

IN BRIEF

State discloses more virus cases at local schools

The Oregon Health Authority has disclosed nine new coronavirus cases at schools in Clatsop County.

The only virus case from the Astoria School District was a student from Astor Elementary School. Three cases were students from the Warrenton School District, with one each from Warrenton Grade School, Warrenton Middle School and Warrenton High School.

Two cases were students from the Seaside School District, with one each from Seaside Middle School and Pacific Ridge Elementary School. The remaining cases were two students from Hilda Lahti Elementary School in the Knappa School District and one staff member from Jewell School.

The health authority, meanwhile, reported five new virus cases for the county on Thursday and five new cases on Wednesday. Since the pandemic began, the county had recorded 2,488 virus cases and 28 deaths as of Thursday.

Johnson stripped of leadership role on Ways and Means Committee

State Sen. Betsy Johnson has been removed as the co-chair of the powerful Joint Ways and Means Committee, Willamette Week reported.

Johnson, who represents the North Coast, has announced she will leave the Democratic Party to run as an independent for governor next year.

Willamette Week reported that Senate President Peter Courtney told Johnson on Wednesday he was removing her from the budget-writing committee.

“We are preparing for our interim committees to meet,” Courtney said in a statement. “I have taken Sen. Johnson at her word that she plans to leave the party and the caucus. She will still be a member of Ways and Means and co-chair of a subcommittee.”

In a statement to Willamette Week, Johnson attributed her demotion to partisan considerations.

“Today, the extreme left of the Democratic Party canceled me as co-chair of the Ways and Means Committee. This intolerant purging represents everything wrong with Oregon politics,” the senator said.

“It is a choice of ideology and partisanship over experience, knowledge and common sense. This decision lays bare the need for an independent voice who will force the two parties to work together and put Oregon ahead of partisan politics.”

— *The Astorian*

Judge halts post-fire roadside logging on Willamette National Forest

A federal judge has ordered an immediate stop to a U.S. Forest Service plan to log along more than 400 miles of roads within the Willamette National Forest.

The Forest Service crafted the project in the wake of the 2020 Labor Day wildfires that ripped across Oregon. The agency said earlier this year that the Beachie Creek, Lionshead and Holiday Farm fires created dangerous conditions on forest roads that required extensive cleanup in the form of cutting trees.

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

DEATHS

Oct. 30, 2021

SMOTHERMAN, Joyce Lucille, 93, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

VAN DUSEN, Carol Susan, 76, of Astoria, died in La Quinta, California. A celebration of life memorial will be held at a later date. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Strangulation

• Patricia Ann Tewalt, 48, of Seaside, was indicted on Thursday for strangulation and assault in the fourth degree constituting domestic violence. The alleged crimes took place in late October.

Burglary

• Chad Robert Frost, 52, of Astoria, was indicted on Thursday for

burglary in the second degree and theft in the first degree. The alleged crimes took place in late October.

Reckless burning

• Paul Lee Roebuck, 49, of Warrenton, was arrested on Wednesday on W. Bond Street in Astoria for reckless burning and criminal mischief in the first degree.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY

Clatsop County Planning Commission, 10 a.m., (electronic meeting).

Cannon Beach City Council, 6 p.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

Lewis & Clark Fire Department, 6 p.m., main fire station, 34571 U.S. Highway 101 Business.

Warrenton City Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

Clatsop Community College Board, 6:30 p.m., (electronic meeting).

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EMERGENCY LANDING

The U.S. Coast Guard said a helicopter made a precautionary emergency landing on Thursday on a beach near Cape Disappointment after a mechanical malfunction.

Lincoln County votes to restrict vacation rentals

By ELLIOT NJUS
The Oregonian

Lincoln County residents have voted to phase out vacation rentals in the coastal county's unincorporated residential areas.

Voters approved Measure 21-203 on Tuesday by a wide margin, with 58% voting “yes.” The hot-button issue drew 45% voter turnout in the county, one of the highest turnout rates in the state for the off-year election.

The measure, an initiative petition brought to the ballot by a coalition of neighborhood groups, would phase out short-term rentals in residential areas of unincorporated Lincoln County over five years and halt immediately the issue of new licenses. Vacation rental rules within the boundaries of Newport, Lincoln City and other incorporated cities would not be affected.

Boosted by online booking platforms and turnkey property managers, the proliferation of vacation rentals on the coast has resulted in complaints from neighbors about trash, noise, illegal parking and other nuisances. But the conversion of rental



George Rose/Getty Images

A section of the coastline in Lincoln County. Voters approved a ballot measure that would phase out vacation rentals in the county's unincorporated communities.

homes to vacation rentals has also made the community less affordable for its permanent residents, proponents of the measure said.

