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Subject: Smoke-Choked Skies Across Oregon Show Real Need for Change



News from Representative Walden

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Smoke-Choked Skies Across Oregon Show Real Need for Change

As I've traveled throughout our district, meeting with veterans, farmers, ranchers, small business owners, community leaders, and other hardworking Oregon families, I've seen something all too familiar regardless of where I go: smoke-choked skies and communities blanketed with haze.



Smoky skies reveal an orange sun in the Gorge on my way to Umatilla.



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Low visibility from smoke in Pendleton as poor air quality persists across eastern Oregon.



As I made my way through Baker, I could barely see the Elkhorn Mountains across the Baker Valley because of the smoke.

I've also received similar pictures from people across our district dealing with another summer filled with smoke. The photos often come with the same message: something needs to change.





Christy, a mother from southern Oregon, sent me this picture of hazy skies and told me, "my children want to play outside but they can't."

It's time for Congress to act for Oregon families like Christy's and people across the West who are suffering from unnaturally catastrophic wildfires every summer. I'm continuing to push the Senate to act on the Farm Bill forest management reforms passed in the House, so Oregon families don't have to be trapped inside all summer because of smoke.

Mail Tribune

Greg Walden: "Fix broken policies to help restore forests"

"We are hostages in our own homes." That's how Jennifer, a mother from Medford, described to me what communities in Southern Oregon and across the West are enduring yet again: a summer filled with smoke and fire.

Jennifer continued in her letter to me saying, "my children are robbed of being able to play outside. I absolutely hate that nothing is done to prevent this from happening."

[Click here](#) to learn more about the reforms I'm working to pass into law in my recent guest column for the Medford Mail Tribune.

Walden Brings Region's Top EPA Official to Southern Oregon to Meet with Citizens Concerned About Smoke



I welcomed the region's top official with the Environmental Protection Agency, Chris Hladick (seated center at head of table) to Medford to meet with concerned citizens about the health consequences of wildfire smoke.

Communities in southern Oregon and across the western United States are experiencing some of the worst air quality in the world because of wildfires. It is important to understand the full scope of the terrible health consequences of this smoke and what can be done to prevent these unnaturally devastating wildfires in the first place. That's why I invited the region's top official with the EPA, Chris Hladick, to Medford to meet with concerned citizens, small business owners, community leaders, and forest managers to hear firsthand how the smoke has impacted business and our everyday lives in Oregon.

The iconic Shakespeare Festival has cancelled 22 shows -- a record far surpassing the previous record of nine cancellations. Local high school sports teams have moved practices and games indoors, with unhealthy air quality making it unsafe to play outside. And white-water rafting on the Rogue River grinded to a halt with massive wildfires making this popular summer recreation destination too dangerous. All of this hurts our local economy and robs people of the enjoyment of our state's outdoors -- something unique that we cherish as Oregonians.





Rep. Greg Walden discussing smoke with Jackson Co. leaders

Jackson County's smoke committee met with Oregon Congressman Greg Walden Friday morning, along with an administrator from the Environmental Protection Agency. All committee members got the opportunity to voice their concerns as to how the smoke is impacting the people they serve.

[Click here](#) to learn more from KOB 5 in Medford.

This fall, I've announced that the Energy and Commerce Committee -- where I serve as Chairman -- will hold a hearing to examine the air quality, environmental, and health impacts of wildfire smoke. Data show that if we do the work upfront to reduce the fuel loads that have built up in our forests due to a lack of management, we can greatly reduce the intensity and carbon emissions of wildfires when they do strike. Who wouldn't want to take steps to stop wildfires from getting out of control and limit the carbon pollution dumped into our air from these fires?

To learn more about the upcoming hearing, please [click here](#).

Walden Receives Update on Efforts to Battle Taylor Creek and Klondike Fires



At the Incident Command Center at Lake Selmac on Friday, I received an update on efforts to contain the Taylor Creek and Klondike fires in southern Oregon. We must thank our brave firefighters for working tirelessly to battle wildfires raging across our state, and for putting themselves in harm's way protecting people and property throughout Oregon.

When wildfires do strike, I think it is important that we are fighting to extinguish them as aggressively as possible -- keeping in mind the longer they burn the more they dump carbon, fine particulates and carcinogens into our air and destroy more of our forests.

Recently, I wrote a letter to the Trump Administration raising these concerns and urging the President to expand use of active forest management practices on public lands to reduce risk of catastrophic wildfires. We can increase and improve the nation's firefighting and fire prevention efforts, which will greatly benefit people in Oregon and across the country.

Grants Pass Oregon's

Walden pays visit to Selma fire camp, says he'll fight to change forest policy

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden and local politicians heard the latest from fire managers Friday afternoon at the Klondike Fire camp pitched at Lake Selmac.

The lawmakers are concerned about the smoke, the size of the fires, and the worsening fire seasons in recent years.

Walden didn't publicly talk about his forest policy bills at fire camp, but afterward, before driving off to a flight from Medford to Bend, he said that he'll continue to fight for policies that thin the forests.

[Click here](#) to read more from the Grants Pass Daily Courier.

Walden Tours Blue Mountain Seeds' New Facility in Union County



Blue Mountain Seeds is a small business based in Union County that supports jobs for the local community and is continuing to expand. Recently, I was invited to join the team at Blue Mountain Seeds on a tour of their new seed cleaning facility outside of La Grande.

