

LOCAL, STATE & REGION

2 supermoons to brighten night skies this summer

BY JAMIE HALE
The Oregonian

Full moon watchers will want to circle two dates on their calendars if they haven't already: June 14 and July 13, dates of the two supermoons in 2022.

The pair of especially large full moons are coming just in time for the summer solstice on June 21, each rising just after dusk on some of the longest days of the year.

And while the term "super-

moon" conjures up fanciful images, it simply means that the moon will be a little closer to the Earth when full, making it a little larger and brighter than normal. The moon will appear the biggest as it rises over the horizon, which is perhaps the best time to look for it.

The June 14 full moon, also known as the "strawberry moon," will rise at 10:01 p.m. in Portland, according to Time and Date,

while the July 13 full moon, or the "buck moon," will rise at 9:41 p.m. Look for both moons over the southeastern horizon.

The supermoon phenomenon occurs as the moon reaches its closest point to Earth in a given annual cycle. Because the moon follows an elliptical path around the Earth, its closest distance from our planet (known as the perigee) varies throughout the year.



Jamie Hale/The Oregonian file

A full supermoon rises over the Oregon Dunes on the Oregon Coast near Reedsport in April 2021. The 2022 supermoons will be this Tuesday and July 13.

This year's July full moon will be the closest of the year, at 221,993 miles from the earth. The June full moon will

be 222,098 miles away. The new moon on Dec. 23 will also be "super," with a perigee of 222,619 miles.

Arrests

Continued from A1

Police learned about the U-Haul from a tipster, who reported that "it looked like a little army was loading up into the vehicle" in the parking lot of a hotel, White said. Officials spotted the truck soon after and pulled it over, he said.

Videos of the arrest posted on social media show the men kneeling on the grass with their hands zip-tied behind their backs. Police led the men, one by one, to the front of patrol cars, took off their masks and then brought them to a police van. Those arrested came from at least 11 states, including Washington, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Colorado, South Dakota, Illinois, Wyoming, Virginia, and Arkansas, White said.

Only one was from Idaho, he said.

The truck was stopped near where the North Idaho Pride Alliance was holding the Coeur d'Alene Pride in the Park event. Police had stepped up their presence in the area during the event.

"It appears these people did not come here to engage in peaceful events," Kootenai County Sheriff Bob Norris told a Coeur d'Alene Press reporter.

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.

Background

Continued from A1

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.

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Guns

Continued from A1

Given the bipartisan support, "there are no excuses for delay, and no reason why it should not quickly move through the Senate and the House," he said.

Leaders hope to push any agreement into law rapidly — they hope this month — before the political momentum fades that has been stirred by the recent mass shootings in Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas. Participants cautioned that final details and legislative language remain to be completed, meaning fresh disputes and delays might emerge.

In a consequential development, 20 senators, including 10 Republicans, released a statement calling for passage. That is potentially crucial because the biggest obstacle to enacting the measure is probably in the 50-50 Senate, where at least 10 GOP votes will be needed to attain the

usual 60-vote threshold for approval.

"Families are scared, and it is our duty to come together and get something done that will help restore their sense of safety and security in their communities," the lawmakers said. The group, led by Sens. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., John Cornyn, R-Texas, Thom Tillis, R-N.C., and Krysten Sinema, D-Ariz., produced the agreement after two weeks of closed-door talks.

The compromise would make the juvenile records of gun buyers under age 21 available when they undergo background checks. The suspects who killed 10 Black people at a grocery store in Buffalo and 19 students and two teachers at an elementary school in Uvalde were both 18, and many perpetrators of recent years' mass shootings have been young.

The agreement would offer money to states to enact and put in place "red flag" laws that make it easier to tempo-

rarily take guns from people considered potentially violent, plus funds to bolster school safety and mental health programs.

Some people who informally sell guns for profit would be required to obtain federal dealers' licenses, which means they would have to conduct background checks of buyers. Convicted domestic abusers who do not live with a former partner, such as estranged ex-boyfriends, would be barred from buying firearms, and it would be a crime for a person to legally purchase a weapon for someone who would not qualify for ownership.

Congressional aides said billions of dollars would be spent expanding the number of community mental health centers and suicide prevention programs. But they said some spending decisions are unresolved, as are final wording on juvenile records and other gun provisions that might prove contentious.

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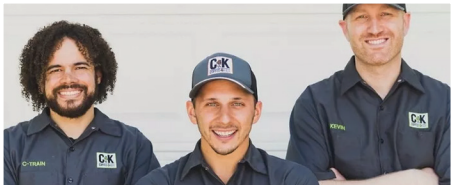
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