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## WEATHER

HIGHS IN 80S-90S IN THE DALLES, COOLER IN HOOD RIVER



Mask sale supports Mid-Columbia Senior Center, community. page A12



Kids receive free books, see "kid's Space" page B1

# Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER | THE DALLES | WHITE SALMON

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\$1.00

## Regional jail to end ICE contracts

By Emily Fitzgerald  
Columbia Gorge News

The Northern Oregon Regional Correctional Facility (NORCOR) will terminate its housing contracts with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE), the jail announced Thursday.

The NORCOR Board of Directors voted unanimously during an Aug. 20 meeting to discontinue housing all custodies for ICE, and the jail management will "initiate the steps

within contractual requirements to terminate the housing agreements." They will give the board an update at their September meeting, said a NORCOR press release.

While the regional jail has faced public pressure to terminate their ICE contracts for years, the decision to terminate the contracts "comes as the overall numbers of in custody episodes has declined over the past year, decreasing the reliance of revenue for the NORCOR budget," according to a press release.

NORCOR's federal inmate housing contract is expected to contribute \$268,000 to the jail's total revenue for both adult and juvenile detention facilities in the 2020/21 fiscal year — compared to \$820,000 in the 2019/20 fiscal year and \$913,872 in the 2018/19 fiscal year — according to NORCOR budget proposal documents.

While NORCOR's ICE contract has seen a significant reduction in revenue, NORCOR's housing contract with the U.S. Marshals saw

a significant increase in the 2020/21 budget jumping from \$23,200 and \$18,000 in 2018/19 and 2019/20, respectively, to \$891,500 in the proposed budget for the 2020/21 fiscal year. Funds from this contract go exclusively to the Adult Corrections facility in the 2020/21 budget, while ICE funds are split between Adult Corrections and the Juvenile Detention Facility.

NORCOR Board President Bob Benton could not be reached for comment by press time.

Gorge ICE Resistance, a coalition of organizations that supports detainees on hunger strike and calls for the removal of the immigration detention center in The Dalles, said that they will "monitor closely" as NORCOR goes through the process of canceling its contracts with ICE.

"While we celebrate this victory for the Gorge community, we recognize the fight for justice continues," said Solea Kabakov, an organizer

See **NORCOR**, page 3

## Foiling the Wind



Two people from the Bay Area were trying the new wind sport "Windfoiling" last week off the beach of The Fish Hatchery, located off Highway 14 in Washington along the Columbia River west of White Salmon. Above, Chris MacDonald from Fairfax, Calif., is captured making "moves" that adults haven't managed, yet. "The lighting was extremely good," said photographer Stephen Datnoff. Chuck Patterson (NAISH rider), a world-renowned extreme skier and paddle boarder, was also exploring the Gorge winds on a Windfoil. Photo courtesy of Stephen Datnoff

## Wash. seeks broadband information

By Jacob Burtram  
Columbia Gorge News

In accordance with recently passed legislation, the state of Washington has been working to achieve the goal of providing broadband access to every resident by 2024. One critical piece to puzzle requires public participation: Taking a one-minute speed survey from your computer.

By responding to the survey at [www.commerce.wa.gov/building-infrastructure/washington-statewide-broadband-act/speedtestsurvey](http://www.commerce.wa.gov/building-infrastructure/washington-statewide-broadband-act/speedtestsurvey), the Governor's Statewide Broadband Office, an organization under the state Department of Commerce, will collect data about your broadband speed to identify gaps in the services provided to the community.

The broadband office is also responsible for the collaboration between the public and broadband providers.

Another crucial part to the legislation is the establishment of a competitive loan program through the Washington State Public Works Board, to "assist in funding acquisition, installation, and construction of middle mile and last mile infrastructure and promote the expansion of access to broadband service in unserved areas of the state," according to the website.