During our meeting, we discussed the upcoming Farm Bill, which is currently being negotiated between members of the House and Senate. This legislation is an important safety net for agriculture and members of the ag community like the hardworking people at Blue Mountain Seeds. It is also important to improve the management of our forests to reduce the wildfire smoke that has hurt small businesses like Blue Mountain Seeds across our state.

Farmers who were at the meeting told me that smoke levels drastically impact their ability to maintain normal production cycles and makes it impossible to use prescribed burns on schedule because of the air quality. The Senate needs to advance the House passed forest management reforms in the Farm Bill to change the policies that have negatively impacted farmers, ranchers, businesses, and ordinary people across the West during wildfire season.

THE OBSERVER

Walden tours Blue Mountain Seeds, speaks on

Walden tours Blue Mountain Seeds, speaks on Farm Bill

Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River) visited Blue Mountain Seeds' new seed cleaning facility on Wednesday. He met with members of the local agricultural community, including the owners and employees of the Imbler-based company. The next day, leaders from both parties in the House and the Senate had a conference call to begin discussions about the 2018 Farm Bill -- also known as the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 -- the legislation that reforms and continues the programs of the Department of Agriculture.

[Click here](#) to learn more about my meeting from the La Grande Observer.

Walden Speaks at OSU Agriculture Research Center in Hermiston

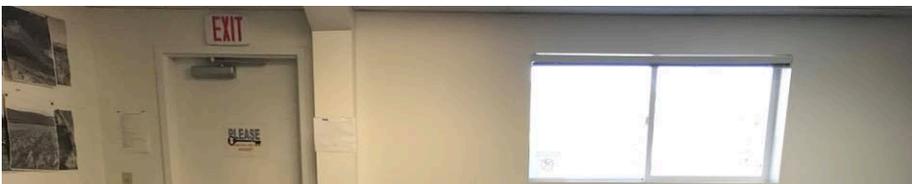


Oregon State University's Agricultural Research & Extension Center in Hermiston is at the forefront of equipping farmers with the tools they need to stay competitive, and ensuring students are prepared for in demand jobs in our community.

I am proud to have worked closely with the OSU team in Hermiston to fix an outdated federal provision that restricted the Extension Center's ability to grow. In addition, I supported legislation earlier this year to provide solid funding for the research centers across our district. These facilities give us the science-based research to provide better habitat for sage grouse; better, common sense policies on food safety and new efforts to combat pests.

It takes a lot to get this "Duck" to wear an "OSU" hat, but when it comes to Agricultural Research, no one does it better than the OSU crew. A big thank you to Director Phil Hamm, the entire Extension Center staff, and the ag community in eastern Oregon for your commitment to the success of this center and our students.

Walden Meets with Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District





In The Dalles, I met with the Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District team to receive an update on their work to help farmers recover after the devastating Substation Fire. I'm working closely with them to provide needed relief to local farmers and ranchers after this year's fires.

Farmers and ranchers -- especially in Wasco and Sherman counties -- have lost significant crop to rangeland fires that burned across the region. Years of work along 15 Mile Creek literally went up in smoke.

That's why I called on Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue to request relief for those impacted. I [requested that Secretary Perdue promptly approve the state of Oregon's disaster declaration, authorize emergency grazing for ranchers who lost substantial forage for their cattle in the fires and grant farmers flexibility to stabilize soil following the fires.](#) I'm glad to see that emergency grazing was authorized to area ranchers, and will continue to work to help the agriculture community in the Gorge get back on their feet after this devastating fire season.

The Dalles Chronicle

Fire aftermath clouds future

[Click here](#) to read more from The Dalles Chronicle.

In Warm Springs and Redmond, Walden Thanks Oregon Veterans for Their Service



The men and women who have worn our nation's uniform are owed our profound respect and gratitude. In Warm Springs this weekend, I was honored to recognize 28 veterans of the Korean War for their service.

The quote engraved in stone at the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C. says it best: "Our nation honors her sons and daughters who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met."



Presenting an American flag that was flown over the Capitol to Laura Jones for her efforts on behalf of Oregon veterans.

Later on in Redmond, I spent time talking with veterans and their families at the Veterans Appreciation Day BBQ organized by a local veterans' advocate, Laura Jones, who devotes her days to helping Oregon veterans. Laura put together the BBQ to show her support for local veterans in central Oregon, and the community rallied behind her. With more than \$3,000 in donations for raffle prizes and more than 400 pre-made hamburgers donated, Saturday's BBQ was a tremendous success. As a small token of appreciation for her work, I was proud to present Laura with an American flag flown over the Capitol in her honor.

I continue to support legislation in Congress to help get our veterans the care and support they deserve. I voted to pass into law historic funding for the VA to ensure they have the resources they need to boost mental health, opioid addiction, and suicide prevention programs. And we've secured reforms through the VA MISSION Act, which strengthens the VA and improves care for our veterans. This law includes a provision I authored to bring medical scribes into the VA system, so doctors can focus on the veteran rather than paperwork.

And over the last year, I've helped more than 600 veterans and military service members with issues regarding disability pay, benefits, and health care. If you or a loved one needs help with the VA or any federal agency, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office from Oregon at 800-533-3303. I will do everything I can to get results for you.

That's all for this update. Remember, you can always keep in touch with me via [email](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

It is an honor to represent you in the U.S. Congress.

Best regards,

Greg Walden
U.S. Representative
Oregon's Second District

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