

County surpasses 1,200 COVID-19 cases

Extreme risk pandemic safety measures to remain in place until at least late February

By KALEB LAY
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Due to continued spread of COVID-19, Union County has once again missed the mark to escape categorization as “extreme risk” under Oregon’s risk and protection framework.

The county will remain under the state’s most stringent COVID-19 protection measures until at least late February. The county reached the 60-case threshold for extreme risk categorization on Thursday, Feb. 4. To fall into a different risk category, Union County needed to record fewer than 60 cases during the two-week period from Jan. 24 to Feb. 6. However, spread of the virus during that span did not slow sufficiently, and as a consequence, restaurants will remain closed to in-person dining until at

least Feb. 26, when the next movement week changes take effect. Cases have remained high despite the absence of active workplace outbreaks in Union County, according to the Oregon Health Authority’s outbreak report published Wednesday, Feb. 3. As of Friday, Feb. 5, Union County reported a total of 1,225 cases of COVID-19, with 42 of those cases since Jan. 31 and 30 cases since the week before. The virus has killed 18 people in the county.

That is a local fatality rate of one in every 68 confirmed cases. More details came to light in an OHA press release regarding the 18th person to die of COVID-19 in Union County. The victim was an 84-year-old woman who tested positive on Wednesday, Jan. 20, and died the following week on Friday, Jan. 29, at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande. The state of Oregon crept toward another troubling threshold this week as the COVID-19 death toll approached 2,000. The statewide death toll

stood at 1,998 as of Thursday, Feb. 4. Even as statewide daily cases continue to ebb, the loss of yet another Union County resident and the Beaver State death toll — zero at this point a year ago, unthinkable to many — serve as painful reminders that COVID-19 is a deadly and serious disease. In all, Oregon had reported 145,320 cases of COVID-19 as of Feb. 4, and the presence of at least one coronavirus variant

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Bentz: Greene should keep her seats on committees

Georgia representative backs off false claims about 9/11, more

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

WASHINGTON — Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, voted Thursday, Feb. 5, against removing controversial freshman Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Georgia, from all committee assignments. Democrats sought to remove Greene from the House Education and Labor and the Budget committees, citing her history of advancing conspiracy theories, harassing a mass shooting victim, and advocating for the right-wing conspiracy theory group QAnon. The vote, primarily along party lines, was 230-199, with 11 Republicans joining Democrats in voting yes. “I find Rep. Greene’s previous comments and actions deeply offensive and totally unacceptable,” said Bentz, the first-term congressman from Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District. “However, she went to the House Floor to say she regrets her comments and actions.” Bentz said Democrats should have gone to House Ethics Committee first. “I cannot support an unprecedented vote by House Democrat Majority to strip the congresswoman of her committee assignments.” The House debate included a 10-minute address by Greene, trying to reassure her new colleagues that she was not dangerous and disconnected from reality, as some claimed.



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A DREAM COME TRUE

Work on Tamkaliks grounds will provide fish habitat



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Nez Perce Tribal Fisheries biologists Montana Pagano, left, and Kate Frenyea point out the design characteristics of one channel that includes a deeper-water alcove that will provide fish habitat during low streamflow.



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Side-channel construction is retaining as much native and existing beneficial vegetation as possible, including this tree.

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — When he first joined the board of the Wallowa Band Nez Perce Homeland Project more than 20 years ago, Joe McCormack dreamed of restoring the Tamkaliks grounds to their native condition. Today, some of the Wallowa County resident’s dream is coming true. Nez Perce Tribal Fisheries has started a half-million-dollar project on the Tamkaliks grounds that provides habitat for juvenile salmon and other fish, and will restore native plants to the Tamkaliks landscape. “We’re hoping this will represent what the river had originally been like, including a lot of braided channels,” said McCormack, who works for Nez Perce Tribal Fisheries. “We need this kind of thing here, if we want coho and lamprey and the other species that we are trying to reintroduce to prevail.”

The \$500,000 NPTF project, funded by both the Grande Ronde Model Watershed through the Bonneville Power Administration and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, got started in early January. It includes a total of about 10 acres of the 320-acre Homeland Project (Tamkaliks) property just north of Wallowa. The first phase — constructing side channels along the Wallowa River and planting willows and other native plants on the banks and floodplain — will conclude in March. Camas and tule reeds, important to Nez Perce as foods and in their culture, will be included in the reintroduced native vegetation, said project director and Nez Perce Fisheries biologist Katie Frenyea. The side channels, which vary from about 3 feet to more than 6 feet deep, are designed to be rearing habitat for juvenile steelhead, coho salmon and spring Chinook salmon, Frenyea said. “The young fish need a place to get out of the faster water in the main river channel and rest. The Wallowa River is almost like a flume here,” she said. “The side channels will provide places to eat, be safe from predators, rest, and even provide a place for young fish to over-winter.” The alcoves — deeper pools where the channels and also an irrigation ditch rejoin the river — “will be heavily vegetated to

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
36 LOW
An evening shower



Sunday
39/31
A few flurries

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