

Masks: Virus primarily spreads through the air

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Brown announced that people in Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Hood River, Polk, Marion and Lincoln counties are required to wear masks starting Wednesday in indoor public spaces like grocery stores, retail shops and restaurants and bars when not eating or drinking. Because of a lower infection rate, Clatsop County was not included but given the ability to opt in.

In Washington state, Gov. Jay Inslee will require people to wear masks while out in public starting Friday.

The virus primarily spreads through the air in particles from people's mouths and noses. The danger of exposure increases significantly indoors and when in prolonged contact with others. Many infectious disease experts agree that wearing face masks in public places is one of the most effective ways to stem the spread of the virus.

Astoria's request for masks comes as Oregon counties are reopening businesses, public gatherings and travel from government restrictions, all while experiencing a statewide surge in coronavirus cases.

Mayor Bruce Jones said he's seen the return of tourists to Astoria, many heeding recommendations to wear masks, but many not.

Venues and businesses have the ability to require visitors or customers to wear masks and take other precau-



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Tourists Ashley Wooderson, left, and Bobby Cash eat lunch at the Bridgewater Bistro.

tions against the virus. The Sunset Empire Transportation District, for example, has been requiring masks on bus routes. The Columbia River Maritime Museum, where Jones is deputy director, is imposing a mask requirement and social distancing when the museum reopens Thursday.

"I know businesses don't like being the bad guy," Jones said. "It's been expressed to me by some of our business leaders recently that they would prefer the city or the county be the bad guy, so it takes the onus off of them to have individual requirements within their shops."

City councilors, although worried about how the city would enforce a mask

requirement, agreed it would promote better behavior and put business owners on stronger footing when asking customers to don masks.

"I am so distressed that this has become a political issue for some, and I want to stress again that ... when you refuse to wear a mask, you don't win any macho points," City Councilor Roger Rocka said. "Masks aren't to protect you. They are to protect others."

The City Council also passed a \$46.9 million budget for the coming fiscal year, with the understanding it will be reviewed monthly and adjusted as needed, with likely drops in lodging and other tax revenue because of the pandemic. Local bud-

gets for the coming year are required to be finished by the end of June.

Some residents had pushed city councilors to redirect money from the police department toward social services responding to nonviolent situations. Defunding the police and investing in social services has become a clarion call since the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police sparked nationwide protests against police misconduct and racism.

City councilors agreed on the need to invest in more social services, but were hesitant to take money away from the police budget at the last minute for an undefined purpose.

Two new virus cases reported in the county

The Astorian

Two new coronavirus cases have been reported in Clatsop County.

The Public Health Department said on Wednesday that a man living in the southern part of the county tested positive. The man is in his 50s and was reportedly self-quarantining at home.

On Tuesday, the department said a woman living in the northern part of the county tested positive. The

woman is in her 30s and had reportedly been hospitalized for a reason unrelated to the virus.

The county has reported 48 cases since March 23. Forty-six of those have recovered.

The Oregon Health Authority reported 7,444 cases and 195 deaths from the virus statewide as of Wednesday morning.

The health authority tracked 2,170 test results in Clatsop County, including 47 of the positive cases.

Cormorants: More aggressive management expected in some places

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According to the Fish and Wildlife Service, the permit would be issued to address cormorant populations that are having an impact on aquaculture facilities, including hatcheries, or state or tribal-owned properties and assets. The permit could also be issued if the birds threaten health and human safety, or are in conflict with threatened or endangered fish.

When the Army Corps laid out a plan to significantly reduce the number of double-crested cormorants nesting on East Sand Island by shooting adults and destroying nests and eggs, they argued the birds were eating too many endangered and threatened salmon. Other groups challenged this conclusion, as well as the killing of the birds, including researchers who had studied the colony.

Portland Audubon, which opposed the East Sand Island management plan, is also against the new proposed rule.

"Make no mistake," the organization wrote on its website Tuesday, urging people to submit comments to the Fish and Wildlife Service, "this proposal is ecologically destructive, inhumane and will result in the needless slaughter of tens of thousands of cormorants in the United States."

They argue that expanding lethal management guidelines could plunge the Western population into decline.

"It perpetuates a disgraceful history of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service caving to the demands of commercial and industrial interests who would scapegoat cormorants for fish declines rather than address the root causes such as the

PORTLAND AUDUBON ARGUES THAT EXPANDING LETHAL MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES COULD PLUNGE THE WESTERN POPULATION INTO DECLINE.

Columbia River hydropower system," the organization concluded.

Under the new rule, tribal and state agencies could take up to 123,157 cormorants nationally each year. The rule would allow just under 9,000 double-crested cormorants to be taken from populations west of the Rocky Mountains.

In an analysis of double-crested cormorant populations, the Fish and Wildlife Service concluded it could allow a take of more than 163,000 birds nationally, but recommended a more conservative number.

"Importantly, reducing the abundance of double-crested cormorants is not the goal of the service or this proposed management action," the agency stated in the proposed rule document. "Reducing their overall abundance does not guarantee that conflicts in specific areas will decrease."

