

Risk of large wildfires elevated in parts of West

By Brad Carlson
EO Media Group

Wildfire risk will be above average in much of the West, according to the National Inter-agency Fire Center's new forecast.

July marks the start of the primary wildfire season in the Northwest, Intermountain West and the northern Great Basin.

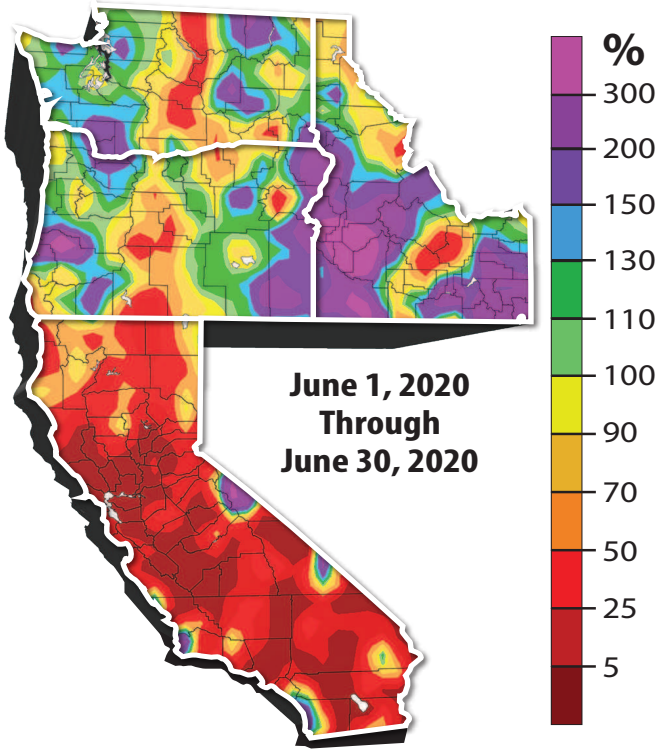
Bryan Henry, fire weather program manager at the Boise-based center, said in an interview that an unusually wet June — precipitation was 200-400% of average across most of Idaho except in the northern panhandle — “will delay the onset of more significant fire activity until mid- to late July.”

Idaho's central mountains, where snowpack and runoff have been well below average, could see some small fires by around July 10, a few days later than usual after some rain in late June, he said.

Henry said, in northeastern Washington, the northern Idaho panhandle and northwestern Montana, precipitation was 50-75% of normal in the second half of June, so “a normal July is expected as the pre-existing conditions continue.”

“Areas of emerging concern are northern California, north-

Percent of normal precipitation



Source: NOAA Regional Climate Centers

Capital Press graphic

western Nevada and southern through central Oregon,” he said. “Precipitation received over the last month in these areas has been generally below 50% of average, and in some cases less than 5% of average.” That was the case in the San

Francisco Bay Area.

Temperatures across most of the West have been about 2 degrees above average over the past two months, Henry said.

In his forecast for July through October, he said the potential for significant large

fires, burning total acres exceeding long-term medians, is above normal in the Northwest, Northern California, Hawaii and the northern Great Basin. It's normal in the northern Rockies, Alaska and Southern California.

The Northwest's cool, wet weather in June delayed some fuel curing, but will be followed by conditions that are warmer and drier than average through September — increasing the risk of large fires, particularly in central Oregon and central Washington, Henry wrote.

Conditions expected to be warmer and drier than normal should elevate fire risk in northern California and Hawaii, he wrote. Dead fuels at all elevations are expected to be dry enough to carry fire.

Fine-fuel loading was 100-300% of normal across parts of Nevada, Arizona, Utah and southern Idaho as July began, and patchier in parts of southern Utah and Idaho.

The chance of thunderstorms will increase through July in the northern Great Basin, with some periods of gusty winds, precipitation and lower temperatures as low pressure continues to track, Henry wrote. This will prevent much of Idaho from being critically dry during much of July.

DA: Several alleged thieves identified

Anyone with information about recent thefts should contact the sheriff's office



Tanner Walczyk
Austin Catron

Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County's district attorney has released the names of several people believed to be involved in thefts, stemming from an investigation that began in September.

“By admission and the recovery of some of the stolen items, alleged perpetrators include (a 14-year-old boy), Austin Catron, Tanner Walczyk and others,” District Attorney Jim Carpenter said in a press release. “Items stolen are likely being taken out of the county to be sold and traded.”

Carpenter said Grant County has experienced an uptick in thefts, including the thefts of chainsaws, firearms, tools and other equipment. These thefts are currently being

investigated by the Grant County Sheriff's Office.