Eligible participants of the loan program include cities, counties,

special purpose districts and tribal governments. According to Jacob Anderson, project coordinator with the Klickitat County Economic Development Department, the county's role will be mainly to work with local providers to expand services to the outlying rural areas of Klickitat County, where he says residents are reporting speeds of 1 mbps upload speeds and 2 mbps download speeds, while paying for 10 mbps up and 20 mbps down.

Because investments have been made in Klickitat County for previous upgrades to the broadband services, Anderson said the county is ineligible for the grant and loan program, so they are looking for alternatives to consider.

Acknowledging the predicament residents will be in as school starts soon in a virtual format, Anderson said the best thing the public can hope for right now is the ability for local providers to expand and upgrade their systems as residents adjust to remote living.

Anderson said the county is also willing to entertain co-location on county-owned emergency communications towers to boost signals across the area.

The county has also spent money boosting posts on Facebook advertising the survey online. The public can view survey results at [www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/4bcf7c77eca-c475eb467e9df0028d05b](http://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/4bcf7c77eca-c475eb467e9df0028d05b).

## COVID-19

### Workplace outbreaks reported in HR county

#### Wasco County removed from state watch list

Hood River County currently has more than 15 active COVID-19 workplace outbreaks, including one at the Hood River County Health Department (HRCHD).

"The health department will remain staffed to take calls and provide essential services by appointment," said a HRCHD press release. "Staff working here in the building are not on isolation or quarantine."

Facility types range from agricultural processing, fruit packing, and restaurants, to office and retail facilities that have been identified as having workplace outbreaks of COVID-19 cases.

An outbreak is defined as a worksite with two or more cases that are not household contacts. Once five or more cases are identified and connected to one facility,

Oregon Health Authority (OHA) will release this information in their weekly report.

Hood River County has the second highest rate of testing per capita in the state, according to the press release. Hood River County is currently approved for "Phase 2" reopening, but is on a state "watch list" as an area of concern regarding community spread of the virus.

#### Wasco County

Wasco County is also approved for "Phase 2" reopening, but was removed from the watch list Aug. 20, according to an announcement by Governor Kate Brown.

On Sunday, Aug. 23, the Oregon Health Authority reported 417 new confirmed and presumptive cases in the state, for a state total of 24,937. No new cases were reported in Hood River, Wasco or Sherman counties at that time.

On Sunday, OHA reported cases, deaths and negative test results for

COVID-19 to date. At that time, Hood River County had a total of 225 cases, no deaths, and 4,237 negative tests; Wasco County had 207 cases, three deaths and 4,144 negative test results; Sherman County had 16 cases, no deaths and 2,421 negative test results; and Gilliam County had four cases, no deaths and 236 negative test results.

In Washington, Klickitat County reported a total of 180 positive cases, three active, and three deaths to date in 13 cities.

Health departments in all counties are urging residents to take precautions, which include following proper guidance for:

- Social distancing
- Mask use both at work and during personal time outside of work
- Washing of hands frequently
- Staying home when ill and calling your doctor even if you think you just have allergies

## Old Dalles Road fire contained

By Kirby Neumann-Rea  
Columbia Gorge News

On Monday night, Aug. 17, near Pine Grove in Hood River County, a four-helicopter rotation came to the rescue when fire broke out just east of Old Dalles Road.

The fire burned timber starting around 6 p.m. off Oak Ridge Road, in the Pine Grove area.

The fire was kept to about 1.5 acres (smaller than a published post) thanks to rapid action by air and ground responders, and is contained, Chief Greg Borton of Wy'East Fire District said Aug. 18 at 9:30 a.m. No structures were

damaged, though flames did come close to one outbuilding.

"If not for the aerial attack getting to it when it did, the fire would have been much bigger," Borton said. "They had water on it before we were there on the ground," he said. On Friday, Aug. 21, the fire was fully contained and firefighters remained on patrol given that hot spots were found Aug. 18-19.

At about 7:30 p.m. Aug. 17 after the fire line was in place and most of the flames had been knocked down, a pair of tall firs erupted in

See **FIRE**, page 2

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