

# VIRUS

## Residents should remain vigilant

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and activities. The levels are adjusted every two weeks. The ratings announced Feb. 9 expired Feb. 23; the new ratings went into effect Feb. 26. Announcement of the next level changes will be March 9 and will go into effect March 12.

Some of the state's most populous counties improved their level, though Portland just missed the mark.

Washington and Clackamas counties near Portland moved from high to moderate risk. Neighboring Multnomah County, which includes Portland, was just above the cut-off point for cases per 100,000.

Major counties moving off the extreme level list to high level include Umatilla (Pendleton), Lane (Eugene, Springfield and Florence), Marion (Salem), Jackson (Medford and Ashland), and Linn (Albany).

Other than Multnomah, the largest county to not improve its level was Deschutes, which had already dropped to high level in the previous report. The county showed significant improvement in cases and is on pace to move to the moderate tier on March 9.

In Central Oregon, Crook dropped from extreme to high level. Jefferson remains at extreme.

Eastern Oregon showed improvement, with Umatilla moving from extreme to high risk. Union and Malheur counties made big jumps, going from extreme to moderate level.

The coastal counties were an odd split. Clatsop County (Astoria) posted the lowest number of COVID-19 cases in the state when adjusted for population: 30.5 per 100,000. The second lowest number was in Lincoln County (Newport, Lincoln City), with 37.3 cases. Both counties moved from high to lower risk level. Tillamook County remained at lower risk level.

Measuring the coastal infection rate is problematic because two counties, Lane and Douglas, stretch from the Pacific Ocean to the Cascades.

But the southern most coastal counties are the flip side of the virus rates in the north coast. Coos County remains in the extreme risk level, while Curry County (Brookings, Gold Beach) saw infections rise and its risk level increased from lower to moderate.

Three counties saw their risk level increase due to rising infections. Douglas County (Roseburg), the state's ninth most populous county, rose from high to extreme. Harney and Curry counties moved from lower to moderate risk. All three will have to reinstate restrictions for a minimum of two weeks.

The highest infection rate was reported in sparsely populated Lake County, with 30.4 percent of tests coming back positive for COVID-19.

OHA announced last week that it had mistakenly included infections from the Warner Creek Correctional Facility in the Lake County

total, which is against state policy. The numbers were later revised. Lake County remains at a moderate risk level.

The risk levels are part of a spate of good news on the COVID-19 front.

Case have dropped 44 percent nationwide over the past 14 days, according to the New York Times survey of state health agencies. Deaths are down 28 percent in the same period.

Oregon was part of the trend, with a 34 percent drop in cases and a 54 percent decline in deaths.

Oregon continues to rank 49th out of 50 states on a key measure that averages cases over seven days and adjusts the number for infections per 100,000 people.

Oregon has nine cases per 100,000. Only Hawaii, with three, had a lower mark. Among Oregon's neighbors, Washington and Nevada each had 11. California was at 17. The worst rates were in South Carolina, at 46 and New York at 38.

Public health officials are hopeful that the trend will continue as the slow pace of vaccination picks up in coming months. But experts remain concerned about a spate of variants that spread faster and may be more virulent. One first discovered in the United Kingdom has been reported in three cases in Oregon.

The Centers for Disease Control has forecast that the "U.K. variant" could be the predominate infection by the end of March. Another variant, from South Africa, has been shown in early research to be more virulent and deadly, and can possibly bypass the current Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

Both companies are working on revisions of the vaccine to deal with the variants. The CDC has said even if some variants infect those who are inoculated, the vaccine will protect against severe and fatal symptoms.

### Hood River County vaccines

"Local cases have dropped, allowing us to open businesses to a greater level," said a Feb. 25 press release from the Hood River County Health Department. "This is great news for local businesses, but please remember not to let down your guard. It is more important than ever to continue wearing masks, physical distancing, avoiding gatherings, and

staying home if you are sick. Continuing to follow current guidance from the Governor's Office will help us keep our businesses and Schools open."

Adults 65 and over will become eligible to get a vaccine over the following weeks. However, that does not mean the necessary doses or staff will be available to distribute to all that are eligible, said the press release.

"We have approximately 5,000 seniors 65 and up in our county. In the coming weeks, we know there will be more seniors who want to get vaccinated than there will be vaccines available for them, said the press release. "Please do not double schedule or attempt to schedule if you don't meet the state criteria. If you are age 65 or over, you should be contacted to schedule your COVID-19 vaccination by your primary care provider."

"Columbia Gorge Family Medicine clients, please see their website, cgfm.com. If you do not have a primary care provider, One Community Health will be helping us to get you vaccinated. The health department will be coordinating vaccination for those who do not have a primary care provider once we have vaccine available. Please do not call the Health Department or your primary care provider's, as phone lines are overloaded."

All information can be found on the website [hrcovid19.org](http://hrcovid19.org) or on the information lines: English, 541-399-8022; Spanish 541-399-8023.

"We will all have to be patient as we continue to slowly receive vaccine for distribution in the upcoming weeks," said the press release. "We will do our best to be sure everyone in Hood River County who is eligible and wanting a vaccination receives one as soon as possible."

### Wasco County vaccinations

Vaccines are being given to healthcare providers, emergency responders, educators and childcare providers, and now, those 70 and older. Those 65 and older become eligible this week. Wasco County has vaccinated 14.8 percent of its population, Sherman County 16 percent, and Gilliam County 12 percent.

# Sense of Place lecture features OSU Extension

## 'Sense of Place goes virtual for March 10 presentation

Join Mt. Adams Institute for a virtual Sense of Place event, "The Legacy & Promise of Land Grant Universities and Oregon State University Extension in the Gorge," March 10 at 7 p.m. on Zoom featuring Ann Harris.

After more than a century in existence, what have we learned from local Extension Services? In this month's Sense of Place lecture, Harris of OSU Extension in the Gorge will share her understanding of the impacts this research-based organization has had on our local communities and our relationships with one another and the landscape.

When Harris interviewed for her position at OSU Extension, she had no idea what a "land grant" university was.

She also didn't know how the Extension Service connected to the university, but that's no longer the case.

From the complex history that established land-grant universities to the present day programs that provide research-based support for our



Ann Harris of OSU Extension will review the research agency and its impact in the region March 10 via ZOOM.

Hood River News photo/file

economy, Harris has learned a lot about how Extension Services impact people and our region as a whole.

During her lecture, Harris will share pictures and stories from OSU Extension's long history of programs ranging from Master Gardener classes to 4-H to food preservation.

Harris currently serves as the Open Campus Education Coordinator for OSU Extension in the Gorge.

She grew up in Southern California and moved with her family to the Gorge more than 23 years ago.

Harris has worked in social services and in education and is an active community and church volunteer.

For more information, go to [mtadamsinstitute.org/senseofplace](http://mtadamsinstitute.org/senseofplace).

The event is free, with a \$10 suggested donation to support the program.

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