Other agencies that have provided valuable assistance include the John Day Police Department and the Oregon State Police, he said. The investigation has been ongoing since September 2019.

The District Attorney's Office is currently waiting for the finalization of the investigation. Residents and others with information regarding recent thefts are encouraged to contact the Grant County Sheriff's Office at 541-575-1131, or notify Grant County Dispatch at 541-575-0195.

Carpenter encouraged residents to lock their cars and homes, not leave valuables in plain sight and be vigilant in watching out for themselves and their neighbors.

Human-caused fire near Kimberly destroys house, burns just over 30 acres

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

A house was destroyed by a human-caused fire near Kimberly July 1.

The John Day Inter-agency Dispatch Center received a report of a fire about 6 miles west of Monu-

ment at a residence on Highway 402 at about 1 p.m. July 1.

The fire was controlled at 8:05 p.m.

Oregon Department of Forestry Central Oregon District Public Information Officer Christie Shaw said the fire was human-

caused, but it was still under investigation.

She said the fire burned a little over 30 acres, and most of what was burned was grass and brush in terms of the wildland fuels.

ODF was assisted by type 1 helicopters available from federal partners,

seven wildland engines, a local landowner's bulldozer, a bulldozer from ODF and assistance from the Monument Fire Department.

“By early evening last night, we had gotten it fully lined so some of the lines are dozer lines and some of the lines were hand lines where

they couldn't get to with the dozer,” Shaw said Thursday. “Once they finished securing that line and once the spread of the fire has stopped, they began to mop-up and continue those activities today.”

Monument Fire Chief Kevin Mitchell, who responded to the call as ODF,

said there were no injuries at the incident and Monument fire had a truck at the scene.

Mitchell added that defensible space around a home is important to protect a house from incidents like this where the grass is three to four feet tall and near the house.

COPS AND COURTS

Arrests and citations in the Blue Mountain Eagle are taken from the logs of law enforcement agencies. Every effort is made to report the court disposition of arrest cases.

Grant County Circuit Court

A count of harassment and second-degree criminal trespass against James W. Cook Jr., allegedly committed Dec. 17, was dismissed on July 1 based on a motion by Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter because of the wishes of victims and a lack of state resources.

A count of harassment and second-degree disorderly conduct against Charles E. Williams, allegedly committed Feb. 1, was dismissed on July 2 based on a motion by Carpenter because the victims are protected and a lack of state resources.

A conviction on appeal of first-degree sexual abuse against Bradley D. Moles, allegedly committed Feb. 1, 2016, was dismissed June 29 based on a motion by Carpenter because Moles' jury conviction was not unanimous and the United States Supreme Court ruled that jury verdicts in criminal trials must be unanimous. Carpenter said in the motion that the state has decided not to pursue retrial.

Grant County Sheriff

The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of July 1:

Concealed handgun licenses: 7

Average inmates: 10

Bookings: 10

Releases: 9

Arrests: 1
Citations: 0
Fingerprints: 4
Civil papers: 17
Warrants processed: 3
Assistance/Welfare check: 1

Grant County Justice Court

Violation of the basic rule: Mackenzie J. Coggin, 28, Enterprise, May 13, 70/55 zone, fined \$165; Ronald B. Borello, 57, Sumpter, June 9, 74/55 zone, fined \$165; Daniel C. Sigler, 66, Irvine, California, June 10, 75/55 zone, fined \$165; Ted W. Law, 72, Bedford, Kentucky, June 8, 68/55 zone, fined \$165.

Exceeding speed limit: Noah R. Schultz, 28, Milwaukee, March 25, 91/65 zone, fined \$440; Daniel R. Cook, 55, Canyon City, April 29, 48/30 zone, fined \$140; Philip J. Milburn, 49, Ontario, May 4, 74/65 zone, fined \$140; Dakota L. Wolfer, 20, John Day, May 21, 45/35 zone, fined \$140; Michael N. McGarry, 67, Prairie City, May 4, 74/65 zone, fined \$140; Sylvia R. Sweeney, 60, John Day, Jan. 24, 53/35 zone, fined \$165; Alexander J. Titus, 26, Prairie City, 79/65 zone, fined \$265; Dessiree M. Sutton, 47, Kimberly, June 10, 55/40 zone, fined \$165.

Driving while suspended: Sylvia R. Sweeney, 60, John Day, Jan. 24, fined \$440; Jared J. Baker, 25, John Day, May 16, fined \$440; Jimm E. Roba, 45, John Day, June 7, fined \$440.

