcement guarantees funding for the thinning projects to be conducted on the Deschutes National Forest, an area bordering several large population centers, including Bend, La Pine and Sunriver. Forest restoration projects in the area are designed to protect communities from wildfire risk by reducing forest

fuels.

Work will be also be conducted on the Crooked River Grasslands.

The Forest Service said Central Oregon will receive \$4.5 million in funding this year to treat around 5,000 acres of forest and grasslands.

A total of \$41.3 million will go toward work on 50,000 acres through fiscal year 2024.

"Central Oregon is fortunate to receive this funding, which will support increased public engagement with our communities, reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire, make our forests more resilient to insects and disease at a landscape scale, and protect our critical watershed both for wildlife and sources of com-

munity water," according to a statement from the Deschutes National Forest.

The Forest Service states that a primary goal of the forest treatments is to ensure protection of Central Oregon's tourism economy.

The Deschutes National Forest adds that a "healthy and resilient forest" will recover more quickly if wildfires do occur.

Central Oregon was the only forest area in Oregon selected to be part of the funding.

Central Oregon made the list from an initial group of 29 regions that were considered for funding.

■ Reporter: 541-617-7818, mkohn@bendbulletin.com

PORTLAND

Man sentenced to federal prison for smuggling marijuana out of state

BY MAXINE BERNSTEIN

The Oregonian

A Portland man who helped smuggle more than \$2.5 million worth of Oregon-grown marijuana out of the state in hand-built freight crates was sentenced Monday to two years and nine months in federal prison.

Robert Benjamin Kawika Dawe, 39, worked with two accomplices and others to ship more than 2,200 pounds of marijuana to New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Georgia, Texas, Arkansas, Illinois and Minnesota and create false cargo bills, according to prosecutors.

They then flew to the destination cities to receive the shipments to help avoid scrutiny and to distribute the marijuana for sale in those states, according to federal prosecutors.

When the operation's warehouse in Vancouver, Washington, closed down, Dawe used his home to store marijuana for distribution, according to court records.

On Oct. 16, 2020, for example, police intercepted a load of marijuana that left Dawe's home in a rental truck. The truck met up with another truck pulling a 53-foot refrigerated trailer, according to prosecutors.

His accomplices loaded two large crates from the rental truck into the trailer.

Police stopped both vehicles and searched the trailer. They found two crates containing 12 cardboard boxes that held more than 600 pounds of vacuum-sealed marijuana bud with markings describing their respective strains, according to court records.

The load was destined for San Antonio, Texas, according to prosecutors.

After shipping the mar-

ijuana to other states and receiving the crates, Dawe and his accomplices would then fly back on commercial airlines with cash from the drug sales or structure cash deposits through bank accounts.

Dawe and his two accomplices created the companies of Transport 1 Logistics and PDX Payments Solutions as fronts to disguise the nature and source of their drug trafficking proceeds, according to court records.

During a search of Dawe's home, agents seized 238 pounds of marijuana and \$7,000 in cash.

Dawe pleaded guilty in November to conspiracy to traffic in marijuana.

"Following his greed and ambition, the defendant joined the cadre of black-market marijuana smugglers that unabashedly ignored the rules that apply to everyone else for his own personal and financial gain," Assistant U.S. Attorney Julia E. Jarrett wrote in a sentencing memo.

Jarrett sought a sentence of three years and 10 months for Dawe, while defense lawyer Kevin M. Sali argued for the lesser sentence that the judge imposed.

Dawe said he's now seeing a drug therapist and is committed to staying sober. He said he had previously viewed his offense as falling in more of a "gray area," having seen marijuana "sold on the streets in dispensaries."

Co-defendant Jeremiah David Cruz was sentenced in February to a year and nine months in prison. Co-defendant Kyle Cerkoney is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to conspiracy to traffic in 2,200 pounds or more of marijuana.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Man arrested after police pursuit near La Pine

A Salem man suspected of drunken driving led police on a vehicle chase near La Pine and later ran into a wooded area and was captured with the aid of a police dog.

At about 4 a.m. Tuesday, the Bend Police Department ended a short pursuit of a suspected drunken driver after they attempted a traffic stop and the driver refused, the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office said Tuesday in news release.

At around 4:28 a.m., a sheriff's deputy saw the suspect vehicle, driven by Michael Gookin, 43, of Salem, traveling south without lights on U.S. Highway 97 near Vandeventer Road. Another deputy set up tire deflation devices and attempted a traffic stop, but Gookin did not stop, despite the deflation of one tire, according to the sheriff's office.

