



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

Shannon White, regional testing liaison for Grande Ronde Hospital, gives directions to Doug Ross for a self-administered COVID-19 test in the Bi-Mart parking lot in La Grande on Friday, Aug. 27, 2021. The number of people in Oregon hospitalized with COVID-19 will stay above 400 statewide through the holidays, according to the forecast from Oregon Health & Science University.

COVID-19 recovery slows, but no sign of a new spike

State reports 67% of all Oregonians — including kids — have been vaccinated

By **GARY A. WARNER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon’s rebound from the delta variant spike in COVID-19 has slowed, with hospitalizations remaining high through February, a new state forecast reported Thursday, Nov. 11.

The number of people in Oregon hospitalized with COVID-19 will stay above 400 statewide through Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s, according to the forecast from Oregon Health & Science University, Portland.

Dr. Peter Graven, director of the OHSU Office of Advanced Analytics, said due to the availability of vaccines, Oregon won’t experience the kind of surge in infections that swept the state last winter.

“At this time a year ago, we were going straight up,” Graven said.

The Oregon Health Authority reported Nov. 10 that 67% of all Oregonians — including children — have been vaccinated. Among adults, 72% are vaccinated.

The health authority reports that only Gilliam, Grant, Malheur and Lake

counties have less than half of adults vaccinated.

Seven counties have vaccinated more than two-thirds of all residents, including children — Lincoln, Multnomah, Benton, Hood River, Washington, Deschutes and Lane counties.

OHSU forecasts that hospitalizations will dip under 200 per day by the beginning of February. That is two months longer than OHSU forecast last month and a month longer than forecast just last week.

The Oregon Health Authority reported Nov. 10 that 509 Oregonians remained hospitalized with COVID-19.

That’s less than half the number at the peak of the latest spike, when 1,178 were hospitalized on Sept. 1. The agency did not release updated statistics on Nov. 11 due to its offices being closed for Veterans Day.

The virus continues to be the major reason for patients to be in intensive care units. COVID-19 patients make up 22% of those currently in the state’s intensive care units, up from 18% last week, OHSU reported.

Environmentalists say feds aren’t protecting fish

Group decries alleged violations of the Endangered Species Act

By **ALEX BAUMHARDT**
Oregon Capital Chronicle

PORTLAND — The first time Nina Bell heard that the Columbia River was getting warmer was in the early 1990s.

Scientists advising the state Department of Environmental Quality warned that the river in some places was becoming a danger to migrating fish, she said.

“They called it out, said the temperatures were jeopardizing the fish — jeopardizing as in their continued existence — then turned around and told agencies to come up with a plan, which itself is just the same thing they criticized,” she said.

Today, Bell is executive director of Northwest Environmental Advocates, and her organization is suing the National Marine Fisheries Service over what it believes is too many plans. The suit, filed Nov. 2 in U.S. District Court, aims to invalidate a 2015 opinion the agency issued on the safe heat threshold for fish in the Columbia and Willamette rivers, and claims the federal agency failed to act pragmatically to save threatened and endangered fish by reducing water temperatures in the two rivers during the last 30 years.

They want the national fisheries agency to revise the study to impose tougher standards, and make the

federal Environmental Protection Agency and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality take direct action.

Officials from the fisheries service said the agency doesn’t comment on active litigation.

It is the fourth time since 2001 that Bell’s organization has sued a federal agency over rising temperatures in Oregon rivers, claiming those agencies are violating the Endangered Species Act by not mandating other environmental agencies take action to moderate river water temperatures.

Instead of pressing for action, federal officials only ask for more plans, according to the lawsuit.

“None requires that direct action be taken that may impact baseline river conditions to potentially reduce jeopardy to these species,” the complaint contends.

In its 2015 study, the fisheries service found that cold-water refuges needed to be protected in parts of the Columbia and Willamette rivers. Such spots provide endangered salmon and steelhead that are migrating a place that when river temperatures exceed 68 degrees. Heat can allow damaging diseases to promulgate in fish and can cause stress that inhibits growth and spawning, according to that study.

Judges, court staff among most vaccinated of all state workers

By **AIMEE GREEN**
The Oregonian

SALEM — More than 92% of some 1,800 state court employees and judges across Oregon are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 now that a mandate handed down by state Supreme Court Chief Justice Martha Walters took full effect Nov. 5.

That represents an increase of about 6 percentage points since Walters issued her order in mid-September — and elevates the state court system to one of the most vaccinated big departments in the state.

State courts produced a higher vaccination rate than Oregon’s executive branch, which stood at only 85% as of two days after its vaccination mandate took effect. Gov. Kate Brown’s executive-branch order applies to more than 40,000 state employees, but not the judicial branch, which required its own directive from Walters.

The state courts’ rate also is notably higher than individual executive

branch agencies employing more than 1,000 workers — including, as of Oct. 20, the Department of Corrections at 75%, the Department of Transportation at 81%, the Department of Human Services at 86%, and the Department of Justice at 89%.

The state courts’ vaccination rate, too, exceeds the reported rate of every category of health care worker, with the exception of Oregon dentists, with 94% fully vaccinated, according to state data through Nov. 1.

In comparison, 72% of adult Oregonians statewide are fully vaccinated.

Walters’ mandate applies to the Oregon

Court of Appeals, Oregon Supreme Court and Oregon Judicial Department employees and elected and pro-tem judges in Oregon’s circuit courts.

But it doesn’t apply to many courthouse regulators, including prosecutors, defense attorneys and deputies moving detained defendants to and from courtrooms.

In Walters’ order, she required state courts employees and judges to get at least partially vaccinated by Oct. 1 and fully vaccinated no later than Nov. 5.

In an email sent to state court employees, she said her vaccination order was part of the department’s

“efforts to keep our courts open and safe” and thanked employees for complying with it.

Of note, 256 of 258 state court judges are fully vaccinated, with just two unvaccinated but still on the job because they received religious or medical exceptions.

Among court employees, 1,441 of 1,581 — amounting to 91% — are fully vaccinated, with 108 of them receiving exceptions.

Another 18 employees are awaiting approval of their exception requests. As of last week, the judicial department had denied one request for an exception so far.

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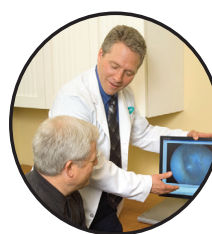
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