Driving uninsured: Sylvia R. Sweeney, 60, John Day, Jan. 24, fined \$265; Jared J. Baker,

25, John Day, May 16, fined \$265.

Following too closely: Cherith R. Sheedy, 44, John Day, March 10, fined \$225.

Failure to drive within lane: Michael J. Weedman, 73, Salem, June 11, fined \$265.

Failure to register vehicle: Kyle L. Hand, 29, Dayville, Feb. 8, fined \$220.

Baylee K. Metcalf was convicted of misrepresentation of age by a minor after a plea of not guilty. The defendant was ordered to pay a fine of \$440.

Oregon State Police

June 28: OSP stopped a vehicle for speeding, failure to use headlights and failure to drive within lane on Highway 26 near milepost 162. On contact, the driver, Mariah N. Boyd, 22, had glassy, bloodshot eyes. There was a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage coming from the vehicle. She admitted to consuming a couple shots of whiskey. The driver consented to field sobriety tests and showed further indicators of impairment. OSP arrested the driver for driving under the influence of intoxicants. OSP left the vehicle at the scene with two of the driver's friends. OSP transported the driver to the Grant County Jail. Boyd submitted to a breath test, which indicated a blood alcohol concentration level of 0.12%. OSP issued the driver a citation for DUII-Alcohol and lodged her at the jail.

June 28: OSP responded to a serious injury crash on State Route 19 near milepost 109. A caller was reporting a rollover crash with one occupant ejected. Investiga-

tion revealed the driver, Colton J. David, 24, Monument, was traveling northbound on State Route 19 when he lost control of his vehicle and went into a small ditch, rolling his car and ejecting his passenger, a 21-year-old man. The driver had glassy eyes and a moderate odor of an alcoholic beverage coming from his breath. The driver admitted to drinking one beer. The passenger was transported via Life Flight to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Washington, and then transferred to Oregon Health & Science University in Portland with serious injuries. The driver was transported by ground ambulance to Blue Mountain Hospital. Hospital staff drew a blood sample that indicated a BAC of 0.248%. A search warrant was obtained to seize all blood and urine samples from the hospital as well as new samples from the driver. The driver had been discharged from the hospital prior to OSP's arrival, and OSP was unable to reach the driver to obtain new samples pursuant to the warrant. The vehicle was seized as evidence and towed by Doug's Towing to a secure location. Investigation is ongoing.

July 1: OSP investigated a reported driving complaint that had been received on June 28 on Highway 26 near milepost 155. Investigation revealed a vehicle was following a white SUV westbound on Highway 26 when the unidentified man in the white SUV abruptly stopped on the highway, stepped out of the white SUV and charged towards the vehicle that was following.

The driver of the vehicle that was following the white SUV began backing up not seeing another vehicle which was struck. The driver that was following the white SUV left the scene, calling 911, while being followed by the white SUV for several miles. The driver of the vehicle that was hit was uninjured, pulled off the highway and called 911 to report the incident. The unidentified male subject was identified as Patrick La Monte Burns, 50, and a report will be forwarded to the Grant County District Attorney for menacing, reckless driving and reckless endangering.

Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 126 calls during the week of June 30 to July 5, including:

• John Day Police Department

June 30: Along with Long Creek ambulance, cited Caleb Vielme, 31, for driving while suspended and uninsured.

July 1: Morgan Westphal, 22, was cited for driving while suspended on Highway 395.

July 1: Received a report of trespassing in John Day.

July 2: Received a report of criminal mischief on Seventh Avenue.

July 3: Arrested Greg L. Whatley, 33, of John Day for driving under the influence on Main Street.

July 4: Received a report of attempted rape on First

Avenue.

• Oregon State Police

July 4: Advised of cattle on the roadway on Highway 26 near milepost 137.

July 5: Responded to a report of an injured deer on East Main Street.

• Grant County Sheriff's Office

June 30: Along with John Day and Long Creek ambulance, dispatched for an elderly man with a bladder issue on Trout Road.

June 30: Received a report of theft in Prairie City.

July 2: Received a report of theft in Canyon City.

July 5: Received a report of a burglary on Ingle Street.

• John Day ambulance

June 30: Responded for a 78-year-old woman who had become unresponsive on Canyon Mountain Trail.

June 30: Responded for an 82-year-old woman who was unresponsive on East Fifth Street.

• United States Forest Service

July 5: Responded to a request from a campground host to remove campers who were refusing to leave on Bull Prairie.

• Seneca ambulance

July 5: Responded to a 70-year-old man with arm pain on Park Avenue.

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