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Elevated fire danger forecast for region

Continuing trend of hot, dry summers

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Heavy smoke that blew into the John Day Valley last week from several fires in Central Oregon may be a sign of what is to come as forest officials prepare for elevated fire danger this season.

The Boxcar Fire 1 mile southeast of Maupin, the Jack Knife Fire 5 miles northeast of Kent and the Graham Fire 15 miles north of Sisters near Lake Billy Chinook were all caused by lightning.

By June 26, the Boxcar Fire covered 99,500 acres, the Jack Knife Fire covered 14,700 acres and the Graham Fire covered 2,100 acres. The Boxcar Fire was 60 percent contained, and the others were 80 percent contained.

The wildfire forecast for the Grant County area this summer is about the same as for the past few years, officials said, as continuing hot and dry conditions are expected in July and August.

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Eagle file photo
A tree burns during the Canyon Creek Complex fire in 2015. Elevated fire danger is forecast this season.

As of June 20, more than 200 wildfires were reported on lands protected by ODF across Oregon, burning about 200 acres. More than 80 percent of the fires were human caused.



Eagle file photo
Clinton Shaver, with the Molalla Rural Fire District, watches as a tree goes up in flames on the Canyon Creek Complex south of John Day in 2015. This year could bring another severe fire season.

Revised forest plan to be released Friday

Blue Mountain Eagle



Jim Peña

The long-awaited revised forest plans for the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests will be released Friday.

Updating the current plans drafted in 1990, the new 15-year plan has the potential to support up to 2,820 jobs and \$113.6 million in labor income annually, according to

the Forest Service.

“We have been listening to diverse perspectives,” said Pacific Northwest Regional Forester

Jim Peña. “The revised Forest Plans honor the many years of input provided by the public, local governments, states,

tribes, federal agencies and other stakeholders. Together, we are working to make our forests more resilient to change while also supporting rural prosperity.”

The revised plans provide a framework for future site-specific decisions and have the potential to add 1,173 new jobs and \$59.5 million

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Backers drop gun storage initiative for now

By Claire Withycombe
Capital Bureau

Citing time constraints, supporters of an initiative petition to impose new storage requirements on gun owners say they won't try to put the issue before voters this year after all.

Supporters of Initiative Petition 44 are withdrawing the petition, they announced last week. They plan to refile for the 2020 ballot and lobby the legislature to pass the measure in next year's long legislative session.

Supporters of the petition said they didn't have enough time to collect the 88,184 signatures required to get the

measure on the ballot by the July 6 deadline.

“We are not discouraged and look forward to working with legislators to pass this important measure in the 2019 session,” Henry Wessinger, one of the chief petitioners on the measure, said in a prepared statement.

Another petition that would place restrictions on what types of firearms Oregonians can own — Initiative Petition 43 — faces the same deadline.

Its ballot title is still caught up in the courts, so the petition can't be circulated for signatures yet.

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Kill permit issued for Wallowa County wolf

State could update management plan before year's end

By George Plaven
EO Media Group

State wildlife officials will allow a northeast Oregon rancher to kill one wolf on privately owned pasture near Joseph Creek in Wallowa County following a string of gruesome attacks on livestock.

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife issued a kill permit June 21 for RL Cattle Company, based in Enterprise, after confirming the wolf depredations June 13-14.

According to the investigative reports, a wolf — or wolves — injured three calves in three days on the same private pasture within an area of known wolf activity in the Chesnimnus Unit.

ODFW counted three wolves in the area at the end of 2017. None are wearing a radio tracking collar. It is not certain whether the wolves are remnants of the Chesnimnus pack or new animals that have moved



Contributed photo/Oregon Cattlemen's Association

A wolf or wolves injured three calves within a few days on a private pasture near Joseph Creek in Wallowa County. Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife officials have issued a kill order for one wolf on the pasture and an adjacent public land allotment through July 10.

into the territory.

Under Phase III of the Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, ODFW may consider killing wolves in Eastern Oregon found to prey on livestock at least twice. The agency last issued a kill permit in April for two wolves from the Pine Creek pack in Baker County.

But first, ranchers must

demonstrate they have tried using nonlethal deterrents and cannot leave bone piles or carcasses that would otherwise attract wolves. In this case, RL Cattle routinely monitored for wolves, maintained a human presence around cattle and removed injured livestock from the pasture.

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