

Grants Pass

# Daily Courier

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THURSDAY  
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## Hot weather in forecast this summer for Southern Oregon’s wildfire season



SCOTT STODDARD / Daily Courier, 2024

The Salt Creek Fire, later determined to be human-caused, burns east of Eagle Point as nightfall approaches on July 7, 2024. The high temperature at the Medford airport weather station that day was 107 degrees, according to climate records.

By Vickie Aldous  
of the Daily Courier

The Rogue Valley is going into the summer fire season fully staffed with wildland firefighters, but hot weather in the forecast and a potential shortage of U.S. Forest Service and BLM support workers could pose dangers.

The area has above-average rain and snow-pack from a wet winter, but the National Weather Service predicts a hotter than normal summer across the entire country, said Dan Quinones, district forester for the Oregon Department of Forestry’s Southwest Oregon District.

“That’s going to exacerbate any new ignitions we may have — whether they be human or natural starts. Also, since it’s so widespread across the United States, I’m anticipating resource competition for fires, regardless of where they start,” Quinones said.

“The big unknown right now is the incident management teams and how their staffing is going to be impacted from people seeking different employment opportunities.”

**JEREMY DeLACK**  
Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest fire staff officer

Air tankers, helicopters and firefighters shift across the nation depending on what areas have the worst wildfires. During the worst fire years, there aren’t enough resources to go around. Workers from ODF, the Medford District

Bureau of Land Management, the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, local fire districts and the office of the Oregon State Fire Marshal briefed the Jackson County Board of Commissioners this week about the fire season.

ODF usually declares the start of fire season on June 1 in Southwest Oregon.

The ODF Southwest Oregon District protects 1.8 million acres of private and BLM land in Jackson and Josephine counties.

Trump administration cuts to federal agency staffing could leave the Forest Service and BLM without the support workers who normally help front-line firefighters on wildfires.

“We’re able to hire firefighters at this time. So our fire staffing — as long as people are applying, and they are — we’re able to hire firefighters. On the non-fire side, we’re not doing any hiring

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## Mining firm sues Josephine County over lease

By Chrissy Ewald  
of the Daily Courier

A local company that wants to mine for gold on forestland owned by Josephine County has followed through on a threat to take the county to court.

Circuit Court Judge Robert S. Bain ordered Josephine County to schedule a public hearing on American Mineral Research’s request and then execute a mining lease for the property, located near Wolf Creek, or come to court July 1 to explain why it has not done so.

County Legal Counsel Wally Hicks wrote in an email Wednesday that he plans to discuss the matter with the county Board of Commissioners and potentially formulate a response at a meeting next week.

American Mineral Research, founded by self-taught geologist Michael Cope, applied in 2019 to explore for minerals on the 76-acre, county-owned St. Peter Mine property. A mine on the property would access the “Martha vein” of minerals.

The company believes the bowtie-shaped property is situated over significant deposits of gold.

The company applied to mine the property in May 2023. On Oct. 17, 2024, the Board of Commissioners voted to sell the property. Since the property came into the county’s hands through foreclosure, it will need to go to a future auction, county Real Property Manager Helene Lulich wrote in an email last month.

In April, American Mineral Research filed a

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## Grants Pass to host forum on state homeless camping law

By Vickie Aldous  
of the Daily Courier

With confusion and uncertainty reigning about how an Oregon law on homeless camping affects communities, the city of Grants Pass will host a Listening and Learning Session about the law at 6 p.m. Monday in the Council Chambers, 101 N.W. A St.

The law passed by the Oregon Legislature went into effect in 2021. It requires cities that wish to regulate homeless camping on public property to have “objectively reasonable” regulations about when, where and how homeless people can camp.

The Grants Pass forum will provide an overview of where things stand legally under the state law, including information on recent circuit court decisions that have attempted to interpret the “objectively reasonable” standard.

If homeless people don’t think a local community’s regulations are reasonable, they can sue under the Oregon law.

Other states across the West were freed to

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## Walmart to raise prices due to tariff costs

By Anne D’Innocenzio  
Associated Press

Walmart’s first-quarter profit slipped, and it said it must raise prices due to higher costs from tariffs implemented by President Donald Trump.

The nation’s largest retailers posted strong quarterly sales today and said it expects sales growth of 3.5% to 4.5% in the second quarter.

Like many other U.S. companies, however, it did not issue a profit outlook for the quarter because of the chaotic environment, with stated U.S. tariff policies changing constantly. The company maintained its full-year guidance issued in February.

Many Americans have pulled back on spend-

ing as they grow uneasy about the economy. Government data revealed slowing sales growth for retailers today. Walmart said this morning that its consumers remain cautious and selective. Trump’s tariffs on China and other countries threaten the low-price model that is at the core of Walmart’s success.

Trump’s threatened 145% import taxes on Chinese goods were reduced to 30% in a deal announced Monday, with some of the higher tariffs on pause for 90 days.

Retailers and importers had largely stopped shipping shoes, clothes, toys, and other items with the duties so high, but many will now resume importing from China in the narrow window, hoping to avoid sparse shelves this fall. Yet many retailers say they must raise prices to

help cover tariff costs. And they are also bracing for higher shipping costs fueled by a surge of companies scrambling to get their goods on ships to the U.S.

Walmart has built in hedges against some tariff threats. Two-thirds of Walmart’s merchandise is sourced in the U.S., with groceries driving much of that. Groceries account for roughly 60% of Walmart’s U.S. business.

Still, Walmart isn’t immune.

“We will do our best to keep our prices as low as possible,” Walmart’s CEO Doug McMillon told industry analysts today. “But given the magnitude of the tariffs, even at the reduced levels announced this week, we aren’t able to

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## Older Americans in crosshairs as government restarts Social Security garnishment on student loans

By Matt Sedensky  
Associated Press

Christine Farro has cut back on the presents she sends her grandchildren on their birthdays, and she’s put off taking two cats and a dog for their shots. All her clothes come from thrift stores and most of her vegetables come from her garden. At 73, she has cut her costs as much as she can to live on a tight budget.

But it’s about to get far tighter.

As the Trump administration resumes collections on defaulted stu-

dent loans, a surprising population has been caught in the crosshairs: Hundreds of thousands of older Americans whose decades-old debts now put them at risk of having their Social Security checks garnished.

“I worked ridiculous hours. I worked weekends and nights. But I could never pay it off,” says Farro, a retired child welfare worker in Santa Ynez, California.

Like millions of debtors with federal student loans, Farro had her payments and interest paused by the government five years ago when the pandemic

thrust many into financial hardship. That grace period ended in 2023 and, earlier this month, the Department of Education said it would restart “involuntary collections” by garnishing paychecks, tax refunds and Social Security retirement and disability benefits.

Farro previously had her Social Security garnished and expects it to restart.

Farro’s loans date back 40 years. She was a single mother when she got a bachelor’s degree in developmental psychology and when she discovered

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ROSS D. FRANKLIN / Associated Press

Linda Hilton, a 76-year-old retired office worker, is seen at her home in Apache Junction, Arizona. “There won’t be any frills,” thanks to garnishment of her Social Security benefits, she says.



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A mix of sun and clouds  
OVERNIGHT LOW  
42°  
FRIDAY HIGH  
74°  
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