

INDEX	
Classifieds	B8
Deaths and Services	A10
Kidspage	B10
Medical Directory	B1
Obituaries	A7
Opinion	A4
Police, Sheriff Logs	B2
Public Notices	B6
Senior News	A6
Teacher Marks 100th	A3

WEATHER
100 IN THE DALLES THURSDAY AND FRIDAY; MODERATE HUMIDITY IN GORGE



Special Section: Home and Garden, INSIDE

The Columbia Gorge News will be delivered Thursday next week, rather than Wednesday, due to the Labor Day holiday.

Columbia Gorge News

HOOD RIVER | THE DALLES | WHITE SALMON

Wednesday, September 2, 2020 Volume 1, Issue 22

\$1.00

White River Fire grows

Wildfire declared a 'conflagration' by Gov. Brown

By Mark Gibson
Columbia Gorge News

The White River Fire grew rapidly at the end of the week, forcing additional evacuations and threatening several communities in south Wasco County.

As of Monday morning, the fire had consumed 10,000 acres and was 10 percent contained, according to incident command.

Due to the worsening weather conditions on Friday, Wasco County Defense Board Chief in consensus with Oregon State Fire Marshal requested Mutual Aid, which brought three additional task

Forces to fight the fire and protect residences. These three Task Forces consisted of Hood River, Skamania, Klickitat and Wasco County fire departments. Wasco County agencies include Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue, Dufur Fire and Mosier Fire. With these additional resources Fire Teams prevented the fire from overtaking the structures and residences in Pine Grove. No structures were lost at the White River Fire.

The fire is burning in private, state, and federal land. Three-hundred homes in and around the communities of Pine Grove, Sportsman's Paradise, and Maupin were at risk, as well as Bonneville Power Administration power lines, Wasco Electric high transmission lines, Pine Grove water supply,

See **FIRE**, page 2



An aircraft drops fire retardant along Smock Road outside of Wamic as firefighters work to contain the White River Fire. Photo courtesy Wasco County Sheriff's Office

HR Man sentenced on federal charges

A Hood River man was sentenced to federal prison last week for his role in a conspiracy to traffic marijuana grown in Hood River and Portland to Florida, and launder the proceeds back to Oregon, according to U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams.

On Aug. 14, Cole William Griffiths, 32, was sentenced to two years in federal prison and five years' supervised release.

According to court documents, in April 2018, following several months of investigation, authorities executed a search warrant

See **FELON**, page 14

COVID-19

Wasco County sees drop in cases

Wasco County has seen a steady drop in COVID-19 cases over the past three weeks, and recently went five days without a positive case.

"It looks very good to have in-person learning in some of the schools in Wasco County in September, and if we continue on this trend, in all of them by October," said Dr. Mimi McDonell, health officer for North Central Public Health District.

The schools all having worked hard to develop their plans in accordance with the Oregon Department of Education's Ready Schools Safe Learners Blueprints, and they will be implementing many policies and procedures related to those blueprints.

Local schools with less than 250 students have different criteria to meet to allow in-person learning than schools with more than 250 students.

Under-250 schools are the elementary and high school in Maupin, Mosier Community School, Dufur School and St. Mary's Academy in The Dalles and Riverbend Community School (formerly Wahtonka Charter School). Dufur School can fully separate grade groups and is considered under 250.

Over-250 schools are Chenoweth, Colonel Wright and Dry Hollow elementaries in The Dalles as well as the middle school and high school in The Dalles.

Under-250 schools can go to in-person learning once no

See **COVID**, page 11



Graciela Gomez in front of her Cascade Locks fruit stand, underneath Bridge of the Gods. Her cabin is also known as "East West."

Kirby Neumann-Rea photo

TALKING CENSUS

In Cascade Locks, a family fruit stand and social forum

'This is really, really important' says advocate Graciela Gomez

By Kirby Neumann-Rea
Columbia Gorge News

The latest Census score at Gracie's Fruit is 72 yes, 11 no.

"Have you responded to the U.S. Census?" Gomez asks everyone who comes to purchase pears, peaches and plums from her stand beneath Cascade Locks, which she has operated for nine years. On the corner of her awning she keeps a tally on a white board, prominently displayed along with the www.wecountoregon.com website.

The Census, held every 10 years, is on a shortened timeline through mid-September to collect information that is used to determine how tax money is spent and how political representation is apportioned. Anyone who has not taken the census can do so online, via the

wecountoregon website.

On behalf of "the count," Gomez has created a forum for one-on-one discussions. Gomez, a Hood River resident, has worked in many ways over the last 30 years to advocate for immigrants and the community, and has found one more way to raise awareness of a social need.

Over carefully-arranged stacks of fruit, "Many people say, 'I'm so busy with the COVID, and I don't even have time.'"

"I say, 'Well, the COVID is right now. But then we need the money for our kids,'" Gomez said.

"A lot of people say 'yes' and a lot of them say 'I don't believe in that.' I say 'why not?'" she said. "And they say that's all government crap. And I tell them this is the money we earned, and we need it for the

families, and a lot of times we start a conversations, yes with these questions."

Asked if she is convincing people. Gomez said, "A lot of them."

She displays whiteboards with census-question tallies dating to March.

"It's a lot of days and it's about how important it is to do it," Gomez said.

One thing Gomez stresses to people about the Census is that there is no citizenship question on it, despite last year's attempt by the Trump Administration to add it.

"It's a lot of fear in the community about a lot of issues, and a lot of people don't understand how important is the Census," Gomez said. "It's a lot of work to tell them why and to convince them 'don't be scared.' And time to heal."

"I say, 'Let's get together and keep going, because this is really, really important.'"

The Gomez fruit stand will

remain open a few more weeks. Gomez also works as a health promoter with The Next Door, Inc., and delivers food to families in the need throughout the Gorge

Gomez provides hand sanitizer and masks to her friends at the food stands near hers at Bridge of the Gods, including Native Americans selling salmon.

The cabin at Gracie's Fruit may be familiar to some. The food truck, owned by Riverside Grill/ Hood River Inn Best Western Plus, was hand-painted with words and images several years ago by May Street School students, under direction of artist-in-residence Alison Fox and Riverside Chef Mark DeResta.

"They let me use it this year to be more comfortable," Gomez said. "Chuck Hinman brought it and put it here for me," Gomez said, referring to the long-time general manager at Hood River Inn. "He's my angel. He really is."

CONTACT US AT
541-386-1234
541-296-2141

DELIVERY/Subscribe@gorgeneews.com
NEWS TIPS/ORnews@gorgeneews.com or
WAnews@gorgeneews.com
PLACE AN AD/Sales@gorgeneews.com

STAY CONNECTED

FACEBOOK.COM/tag
TWITTER.COM/tag
INSTAGRAM.COM/tag

