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**WEATHER**  
**MOSTLY SUNNY, HIGHS IN**  
**LOW-80S, NIGHTTIME LOWS**  
**IN THE 50S**



**Plein Air exhibit opens for August.**

page B10



**4-H, FFA have 'little piece of the fair'**

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# Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER | THE DALLES | WHITE SALMON

Wednesday, August 5, 2020 Volume 1, Issue 18

\$1.00

## Crews battle Fir Mountain Fire

### Blaze burns at Wasco-Hood River county line

By Kirby Neumann-Rea  
*Columbia Gorge News*

Controlling the spot fires surrounding the main body of Fir Mountain fire was the main task Monday at the timber and wildland fire straddling the Hood River and Wasco County line.

Firefighters were challenged with wind and dry vegetation as they used dozers and hand crews to construct fireline on the fire perimeter. Air resources, including large air tankers and water scooping aircraft were used throughout the day to support ground resources in efforts to control the spread of the fire. As resources are available, air attack was scheduled to continue Monday (after press time). A fire camp has

been established at Hood River County Fairgrounds in Odell.

The fire has grown to approximately 250 acres by Monday, burning on private forestland and Hood River County ownership.

The fire is located eight miles southeast of Hood River, burning east from Fir Mountain Road toward Gilbertson Road. Single tree torching and spotting across the fireline has hampered efforts to secure the perimeter in some areas. Dozers are being used to construct fireline where the terrain allows, and hand crews are working in areas where slope limits access for equipment.

The fire was reported late Saturday night. The cause is not yet known, according to Kyle Nairns of ODF, who said rising winds are a concerning factor in the spread of the fire. Gusts up to 13 miles an

See **FIRE**, page 8



A helicopter with a bucket works the Fir Mountain Road fire southeast of Hood River Sunday, Aug. 2, 2020. The Dalles Unit of the Oregon Department of Forestry is the lead agency on the fire. Oregon Department of Forestry photo

## ELECTIONS



A drop box in Bingen awaits ballots for the Aug. 4 primary election in Washington. Preliminary results will be made available online. Jacob Bertram photo

## Washington Primary results online

Preliminary results from the Aug. 4 primary in Washington state are available online at whitesalmonenterprise.com.

The top-two vote recipients, regardless of party preference, will proceed to the general election in November.

In Klickitat County, multiple seats are up for election, including both spots for Dist. 14 Representative as well as Klickitat County Commissioner positions 1 and 3. A proposal to lift the levy lid for Dallesport Fire District No. 6 from \$.368 to \$.90 per \$1000 of assessed value also appears on the Aug. 4 ballot.

Up for election in Skamania County is County Commissioner positions 1 and 2.

In both counties, residents will also vote for Congressional District #3 U.S. Representative and participate in multiple statewide races for Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General, among others.

## Filing begins for Wasco Co. elections

By Emily Fitzgerald  
*Columbia Gorge News*

Over 30 local offices in Wasco County are up for election this November — including the Wasco County Sheriff, Clerk and Treasurer, and mayoral seats in The Dalles, Dufur, Maupin, Mosier, Antelope and Shaniko.

The cities of The Dalles, Dufur, Maupin, Mosier and Antelope each have three open positions on their respective city councils, and four seats are open on the Shaniko City Council. The City Recorder position in Shaniko is also up for election in November.

In addition, the Northern Wasco People's Utility District and the Chenoweth Water Public Utility

See **WASCO**, page 8

## Schools plan for distance learning

### In HR, Online and comprehensive options offered, campuses will remain closed

By Kirby Neumann-Rea  
*Columbia Gorge News*

"A fast pivot." That's Rich Polkinghorn's term for the change, in the past week, to a two-pronged plan for distance learning in Hood River County School District this fall.

Superintendent Polkinghorn, a month into the job, announced July 28 that the district will not provide on-site learning until 2021, if then.

Schools will not be open to students at least through November, in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

The district had planned to formalize its choice between distance, on-site, and hybrid models in the School Board meeting on Aug. 12, but the message from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and Gov. Kate Brown on July 27

changed that timeline overnight.

"With the guidance provided today, we are shifting our focus from On-site Learning Model to Comprehensive Distance Learning," Polkinghorn stated on the district website and in a letter sent July 28 to families. "I will continue to collaborate with the Hood River County Health Department, the ODE and Oregon Health Authority to assess when it will be safe to return to on-site learning. The earliest we anticipate making a change to on-site learning will be early November, to coincide with the end of the first quarter/trimester."

Keeping campuses closed, except for the possibility of staff being in buildings, is expected through November, "provided we can meet the requirements of state COVID rates," Polkinghorn said. "Those rates aren't anything the district can control, it's our community following the recommendations of Oregon Health Authority and wearing face masks, washing hands, and people staying home if they're sick."

See **PIVOT**, page 10

## Northern Wasco County D21 to start with online-only format

In a July 30 letter to parents and guardians with kids in North Wasco County Schools District 21, Interim Superintendent Theresa Peters said the district will begin the 2020-21 school year online in a "comprehensive distance learning" format.