The agency expects the new permit will lead to more aggressive management in some places. The number of cormorants in some areas could go down as a result, but, the agency added, "regional continental populations will be managed at sustainable levels, albeit at somewhat reduced abundances."

Clubhouse: Model dates back to the late 1940s

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the people being served in running many aspects of operations.

Unlike Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, the county's mental health contractor, which can serve people who are in crisis, Beacon Clubhouse will fill a different role.

"While maybe we will be working with people who are in frequent crisis, we won't be filling that need because we are nonclinical," said Erin Carlsen, program director. "But we'll hopefully be a resource to help those crisis points be reduced."

Carlsen also runs Filling Empty Bellies, which serves lunch to anyone in need six days a week in Astoria and coordinates other basic services for the homeless.

As director of Filling Empty Bellies, Carlsen had pursued opening a daytime drop-in center for the homeless. She and others in the community envisioned the center as a place where any-

one was welcome and visitors could get a meal, do laundry, rest and access a variety of social services. Ideally, they would also help run the center, gaining job skills and giving back to each other.

MENTAL ILLNESS IS AT THE ROOT OF MANY OTHER SOCIAL ISSUES, SUCH AS SUBSTANCE ABUSE, HOMELESSNESS, CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AND SUICIDE.

While Beacon Clubhouse will serve people in a different capacity, Carlsen hopes it will fill a similar sort of gap in the social services landscape.

Mental illness is at the root of many other social issues, such as substance abuse, homelessness, criminal behavior and suicide.

"I'm hoping this will

offer people an accepting and accessible space, to really address a root issue," Carlsen said.

Beacon Clubhouse's startup costs and first year of operation are being funded through NAMI

Oregon. Carlsen plans to pursue grants to make the organization self-sustaining and is pursuing accreditation by Clubhouse International.

The Clubhouse model dates back to the late 1940s. It emerged from a self-help group created by former patients of a state hospital after their discharge. There

are now official Clubhouses globally and across the United States. They serve adults and young adults diagnosed with serious mental illnesses.

A 2016 review of available research about the model concluded that the Clubhouse programs "are worthy of support as one component of a spectrum of rehabilitative services for persons with serious mental illness."

Two of the people at Beacon Clubhouse are participants in Treatment Court, a program administered through the county's Circuit Court.

Membership at the Clubhouse is part of their rehabilitation program, providing them a place to be and a community. As participants in Treatment Court, they have certain goals they must meet.

"We're filling this need for them ... maybe to have something to look forward to," Carlsen said, "a goal to stay sober that day or to stay on task."

Port: Hopes for more support in future relief bills

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"It's becoming really clear that many grant applications are made much stronger by having a particular project substantiated in a planning document of some kind," Jensen said.

The Port is figuring out which plans best fit the agency's needs, Jensen said.

The Port is partnering with Astoria to create a waterfront master plan as the Port determines how to revitalize the area around the West Mooring Basin, including offices, storefronts and the Astoria Riverwalk Inn. The Port has partnered with Warrenton in pursuit of a state grant to study wastewater issues at the airport.

The Port, like other special districts around the country, is hoping for more federal support in future coronavirus relief bills.

The \$3 trillion Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act, passed in the U.S. House and going before the Senate in July, could provide significant support to local governments that have lost revenue during the pan-

demic. The trick is making sure special districts like ports and recreation districts are counted as local governments, said Mark Landauer, executive director of the Oregon Public Ports Association.

"Our association is working with a number of other associations across the country, attempting to ensure that special districts, including ports, are included in the definition of what a local government is, in order to be eligible for any federal monies coming to the state," he said.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley — Oregon Democrats — have urged Senate leadership to include more support for maritime ports in the next coronavirus relief bill. U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, an Oregon Democrat who serves as the chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, is pushing for the federal government to use the \$10 billion in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund as a stimulus for ports needing relief.

Business Oregon, the

state's economic development agency and one of the biggest lenders to the Port through the Infrastructure Finance Authority, employs a federal lobbyist in Washington, D.C. The agency is creating the concept of an Oregon Public Ports Federal Coordinating Committee to align the business models of Oregon ports with federal support.

"Ports expressed initial interest, but the group needs to reassess how individual port business models intersect with the federal government ... and reconsider it from a statewide lens," Stephanie Prybyl, the state's ports director, said in an email.

Will Isom, the Port's executive director, called the committee a big step forward in making sure ports aren't forgotten as the U.S. tries to recover from the coronavirus.

"The ports end up falling into this weird category, these quasi-businesses that don't have a lot of added expense but have had their businesses significantly impacted," he said. "And so I think the formation of

a committee like this to give us one powerful voice is going to be a step in the right direction."

GRACE FOOD BANK

will reopen on Thursday, July 2

NEW HOURS
Tuesdays and Thursdays
from 9-11:30am

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Astoria, OR

Please wear a mask and maintain social distancing