Deputies continued chasing Gookin until they reached La Pine, where they fell back and saw Gookin's vehicle make a U-turn, according to the sheriff's office.

Gookin then began driving north. Near Burgess Road, a sheriff's deputy performed a driving technique to stop Gookin's vehicle using the deputy's own car, at which point Gookin is alleged to have fled into a wooded area to the west.

A deputy with a police dog began chasing Gookin through the woods, according to the sheriff's office. Gookin allegedly refused to cooperate with the officer's attempts to take him into custody, and the dog, named Ronin, bit Gookin, who was then arrested, according to the sheriff's office.

After his arrest, Gookin was taken to St. Charles Bend for evaluation, then to the Deschutes County jail on suspicion of attempting to elude, driving under

the influence of intoxicants, driving while suspended, reckless driving, reckless endangering, felon in possession of a restricted weapon, resisting arrest and attempted assault on a law enforcement animal.

Central Oregon police arrest alleged fentanyl distributor

An anonymous tip led to the arrest of an alleged Central Oregon fentanyl distributor, police said this week.

Dallas James Harper, 33, was arrested around 10:30 p.m. Sunday by officers with the multiagency Central Oregon Drug Enforcement Team following a long-term investigation, according to Deschutes County Sheriff's Sgt. Kent VanderKamp. Police believe Harper was importing drugs from the Portland area into Crook County.

Over the weekend, officers conducted surveillance and received a warrant to search Harper's vehicle. Harper was later pulled over by Crook County sheriff's deputies and his rental car was searched.

Investigators allegedly found large amounts of counterfeit pharmaceutical pills made of fentanyl, methamphetamine and heroin. In addition to the controlled substances, a loaded pistol was also seized from Harper, according to police.

Harper was arrested on suspicion of attempting to distribute fentanyl, possession of fentanyl, attempting to distribute methamphetamine, possession of meth, attempting to distribute heroin and being a felon in possession of a weapon.

Harper's passenger, Justine Durham, was cited on suspicion of possession of a controlled substance.

Harper was jailed at the Crook County Jail. He's scheduled to be arraigned Friday.

— Bulletin staff reports

Oregon weekly coronavirus cases climb 20%

BY FEDOR ZARKHIN
The Oregonian

Nearly 2,400 Oregonians tested positive for the coronavirus or were diagnosed with COVID-19 over the last week, 20% more than the previous week and 70% more than the week before that, state data show.

The growing case numbers have been expected, given the highly contagious BA.2 omicron subvariant and the lifting of masking requirements. Whether or not the increase in cases — in its second week after nine weeks of decline — is a harbinger of another surge is yet to be seen, though local experts and officials have said a major surge is unlikely.

The percentage of tests that come back positive has also increased, from 2.9% April 3 to 4.6% Sunday. The higher the test positivity rate, the more virus is circulating in the community.

Multnomah County accounted for more than 1 in 3 infections identified statewide in the past week. The county's daily test positivity rate topped 5% three times during that span.

It's unclear if the state has a full picture of the prevalence of disease in Oregon, given the Or-

egon Health Authority does not know how many of the cases in its tally originated with widely available at-home tests. People aren't required to report their results to the state or local health agencies, though they are able to online or by calling 866-917-8881.

Asked about rising cases last week, the Oregon Health Authority acknowledged the increase, saying it likely has been driven by the subvariant and changes in people's behavior. A spokesman for the agency also pointed to stable hospitalization numbers which, at 100 occupied beds, remain at a level last seen before the delta surge.

Still, increasing cases usually precede rising hospitalizations.

"It is hard to predict if cases will continue to rise or for how long as there are many factors that play into cases," Jonathan Modie said in an emailed response to questions.

"OHA will continue to monitor case counts and hospitalizations, and report developments in the pandemic."

Since it began, Oregon has reported 707,512 confirmed or presumed infections and 7,315 deaths. Since April 4, the Oregon Health Author-

COVID-19 community levels for Central Oregon

The Bulletin is no longer publishing COVID-19 daily case counts by county.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention monitors community levels of COVID-19 to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data. Levels can be low, medium or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used, hospital admissions and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area.

The CDC listed the following levels for Central Oregon:

Deschutes County: Low
Crook County: Low
Jefferson County: Low

Precautions the CDC recommends for communities with low levels: Stay up to date on vaccines and get tested if you have symptoms.

ity has reported 101 additional deaths connected to COVID-19. The agency is no longer providing detailed information for each death.