

IN BRIEF

Knappa student tests positive for virus

A student at Hilda Lahti Elementary in Knappa tested positive for the coronavirus on Monday.

The student's family said the student tested positive at the end of the school day and had not been showing any symptoms during the day, according to a letter to parents Superintendent Bill Fritz posted on the school district's website Tuesday.

While there do not appear to be other virus cases tied to this student case, three students and one substitute teacher are in quarantine, Fritz said.

The school district recently returned to full in-person classes five days a week.

"We are pleased to return to a more normal school model, and we want to remind students and parents that safety protocols must continue to ensure continuation of movement toward a typical school schedule," Fritz wrote. "This includes proper mask wearing and distancing. Also, please make sure that students avoid coming to school sick."

Seaside plans forums on homelessness

SEASIDE — The first of four forums on homelessness will be held May 6, Mayor Jay Barber said.

"Our goals are working on what we're calling homeless strategies forums," the mayor said. "We're trying to educate ourselves and the community about how to deal with the homeless situation, trying to bring different groups together."

The first forum, planned for 6 p.m. at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center, will bring together members of the faith-based community to inform the city what they are doing for the homeless.

Forums on May 13 and May 27 will follow, concluding on June 3 in an "open mic kind of meeting, to give people an opportunity to talk about their concerns, their solutions and how we navigate going forward," Barber said.

In November, driven by a rising level of need and impacts to Seaside's neighborhoods and businesses, city councilors asked the police chief, city attorney and city manager what can be done to manage the growing number of homeless people.

City Councilor Tita Montero proposed public forums on the issue, but the dates were postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

At a goal-setting session in January, city councilors said they hope to address homelessness, addiction and mental health issues.

At a City Council meeting in April, Montero sought to revive the forum process. "I believe with all of our goals, we are giving the citizens more opportunities to weigh in and to learn and to participate than ever before," she said.

— *The Astorian*

Pacific County unemployment nears pre-pandemic levels

LONG BEACH, Wash. — Pacific County experienced another positive monthly jobs report, nearly returning to pre-pandemic unemployment levels a year after the county — and the country — suffered through one of the worst economic crises in its history.

According to the latest report from the Washington state Employment Security Department, the county's unemployment rate in March stood at 8.2%, down from 8.9% in February. The rate is similar to where it has been in March in recent years; it was 7.6% in 2018, 8.4% in 2019 and 8% in 2020 — although it likely would have been much lower last year if not for being in the early stages of the pandemic.

— *Chinook Observer*

DEATH

April 27, 2021

PATTERSON, Bonnie Lee, 66, of Hammond, died in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Strangulation

• Steven Gerald Larsen, 58, of Astoria, was arrested Tuesday on Marine Drive in Astoria for strangulation and harassment.

DUII

• Merrill C. Saunders, 44, of St. Helens, was

arrested Tuesday on U.S. Highway 30 for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

• Jerry Leon Tepfer, 69, of Astoria, was arrested Tuesday on U.S. Highway 26 for DUII and criminal driving with a suspended or revoked license.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Clatsop County Recreational Lands Planning Advisory Committee, 1 p.m., (electronic meeting).

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SUPERMOON



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The super pink full moon rises over Clatsop County on Monday night.

Renewable electricity can slash Cascadia pollution, new study says

By PETER FAIRLEY

InvestigateWest

New research shows that renewable electricity can move Washington state, Oregon and British Columbia off of fossil fuels, do so at an affordable price and create jobs along the way.

After decades of reticence from fossil fuel producers and utilities, this may sound like a wishful vision. But building a cleaner and more equitable economy — and doing so in just a few decades to head off the worst effects of climate change — is backed by a growing body of regional and international studies.

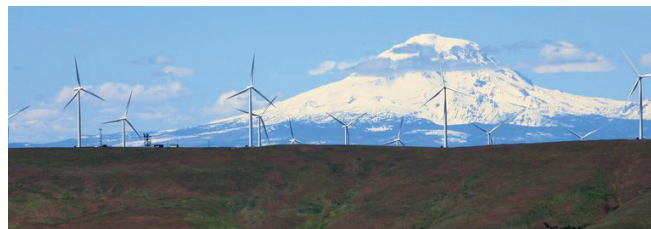
Innovation and mass production have made wind and solar power installations cheaper than most fossil-fueled power plants. The key to moving Cascadia's economies away from fossil fuels is to make renewable electricity the region's go-to "fuel."

