

Grants Pass

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Shelters will offer relief from the heat in Ashland, Grants Pass

By Susan Hiland
of the Daily Courier

Cooling shelters will be opening in Grants Pass and Ashland for a triple-digit heat wave expected to hit the Rogue Valley starting Thursday.

The Mobile Integrative Navigation Team in Grants Pass will be providing cooling services from Thursday to Sunday at its new Parker Place site, 218 Redwood Highway adjacent to Bi-Mart.

Hours are from 2-8 p.m.

The opening of the shelter was made possible by an emergency heat declaration triggered by the National Weather Service's issuance of an excessive heat warning.

The city does not operate severe event shelters but does assist groups that can operate such shelters when severe heat or cold temperatures blanket the area.

In Ashland, the severe weather shelter at 2200 Ashland St. will be open from noon to 7 p.m. each day beginning Thursday and continuing Sunday. There is limited space available at the location.

The shelter may remain open a few days more, depending on the heat wave and volunteer availability to staff the shelter.

The situation is less certain in Medford. City Hall said staff are working with the service provider ACCESS to open a cooling shelter but that ACCESS is understaffed at the moment. A shelter might be open by Friday.

In Medford, the Salvation Army will provide two temporary places to cool off.

The first place open is 304 Beatty St. from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. but will be closed Thursday for the Fourth of July holiday and on Friday. That location will provide water and a place to rest for 30 minutes.

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Hot weather triggers worries about fireworks across region

By Vickie Aldous
of the Daily Courier

The National Weather Service doesn't expect to issue a red flag warning for fire danger on the Fourth of July, but city officials in Grants Pass and Medford are still urging residents to be extra careful with fireworks as an excessive heat warning takes effect on Thursday.

The excessive heat warning lasts from the Fourth of July through

July 8, with high temperatures forecast to hit 105 degrees on Independence Day and peak at 112 degrees Saturday in the Grants Pass area.

High temperatures will remain above 100 degrees into next week, the National Weather Service predicts.

Forecasters also predict a high of 97 degrees on the Fourth of July in the Medford area, with the heat wave peaking at 104 degrees Saturday.

Grants Pass and Medford likely won't see a red flag warning for fire danger on the holiday, said Brad Schaaf, lead meteorologist at the National Weather Service office in Medford.

Red flag warnings for fire danger are triggered when the forecast calls for humidity of less than 15%, plus sustained winds of at least 10 mph or gusts of 20 mph or more for at least two hours, Schaaf said.

"Even though we're not going to

have a red flag warning, the very, very dry humidity will be problematic. Fires can still start from activities like fireworks," he said.

As of Tuesday afternoon, humidity in the Grants Pass area was at 18% — but that's expected to drop to 12% on the Fourth of July, Schaaf said.

Relatively light winds of 5-7 mph will likely keep the combined weather

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Dam removal restores Evans Creek flow



SCOTT STODDARD / Daily Courier

A gravelly riffle has replaced the demolished Williams-Whalen Dam on Evans Creek northeast of Wimer. At 150 feet across and 6 feet high, the dam was listed on the 2019 Statewide Fish Passage Barrier Priority List by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as being in need of removal.



Courtesy of WaterWatch of Oregon

Two excavators assist in the removal of the Williams-Whalen Dam on Evans Creek last month. The dam stood for 128 years before it was demolished to allow for the natural movement once again of salmon, steelhead and other fish.

By Susan Hiland
of the Daily Courier

WIMER — A work crew last week moved logs into place along the edge of Evans Creek, creating new habitat for small critters to hide and eat in.

Just days before, the spot was the site of the old Williams-Whalen Dam, which stood for 128 years before it was demolished to allow for the natural movement once again of salmon, steelhead and other fish.

Recreating habitat was the last finishing touch of a two-year project that made Williams-Whalen the third fish-impeding dam to be removed from the creek in the Evans Valley area of eastern Jackson County.

"This was not an insignificant dam," said John Speece, project manager for the Rogue River Watershed Council.

Said Melanie Klym, a senior engineer from River Design Group who helped on the project, "This went from being a hot bathtub to a flowing stream."

At 150 feet across and 6 feet high, the dam was listed on the 2019 Statewide Fish Passage Barrier Priority List by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as being in need of removal.

Demolition of the dam was part of a larger collaborative effort to restore access to habitat for native salmon and steelhead in Evans Creek, a key spawning tributary of the Rogue River.

"It had been over 50 years ago that the dam was

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Oregon expands free Medicaid to tens of thousands more people

By Lynne Terry
Oregon Capital Chronicle

After two years of planning, Oregon is officially expanding its Medicaid program to give tens of thousands of more people access to the free health insurance program.

The Oregon Health Authority announced Monday the launch of its OHP Bridge Plan to those who earn more than the federal limits for traditional Medicaid. The Oregon Health Plan, the state's version of Medicaid, currently covers 1.4 million Oregonians who earn up to 138% of the federal poverty level, or nearly \$21,000 a year for one person or more than \$43,000 a year for a family of four.

The OHP Bridge is extending Medicaid benefits to those who earn up to 200% of the federal poverty level. That means that individuals who earn about \$30,000 a year or families of four who earn \$62,400 a year will qualify.

Oregon Health Authority officials expect the plan to cover 100,000 Oregonians by 2027.

Dr. Sejal Hathi, director of the health authority, said in a news conference the plan marks a "significant milestone" in Oregon and will help eliminate health inequities, a health authority goal.

"We know that these higher rates of

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Some Oregon Democrats join GOP in calling for changes to camping laws

By Dirk VanderHart
Oregon Public Broadcasting

When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last week that cities are free to outlaw homeless encampments, Republicans in Oregon wasted no time calling for changes to a state law they say hampers local governments from cleaning camps.

Now some Democrats have begun

to join that call, potentially heightening the chance state lawmakers will act when they meet next year.

Two centrist Democratic lawmakers — Sen. Mark Meek of Gladstone and Rep. Paul Evans of Monmouth — are signaling they want to roll back a 2021 law that created vague limits on how cities can regulate camping on public property. They expect to be joined by even more Democrats in a

letter they plan to send to senior members of their party.

"Communities should have clarity, and we may need to rewrite the law," Evans said Monday. "Or because of this decision, the law may in effect be moot."

The hand-wringing over state policy comes after the court ruled an anti-camping law in Grants Pass did not violate constitutional protections

against cruel and unusual punishment — upending lower-court rulings that had limited regulation of homeless camping across much of the western United States.

The state law receiving renewed attention in light of that ruling was passed as House Bill 3115 in 2021. Championed by Gov. Tina Kotek when she served as House speaker, it requires that any local regulations on

where people can sleep be "objectively reasonable." The law allows homeless people to sue if they believe city policies don't meet that standard, which remains undefined.

"The intent behind House Bill 3115 was to affirm that cities choosing to regulate survival activities, like sitting, lying, sleeping, or keeping warm

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