

Roe: 'I want to be in school'

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"And you see the board become enamored with them," Jackson said. "It is a powerful thing to see. It helps the board feel the connection that a teacher feels when they serve a student for multiple years."

Though school board members are clearly motivated to serve students — and many often have children who are still in the school system — "if they serve them from a distance, it's hard to feel that connection," Jackson said.

The student representative is a bridge, but Roe was also looking for connection.

Her final year in high school has been overshadowed by the coronavirus. She wishes that she'd gone to more of the high school dances now that the senior dances won't happen. She hopes she will still be able to walk with friends for graduation. She hopes there's a way to celebrate afterward. She misses the casual conversations with friends and other students in school hallways. Before, when she was at school, she would often wish she was at home.

"Now that I'm home it's, 'Oh, I want to be in school,'" she said.

After she graduates, Roe plans to go to college, either the University of Oregon or Portland State University. After working through a speech impediment when she was younger, she wants to become a speech pathologist, ideally working with kids in a school setting. She realizes the pandemic could upend or delay her plans.

"I think it's harder to look forward to it because I know so much can change," she said. "It's not a for sure."

She contacted Jackson about the student representative role after hearing from her father that it was empty. A self-motivated, organized student, online school has worked for her in general, but, she said, "I like to be a part of Astoria and it's harder this year to be more connected with everyone. Doing this I thought it would be nice to be able to stay connected."

The research she does as student representative to collect information about class and club activities puts her in contact with students she wouldn't usually talk to and also provides an opportunity to catch up with others she hasn't talked to in a while. She has noticed students seem to be coming up with even more activities and clubs this year, all conducted over the phone or online.

Roe was nervous ahead of her first report to the school board and left the call soon after giving her update. But she did hear the comment about how it made the board feel — like things were almost normal again.

"That was really nice to hear," she said.

Sewer: 'This early warning signal has limited utility'

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of how the virus is spreading in an area and perhaps even provide an early warning of an impending outbreak.

But it is an emerging science. Researchers are still considering the implications of the data they collect and how best to interpret it.

The sampling underscores the difficulty communities face in getting a handle on the virus even as caseloads continue to grow and state restrictions once again limit businesses, social interactions and travel.

"This will require careful study over several months," said representatives of the Oregon Health Authority in statements provided to The Astorian, adding, "Unfortunately, in the midst of current widespread community transmission, this early warning signal has limited utility."

Weekly sampling began this summer. Astoria was added to the list in September and initial data has only recently been made public.

Collecting the sample takes maybe 15 minutes. The most difficult part seems to be removing a filter near the end of the process.

But interpreting what is found in the Asto-

ria samples is complicated by the city's combined sewer overflow system, which collects rainwater runoff as well as wastewater. Astoria's sewer flows can get down to about 1 million gallons a day and then surge to 20 million gallons a day during a winter storm, said Jeff Harrington, the city's public works director.

On stormy days, when the system might suddenly be flooded with water, it dilutes the concentration of the virus. This literally muddies the water when researchers go to look at a sample later and try to understand the presence — and prevalence — in a particular area.

"When you're talking about COVID, you're talking about something you can't even see ... so it gets very dilute," Harrington said.

Astoria is unique in the state in that it is one of the few cities that still has a combined sewer overflow system, he added. It isn't clear how much researchers will be able to drill down into Astoria's coronavirus load.

Still, the sampling could be a useful tool. In the summer, elected leaders expressed interest in perhaps paying for this exact kind of sampling. Not long after, Oregon State University approached the city about participating in the

statewide study, Harrington said.

In other communities, such as Newport, researchers have coupled wastewater sampling with door-to-door sampling. As a result, they have been able to provide a more precise snapshot. The testing helped local officials better understand if efforts to curtail the spread of the virus were working. Certain communities found there was no evidence of the virus.

However, as Tyler Radniecki, a principal investigator on the sewage surveillance team, noted in July, the samples are only just that: A snapshot.

"The results tell us only what was occurring at the time of sampling, not what is happening today," he said in a statement at the time. "They should not be interpreted as an indication that any of these communities can relax their vigilance."

Researchers are now seeing evidence of the coronavirus in most communities' watersheds, the Oregon Health Authority told The Astorian.

"This is consistent with widespread community transmissions and is not surprising given the case counts we are seeing statewide," the health authority said.

Minks: 'We're waiting for the virus to run its course'

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Andrea Cantu-Schomas, a Department of Agriculture spokeswoman, said the farm was immediately placed under quarantine, meaning no animals or animal products can leave the farm until further notice. Additionally, the farmer and staff, including four employees, were advised to self-isolate.

So far, Cantu-Schomas said all of the mink appear to have recovered within a few days of initially showing symptoms, and no deaths have been associated with the virus.

Cantu-Schomas said the farmer is continuing to care for the mink while wearing enhanced personal protective equipment. The department will begin testing mink seven to 10 days after symptoms resolve, and, if necessary, will continue testing every 14 days until no more infected mink are found.

"We're waiting for the virus to run its course," Cantu-Schomas said. "We have the virus contained, we have the farm in quarantine and staff are self-isolating."