Opponents say that's not the fault of vacation rentals, citing industry studies, and say vacation rentals are a boon to the local economies overall.

Lincoln County began to license and regulate rentals five years ago, but county

commissioners at the time didn't place a cap on the number of rentals, and a three-strike system that was supposed to cost bad actors their short-term rental license had been rendered inert because the rules didn't lay out a clear enforcement system.

County commissioners voted just days before the election to take steps toward capping vacation rentals,

imposing new requirements and bolstering its system for dealing with violations. A spokesman said the county is still reviewing whether that work will continue given the ballot measure's approval.

The county has had a temporary moratorium on new short-term rental licenses in place since March 2020. It's been extended several times, most recently through Nov. 30.

A global climate pledge could change Oregon's relationship with natural gas

By MONICA SAMAYOA
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Oregon has become increasingly dependent on natural gas to power homes and buildings. But that may have to change, following the Biden administration's announcement at a global climate summit that it wants to sharply cut emissions of this potent greenhouse gas by tens of millions of tons by 2035.

The announcement, made at the COP26 gathering in Glasgow, Scotland, casts a spotlight on a greenhouse gas that gets far less scrutiny than carbon dioxide, which escapes from burning gasoline, diesel and coal. Natural gas is primarily methane. It's become one of Oregon's fastest growing sources of energy. The state's natural gas capacity has tripled over the past decade. Power from natural gas-fired energy plants made up 28% of the state's electric generation and supported 21% of the state's energy consumption in 2018.

Oregon uses a lot of natural gas, but supplies very little of it, instead bringing it in via pipeline from the Rocky Mountains and elsewhere. Pipelines are the subject of a new rule announced Tuesday by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The agency said the new rule would focus on reducing methane leaks and other pollution from new and modified oil and natural gas sources, including pipelines.

Once the proposed rule is in place, it could affect Oregon's three interstate pipelines. Those are the Gas Transmission Northwest,



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says a new rule would focus on reducing methane leaks and other pollution from new and modified oil and natural gas sources, including pipelines.

Northwest Pipeline and Kelo-Beaver Pipeline.

“It's a little bit of a wait and see. Oregon has relatively little of the infrastructure that the EPA rule covers,” Harry Esteve, the communications manager for the state Department of Environmental Quality, said.

The EPA is looking at other sources of methane pollution and additional regulations that could be ready by the end of next year to further curb emissions.

Climate Solutions' Oregon director Meredith Connolly called the Biden administration's new rule a huge first step. But one of her biggest concerns is gas leakages that come from gas powered appliances found in homes, like gas stoves and furnace systems.

“Even small leaks of methane are incredibly potent and harmful,” she said.

According to a 2020 report by the Gas Index, Portland ranks above average among major U.S. cities when it comes to natural gas leaks. Methane radiates 28 to

36 times more global warming potential energy per ton in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, according to the Oregon 2020 Biennial Energy Report.

Connolly said an easy fix to reduce methane leaks in the atmosphere is to continue to transition from natural gas-powered appliances to electric ones and to figure out a way to incorporate that when it comes to building new homes and buildings.

“We have those technologies. We have electric cars and electric trucks. Trimet is going to all electric buses,” she said. “These are the solutions we need to take on and the next big fight and focus is really our built environment.”

The Department of Environmental Quality adopted new requirements this year for natural gas utilities like NW Natural—to monitor, quantify and report methane emissions associated with their gas distribution systems.

NW Natural is the largest natural gas utility company in Oregon that provides natural gas to approximately 2.5 million people in Oregon and southwest Washington state. A spokesperson for the company said they are looking forward to review-

ing the EPA's proposal. The company claims it has one of the most modern pipeline systems in the country and has replaced older pipes with new materials to make their system tight.

Esteve, of the Department of Environmental Quality, said the agency isn't just looking at natural gas infrastructure for methane emissions reductions.

“Looking down the road even though landfills aren't subject to this rule, potentially they could be, recently DEQ adopted and began implementing new regulations on methane that come from landfills,” Esteve said.

Esteve said those rules are the most stringent in the nation for monitoring and capturing methane from landfills and aligned with California's rules. Methane emissions from landfills have 25 times more global warming potential than carbon dioxide.

Other areas of huge concern that produce methane include the agricultural sector. A greenhouse gas emissions report completed by the Department of Environmental Quality in 2017 found 9.1% of greenhouse gas emissions were attributed to agriculture.

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