Peters explained that the Oregon Department of Education and the Oregon Health Authority's release the health metrics required for local districts to provide in-school instruction during the current pandemic clarified district plans.

"In order for families and staff to plan, we will use the Comprehensive Distance Learning format until Oct. 16"

rather than on-site classroom teaching, Peters wrote. "We will monitor the health metrics at the state and county levels to determine whether we continue with Comprehensive Distance Learning or if we are able to move to a hybrid model after Oct. 16."

A hybrid model would be a combination of in-school and distance learning for students. "We are also exploring a full distance learning format as an option for some students," said Peters. "Comprehensive Distance Learning" will not be the same as distance learning from this past spring, which was a response

See **ONLINE**, page 10

## A05 Annex receives PNW Chairman's Award

By Trisha Walker  
*Columbia Gorge News*

Hood River Valley High School's A05 Annex — FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) team — learned it had won the prestigious Pacific Northwest Chairman's Award via an online ceremony June 25.

It was one of three teams located in Oregon, Washington and Alaska to win the honor. HRVHS was up against teams from Renton, Oak Harbor, Seattle, Tacoma and Issaquah in Washington, Umatilla and Lake Oswego in Oregon, and Anchorage in Alaska, and is now ranked 10th in the Pacific

Northwest.

"This is the highest award given to a team," said engineering teacher Jeff Blackman. "The award is based on the team's robot and community service."

But it's not the only award A05 Annex won during this year's shortened season. On March 1, A05 Annex won the Clackamas Chairman's Award during the FRC competition at Clackamas Academy of Industrial Sciences. The students competed against 250 teams from Oregon, Washington and Alaska for that award.

Community service includes

the FAB bus, a well-known sight around the county, bringing STEM projects to elementary and migrant students, among others. Students coordinate the annual June First Friday STEM Fair in downtown Hood River, where families can see robots up close and tour the FAB bus (canceled in 2020 due to COVID-19). This year, students also began a Unified Robotics program, bringing robotics to differently-abled classmates and organizing a competition between teams from various schools.

These awards "best represent a model for other teams to emulate

and best embodies the purpose and goals of FRC," according to an FRC news release. A05 Annex has "prioritized breaking down the barriers that prevent students from participating in FRC by developing bilingual STEM curriculum and materials (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics). To spread the word, their Gorge FAB Bus, plastered with FRC stickers, starts students on the road to a successful future."

A05 Annex 2020 team members are: Edith Soto, team captain, class

See **ROBOTICS**, page 8

## TOWN HALL

### State regulations for COVID raise liability questions

### Region's hospitals have been 'resilient'

By Rodger Nichols  
*For Columbia Gorge News*

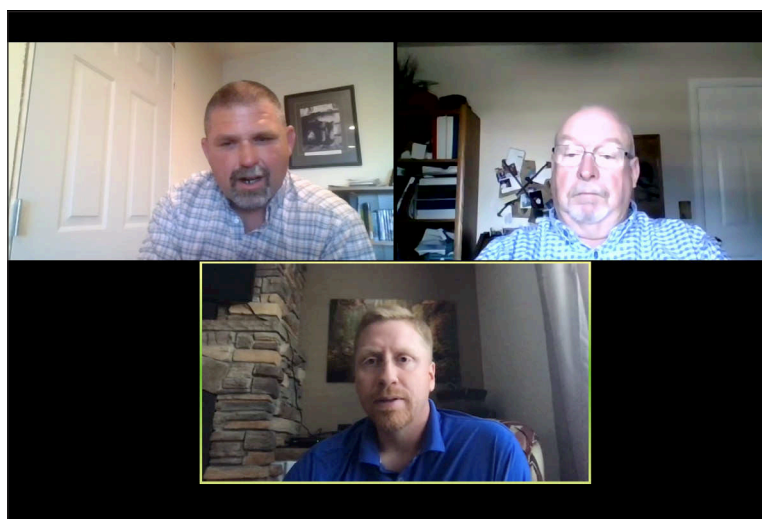
Eastern Oregon State Reps. Dan Bonham and Mark Owens and State Sen. Lynn Findley held the seventh of their biweekly town halls on Thursday. District 59 Rep. Bonham said all of them had been working hard on various legislative topics.

"The conversation I've been

involved in, in Salem, recently has been tied to the discussion of liability," he said. "If the state is going to put forward the regulations that they've put forward and dictate to a large extent how business, how nonprofits, how local jurisdictions, how school districts can conduct business, then they need to provide some liability protection in case of COVID exposure."

Bonham was asked, in light of the sharp downturn in state

See **SALEM**, page 10



Eastern Oregon State Reps. Dan Bonham (above center), Mark Owens (top left) and State Sen. Lynn Findly (top right) hold their seventh virtual town hall Thursday, July 30. Rodger Nichols photo

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