Oregon has 11 permitted mink farms with an estimated 438,327 animals, making it the fourth-largest pelt-producing state behind Wisconsin, Utah and Idaho. Eight of Oregon's mink farms are located in Marion County, one in Linn County and two in Clatsop County.

Cases of COVID-19 in mink have been reported this year in Utah, Michigan and Wisconsin, as well as in several countries internationally, including the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Sweden and Spain.



Fur Commission USA
COVID-19 has been found at an Oregon mink farm.

In Denmark, the world's largest producer of mink skin and fur, 12 people were infected earlier this year by a mutated strain of COVID-19 that spread from minks to humans — prompting the Danish government to order culling the country's entire farmed mink population of 15 million animals.

On Nov. 6, the World Health Organization wrote that mink can act as a reservoir of COVID-19 and "pose a risk for virus spillover from mink to humans." However, the USDA and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say there is no evidence that animals, including mink, play a significant role in transmitting the virus to humans.

The Center for Biological Diversity sent a letter Nov. 6 to the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Health Authority urging the agencies inspect mink farms for potential COVID-19 transmission, and provide informa-

tion about cases publicly.

Scholz, Oregon's state veterinarian, said he has been in contact with the state's mink industry and Fur Commission USA providing information about biosecurity.

"The farmer did the right thing by self-reporting symptoms very early and he is now cooperating with us and (OHA) in taking care of animals and staff," Scholz said in a statement.

Emilio DeBess, the Oregon Health Authority's public health veterinarian, said his team is working closely with the farmer and those affected to ensure they have the necessary personal protective equipment, supplies and can follow COVID-19 guidance.

"Worker safety is critical to protect people and animals on mink farms," DeBess said. "Our best weapon against the virus right now is education. We are providing testing, specific workplace guidance and support, and supplying additional PPE to the farmer, the employees and their families to help reduce further spread of the virus."

Finally, Cantu-Schomas said the Department of Agriculture will be working with the health authority, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and USDA APHIS Wildlife Services around the farm to trap and test other animals, ensuring the virus does not spill out into the local wildlife population.

Animals tested will likely include dogs, cats, raccoons, skunks, house mice and feral cats.

"It's just an additional precaution that we're taking," Cantu-Schomas said.

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SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
49 37 Mostly sunny	53 36 Sunny	51 34 Partly sunny	51 34 Mostly sunny	52 38 Rain	52 39 Showers possible	50 39 Showers possible

ALMANAC
Astoria through Sunday

TEMPERATURES
High/low 56/34
Normal high/low 51/38
Record high 62 in 1999
Record low 24 in 2019

PRECIPITATION
Sunday 0.00"
Month to date 9.67"
Normal month to date 10.75"
Year to date 56.06"
Normal year to date 57.22"

Forecasts and graphics provided by
AccuWeather, Inc. ©2020

UNDER THE SKY
Tonight's Sky: Full "Frost" Moon
(1:29 p.m.)

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

SUN AND MOON
Sunrise today 7:38 a.m.
Sunset tonight 4:31 p.m.
Moonrise today 5:34 p.m.
Moonset today 8:56 a.m.

Full Last New First
Nov 30 Dec 7 Dec 14 Dec 21

TODAY'S TIDES
Astoria / Port Docks
Time High (ft.) Time Low (ft.)
2:07 a.m. 7.2 7:27 a.m. 3.4
12:59 p.m. 8.8 8:18 p.m. -0.4
Cape Disappointment
1:40 a.m. 7.1 6:35 a.m. 3.7
12:41 p.m. 8.7 7:23 p.m. -0.5
Hammond
1:53 a.m. 7.3 6:56 a.m. 3.5
12:50 p.m. 8.9 7:44 p.m. -0.7
Warrenton
2:02 a.m. 7.6 7:11 a.m. 3.5
12:54 p.m. 9.2 8:02 p.m. -0.3
Knappa
2:44 a.m. 7.5 8:28 a.m. 3.0
1:36 p.m. 9.0 9:19 p.m. -0.3
Depoe Bay
12:57 a.m. 7.3 6:02 a.m. 3.9
11:52 a.m. 9.0 6:54 p.m. -0.5

NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today	Wed.
Atlanta	45/29/s	53/30/s
Boston	60/39/c	46/36/pc
Chicago	38/26/pc	44/26/pc
Dallas	61/44/s	54/33/r
Denver	39/19/pc	30/14/pc
Honolulu	85/70/s	85/71/pc
Houston	63/53/s	64/43/r
Los Angeles	76/50/s	75/49/s
Miami	67/51/pc	73/65/s
New York City	56/38/c	44/36/pc
Phoenix	71/45/s	69/45/s
San Francisco	61/44/s	61/45/pc
Wash., DC	48/35/c	48/32/s

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorm, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, l-ice.

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REGIONAL FORECAST
Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

City	Today	Wed.	City	Today	Wed.
Baker City	41/16/s	39/16/s	North Bend	53/36/s	56/36/s
Brookings	55/42/s	54/41/s	Roseburg	47/31/s	51/30/s
Ilwaco	48/35/s	51/35/s	Seaside	48/34/s	51/33/s
Newberg	47/35/s	47/31/s	Springfield	44/30/s	46/29/s
Newport	50/37/s	54/36/s	Vancouver	47/33/s	48/29/s