

COVID ...

Continued from A-1

For core preparedness criteria to be met, the county would have to be conducting an adequate amount of virus testing and contact tracing, have sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical responders, and have thorough plans for government functions like mass transit, community education and critical industries.

Josephine County Public Health received the results of 1,120 COVID-19 tests as of April 28. This indicates that approximately 1.3% of Josephine County’s population has been tested. The Oregon Health Authority has estimated that the minimum need for testing is a ratio of 30 tests per 10,000 persons per week (262 tests per week for Josephine County). The main specimen collection site for COVID-19 in Josephine County is administered by Siskiyou Community Health Center, which uses LabCorp to carry out the tests. Many residents of Josephine County have also been sent to the Asante

drive-through testing site, located in neighboring Jackson County, which uses the BDMax platform for testing. By combining all the regional testing facilities together, a conservative estimate puts Josephine County’s reliable capacity for testing at a minimum of 1,000 tests per week. The Oregon Health Authority concluded that Region 5 (Jackson and Josephine counties) are currently averaging a weekly testing rate of 30.4 tests per 10,000 people, meeting the criterion.

Where contact tracing is concerned, JoCo Public Health claims to have more than enough personnel to carry out investigations into individuals which infected persons may have spread the virus to. PPE is adequately supplied, but the plan indicated that, “If non-essential medical procedures open up, or the state supply line is disrupted, Josephine County would be unable to meet PPE demand.” Region 5 has a medical surge capacity of 383 beds, which can all be converted to ICU beds if necessary. Availability of these beds has remained around a third, ranging between 110-130 beds. This is

enough to meet the criterion for ICU surge capacity.

Josephine County understands that a Phase 1 reopening will be limited to only those establishments allowed under Governor Brown’s Reopening Oregon Plan to include restaurants, personal services, retail, child care, transit and outdoor recreation.

“This is the biggest thing for the public to know,” Commissioner Lily Morgan said. “Phase 1 is not a complete opening of everything back to normal the way it was before we closed things down. Phase 1 is a very intentional, incremental approach to making sure that as we open, still keeping safety guards in place, that we can respond and have the resources to increase testing, increase response and ability. It is not opening movie theaters; it’s not opening up sporting venues; it’s not opening up mass gatherings.”

One point of contention that came up when county officials met to discuss reopening was worship services. “I find it very odd and almost a little bit embarrassing that we’re looking at massage parlors and beauty salons and nail salons

and not looking at our faith-based community.” Commissioner Dan DeYoung said. “Our faith-based communities (are) probably more needed now for the well-being and the spiritual being of our constituents than getting my nails done.”

“I just want to add that the Federal government guidelines put sports, theaters and churches opening in Phase 1 with the strict physical distancing and sanitation protocols but the Oregon comments so far, the working comment, is (that they’re) likely to remain closed during Phase 1. I don’t think that should stop us from asking the question,” Board Chairman Darin Fowler added.

It was ultimately decided to add an additional exhibit for worship services to be reopened, which read as follows in the reopening plan: “In recognition of the importance of faith-based organizations to the community, and to the importance of the social services they provide, Josephine County will allow the opening of faith-based services in accordance with the request to the Governor... This will allow for the reopening of religious services by the Local Public Health Authority

(LPHA) once each organization has submitted a mitigation plan outlining how seating will ensure social distancing, how any food distribution will be done in a safe manner, and how pre/post-service social distancing will be maintained.”

DeYoung relayed, “I did some math this morning early when I got in to work here on those five counties that signed on to the letter with Douglas; of Coos, Curry, Jackson, Josephine and Douglas, there are 506,725 residents in those five counties, and to date... there’s only 98 cases of COVID through those five counties and one death.” The implications of this data reinforce a view held among many Southern Oregon residents, including all three commissioners, that the restrictions rural counties are forced to comply with are drastic given the modest impact coronavirus has had on the region. However, as Fowler has pointed out, it is impossible to know for sure if the government overreacted in its response because no one can say with certainty how events would have unfolded in lieu of a stay at home order.

