

E-Board approves COVID-19 and wildfire relief

Tracy Loew

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Oregon Legislature approved millions of dollars more in state and federal funds to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the Labor Day wildfires.

“Our state has faced constant crises for the last 10 months, and legislators of the Emergency Board have acted swiftly and thoughtfully to help Oregonians who desperately need help,” House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said.

In December, during the Legislature’s third special session, lawmakers voted to move \$400 million into the state’s emergency fund for pandemic-related programs to support Oregonians during the first few months of 2021; and \$100 million to provide more support for Oregonians impacted by the Labor Day wild-

fires.

The new funds include \$17 million for wildfire preparedness, and \$324 million for educators to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It is a new year, but Oregon and her people are still hurting,” Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, said. “Today, we sent relief to Oregonians hit by the virus and the fires.”

The Legislature convenes Jan. 19 but will hold organizational meetings beginning Monday.

Here is a summary of the Emergency Board approvals, according to a joint news release from House and Senate leadership:

Pandemic relief:

- \$324 million in federal funds for grants to school districts and for staff to meet education needs of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- \$116 million in federal funds for emergency rental

and utility assistance to Oregonians from the December 2020 Congressional stimulus package.

- \$100 million to fund a commercial rent relief program.
- \$46 million to the Oregon Community Foundation to provide continued support to the Worker Relief Fund and the Quarantined Worker Fund, and the creation of a Small Enterprise Fund for small business assistance.
- \$19 million to the Oregon Health Authority for the public health response to COVID-19.
- \$15 million to assist residential and day camps that provide school-age childcare and other services.
- \$12 million for community behavioral health providers.
- \$9 million for grants of \$1 million each to Oregon’s

See E-BOARD, Page 3A



Kehlani Marie Coria was the first baby born in 2021 at Legacy Silverton Medical Center.

SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Meet the first babies born in 2021



Forward This

Capi Lynn
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Hope Wilkinson and Justin Sramek were prepared for their newborn to arrive on the last day of 2020, the perfect ending to a year many want to forget.

They arrived at the hospital at about 2 p.m. on Dec. 31.

They also prepared for a natural birth, but their baby girl had other plans.

Sophie Maxx Sramek made her entrance at 4:18 a.m. New Year’s Day, delivered by C-section at Salem Hospital’s Family Birth Center.

She weighed 7 pounds, 9 ounces, and was the first

baby born at the hospital in 2021.

Sophie was one of seven born there on Jan. 1. That’s about average for New Year’s Day births at Salem Hospital over the past 20 years, but it’s probably still too early to tell whether predictions of a COVID-19 baby boom may be on the horizon.

Sophie’s mom works as a pharmacy tech in Salem Hospital’s emergency department. Dad owns a local glass business.

The C-section became necessary after more than 24 hours of labor and when Sophie’s heart rate dropped, according to a Jan. 6 news release from Salem Health.

Mom and baby are both doing well, according to Sramek. He said Sophie’s birth was “the best way, absolutely” to start what everyone hopes will be a better

See BABIES, Page 4A

State committee suggests who is next for vaccines

Tracy Loew

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon’s Vaccine Advisory Committee has decided who it thinks should be next in line to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, likely in February or March.

Taking a consensus vote just minutes before a noon deadline Thursday, the committee approved the following list:

- BIPOC: Black, African American, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, tribal and urban-based Natives, Pacific Islanders.
- Adults 16-64 with chronic conditions.
- Adults and youth eligible for vaccine in custody; prison and jail frontline workers.
- Frontline workers not already in Phase 1a or 1b.

- Multi-generational homes.
- People under the age of 65 living in low-income senior housing and other congregate senior housing.

Groups within the list are not prioritized. Details of exactly who is in each group will be determined at future meetings.

Deadline pressure

The two-hour committee meeting repeatedly veered off track, and specific recommendations weren’t considered until about 25 minutes before it ended.

As the clock ticked down, the list was extensively revised to get group consensus. A few recommenda-

See VACCINE, Page 2A

Reduced hydropower at Detroit Dam sparks lawsuit

Bill Poehler

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Army Corps of Engineers made changes in the operations at Detroit Dam to aid threatened species of fish before it was forced in court to do so, a move that has prompted another lawsuit.

The Public Power Council filed suit in district court, alleging the Corps violated multiple federal acts and legislation when it curtailed some of its power production at the dam. The council is a trade group for municipal and public utility districts and electric cooperatives in Oregon and five western states.

The Corps made operational changes to Detroit Dam in November, including stopping hydropower production through its turbines in the morning and evening during the winter months and adding a mechanism to monitor and count juvenile salmon making their way downstream on the North Santiam River below Big Cliff Dam.

Those were some of the changes requested by several environmental groups after an August ruling against the Corps. The Corps was found to be years behind the timeline needed to complete work it was required under a 2008 settlement and hadn’t altered operations in the interim to aid salmon.

“The Corps’ decision to turn off turbines in the middle of the winter peak power-using season came as a complete surprise to PPC and our public power utility members across five states, as there was no public process to let anyone know,” PPC executive director Scott Simms said in a statement.

The Army Corps of Engineers didn’t immediately respond to a message for comment about the lawsuit.

Reducing hydropower production

In August, a federal judge found the Corps is years behind its 2008 Biological Opinion timeline, and pushing native Chinook and steelhead to the brink of extinction.

The lawsuit was filed by environmental groups WildEarth Guardians, Native Fish Society and the Northwest Environmental Defense Center.

In November, the Corps announced an interim measure to curtail electricity production through the turbines at the dam between 6-10 a.m. and 4-10 p.m. from Nov. 1 through Feb. 21

The Corps said the move was to aid passage for juvenile Chinook and steelhead down the North Santiam River past the Big Cliff Dam and Detroit Dam.

But the Public Power Council said in a press release that those moves reduced the power production at Detroit Dam by 60% during the winter months and 15% of the power it produces overall.

The dams block approximately 70% of Chinook and 33% of steelhead habitat in the Willamette Valley.

Chinook and steelhead were listed as “threatened” under the Environmental Species Act in 1999, which gave them protections and required that steps would have to be taken to ensure the native species’ survival.

The Corps has been working on a downstream fish passage and temperature control project at Detroit

See DAM, Page 3A



The Detroit Dam was constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Willamette Valley and began operating in 1953. FILE / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Online at SilvertonAppeal.com

News updates: • Breaking news • Get updates from the Silverton area

Photos: • Photo galleries

Vol. 140, No. 5

Serving the Silverton Area Since 1880
A Unique Edition of the Statesman Journal



©2021 50 cents
Printed on recycled paper