The new research highlights three mutually supporting strategies that squeeze out fossil fuels:

- Increasing energy efficiency to trim the amount of power needed
- Boosting renewable energy to make it possible to turn off climate-wrecking fossil-fuel plants
- Plugging as much stuff as possible into the electrical grid

Recent studies in Washington state and British Columbia, and underway for Oregon, point to efficiency and electrification as the most cost-effective route to slashing emissions while maintaining lifestyles and maximizing jobs. A recent National Academy of Science study reached the same conclusion, calling electrification the core strategy for an equitable and economically advantageous energy transition.

However, technologies don't emerge in a vacuum. The social and economic adjustments required by the wholesale shift from



Amelia Templeton/Oregon Public Broadcasting

Wind turbines with Mount Adams in the backdrop.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Increasing energy efficiency to trim the amount of power needed
- Boosting renewable energy to make it possible to turn off climate-wrecking fossil-fuel plants
- Plugging as much stuff as possible into the electrical grid

fossil fuels to renewable power can still make or break decarbonization, according to Jim Williams, a University of San Francisco energy expert whose simulation software tools have guided many national and regional energy plans, including two new U.S.-wide studies, a December 2020 analysis for Washington state and another in process for Oregon.

Williams points to vital actions likely to rile those who lose money in the deal, like letting trees grow many decades older before they are cut down so they can suck up more carbon dioxide, forging quicker profits from selling timber. Or convincing rural communities and conservationists that they should accept power-transmission lines crossing farms and forests.

"It's those kinds of policy questions and social acceptance questions that are the big challenges," said Williams. And without policies to protect disadvantaged communities from potential energy cost increases, some could be left behind.

By 2030, the path to decarbonization shows Washingtonians buying about \$5 billion less worth of natural gas, coal and petroleum products, while putting even more dollars toward cleaner vehicles and homes. No surprise then

that oil and gas interests are attacking the new research.

Key to decarbonizing Cascadia are computer simulations of future conditions known as models. Researchers run dozens of models, tinkering with different variables: How much will energy demand grow? What happens if we can get 80% of people into electric cars? What if it's only 50%?

What most drives Cascadia's energy models toward electrification is the dropping cost of renewable electricity.

Take solar energy. In 2010, no large power system in the world got more than 3% of its electricity from solar. But over the past decade solar energy's cost fell more than 80%, and by last year it was delivering over 9% of Germany's electricity and over 19% of California's.

Once prohibitively expensive, solar's price now beats nuclear, coal and gas-fired power, and it's expected to keep getting cheaper. The same goes for wind power, whose jumbo jet-sized composite blades bear no resemblance to the rickety machines once mocked by Big Oil.

In contrast, cleaning up gas- or coal-fired power plants by equipping them to capture their carbon pollution remains expensive even after decades of research and development and govern-

ment incentives. Cost overruns and mechanical failures recently shuttered the world's largest "low-carbon" coal-fired power plant in Texas after less than four years of operation.

Innovation and incentives are also making equipment that plugs into the grid less expensive. Battery advances and cost cuts have made owning an electric car cheaper than conventional cars, fuel included. Electric heat pumps — essentially air conditioners that run in reverse to push heat into a building — may be the next electric wave. They're three to four times more efficient than electric baseboard heaters and save money over natural gas in most new homes.

Merran Smith, executive director of Vancouver-based nonprofit Clean Energy Canada, says that — as with electric cars five years ago — people don't realize how much heat pumps have improved. "Heat pumps used to be big huge noisy things," said Smith. "Now they're a fraction of the size, they're quiet and efficient."

The computer simulation tools take an economy-wide view. Planners can repeatedly run scenarios through sophisticated software, tinkering with their assumptions each time to answer cross-cutting questions.

Evolved Energy Research, a San Francisco-based firm, analyzed the situation in Washington. Its algorithms are tuned using data about energy production and use today — down to the number and types of furnaces, stoves, toasters or vehicles. It has expert assessments of future costs for equipment and fuels. And it knows the state's mandated emissions targets.

The model sets the most cost-effective choices by homes and businesses that meet the state's climate goals. Modelers then account for uncertainty by throwing in various additional constraints and rerunning the model.