From the mayor’s desk



It has been a busy two weeks. Governor Kate Brown announced her draft of the Reopening Oregon Plan in Week 6, and the following week on May 1, Week 7, she held a press conference to introduce the key steps for reopening.

Oregon’s strategies include testing and contact tracing for Oregonians who are displaying

any symptoms of the coronavirus and randomized testing to monitor where the disease is hiding. Testing guidelines are changing. Along with high risk populations like health care workers, farm workers, and people on the front lines like first responders, grocery workers and bus drivers, everyone who needs a test, gets a test. The COVID-19 symptoms are cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, sore throat and new loss of taste or smell.

All hospitals in Oregon have agreed to unified testing statewide in every region of the state. Shortages are easing up. It is estimated that Oregon has the capacity, using a variety of different platforms and commercial lab partners, to do 15,000 tests per week.

In addition to ramping up testing, the state is adding 600+ staff who will focus on increased contact

tracing. Staff will include bilingual and culturally specific people who can reach communities of color and those populations especially vulnerable.

In order to reopen and stay open, randomized widespread testing across the state will be implemented. In partnership with Oregon Health Sciences University, the program called “Be the Key” will give us a more accurate understanding of the true rate of the infection in Oregon and will monitor any new outbreaks. This tool is a critical piece of the testing puzzle to keep Oregon open. A random sampling of 100,000 volunteers will be invited to participate in this program for one year. Invitation letters will be mailed out May 11. If you receive a letter, please consider volunteering.

We are truly all in this together. We have flattened the curve and lives have been saved. This has been

an incredible effort with significant impacts on all sectors of our personal lives and local businesses. We are expecting that opening Oregon may increase the number of infections. We will not be able to eliminate this virus, but we hope to control the infection rate. This will not be back to business as usual and it will probably be a slower process than any of us would like. That is why we all need to continue doing our part. Wear face masks, practice physical distancing, stay home, and delay any non-essential travel.

Governor Brown requested that all Oregon Counties submit a plan for reopening by May 1. These plans will be evaluated for meeting the “Reopening Oregon” requirements and the governor, in consultation with her teams of experts, will determine the timeline. Some counties could begin the Phase 1 opening process as soon as May 15.

Josephine County Public Health Director Michael Weber presented a 17-page document to the county commissioners. The reopening criteria have been met and the document was approved by the commissioners and submitted to the governor’s office. Cross your fingers! I am hopeful that Josephine County could be in the first wave of Phase 1 reopening.

This has been a lot of technical detail and there are other important things in our lives to remember. During these stressful times, let’s not forget how essential it is to be kind and thoughtful, to go outside and get fresh air, to do something nice for ourselves daily, and to tell our families and friends how much we love and appreciate them. Especially remember to appreciate and honor those heroes who are out on the coronavirus front lines every day.



THE GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ARE RIGHT OUTSIDE YOUR DOOR.

SAVE \$20*

FS 40 C-E TRIMMER

WAS \$169⁹⁵ SNW-SRP

\$149⁹⁵

★★★★★

“Great quality, easy to handle.”

- redfender



SAVE \$80*

RMA 460 V SELF-PROPELLED BATTERY LAWN MOWER SET

WAS \$629⁹⁵ SNW-SRP

\$549⁹⁵

Includes AK 30 battery and AL 101 charger.

Provides quick and efficient self-propelled cutting



SAVE \$20*

MS 170 CHAIN SAW

WAS \$179⁹⁵ SNW-SRP

\$159⁹⁵

★★★★★

“It starts easily and runs great.”

- Dick44

16" bar*



SAVE \$50*

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT KIT

WAS \$149⁹⁵ SNW-SRP

\$99⁹⁵

PPE Kit Includes: Function Basic Helmet, Black 6-Ply Chaps, Protective Glasses, Work Gloves, and Duffel Bag with STIHL logo

Dave's Outdoor Power Equipment

287 Hamilton Ave. | Cave Junction

541-592-3416 | davesope.com