



Alan Brandt

A view inside Facebook's Prineville Data Center.

Meta implementing water projects in central Oregon

Facebook parent company runs data center in Prineville

By MICHAEL KOHN
The Bulletin

Crook County is situated in one of the driest parts of the state — it's one of two counties in Oregon to be completely in the highest level on the U.S. Drought Monitor. Now, one of the county's biggest employers is trying to combat the drought with an aggressive water restoration program.

Facebook's parent company, Meta, which operates a data storage center on the outskirts of Prineville, is implementing two projects it says will improve water availability in Crook County.

The social media giant says the projects will help it to achieve its water conservation goals, which include being "water positive" by 2030, meaning that it will return more water to the environment than it consumes at its facilities.

Meta, which also owns Oculus, Instagram, Messenger, and WhatsApp, plans to accomplish this feat by partnering with environmental groups and federal regulators to restore degraded habitats in Oregon and five other states. It is also upgrading its technologies to make its data centers more water efficient. Technological developments in the last decade, as well as the use of outside air for cooling, have allowed Meta's data centers "to operate 80% more water efficiently on average compared to the industry standard," said Melanie Roe, a spokesperson for Meta.

"We see opportunities for additional gains in the coming years, particularly as our infrastructure grows, and we'll need to develop water-efficient designs for different climates," Roe added.

Meta is under a microscope in the places where it operates as its data centers use large amounts of water to cool their servers and maintain optimal humidity lev-

els. In Prineville, data centers source their water from the municipality.

In Prineville last year, Meta used 445,000 cubic meters of water, equivalent to 117.5 million gallons of water — enough water to fill 178 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Meta's use of water is increasing. The data center, a collection of buildings, is still under construction and when complete will be a 4.6 million square foot campus.

To counter that water use, Meta is helping to fund an aquifer recharge project with the city of Prineville. A second project is restoring the degraded Ingram Meadow in the Ochoco National Forest.

Meta says the aquifer recharge project utilizes the natural storage found underground in the city to store water during cooler, wetter winters. A portion of the water can be recovered during hotter summer periods when water is less available.

The project, which became operational earlier this year, works by conveying a portion of winter stream flows in the Crooked River to the local groundwater supply through injection and extraction wells.

Authorities in Prineville are confident that the work being done won't leave Prineville high and dry.

"The water management tool allows the city to meet peak demands by taking advantage of the natural storage space found in geologic formations underground," said Eric Klann, Prineville's city engineer.

Klann said the project recharged 34 million gallons of water in 2020 and 98 million gallons this year. Next year, 140 million gallons will be recharged, he said.

The system is cost-effective and resilient, said Klann, and he sees it as a good long-term solution for the city to manage its water needs.

"We are committed to continually exploring ways to support the community's water needs in an environmentally sustainable way," he said.

Bruce Scanlon, manager

for Ochoco Irrigation District, added that he is not aware of any impacts on local water resources that can be attributed to the data centers.

"My guess is that if we were going to see something, it would have become clear last year because of the severity of the drought," said Scanlon.

Meta's other project in the area, the Ingram Meadow Restoration Project, spans 15 acres in the headwaters of Auger Creek, in the Ochocos northwest of Prineville.

Logging and overgrazing dried out most of the meadow in the early 1900s. Meta's goal here is to refill the water table and increase water availability in the late summer months.

Meta says in addition to improving a water source for humans, rehabilitating Ingram Meadow will also benefit elk, as well as fish in the streams and creeks downstream from Auger Creek.

Prineville has also received help from Apple, which also has a data center in the city. Similar to the Meta project, the Apple-sponsored program stores drinking water in the airport area aquifer for use during peak demand in summer.

These and other conservation projects have helped Prineville keep a lid on its water use. In 2008 the city used 625 million gallons of water from its valley floor aquifer. In recent years the city's demand has ranged from 582 million gallons in 2019 to 665 million gallons in 2020, according to data provided by Klann.

While Prineville residents may be concerned about the data center's water use, few in town question the positive impact these massive facilities have on the local economy.

Since Meta opened the data center in 2011, the company has invested \$2 billion in the facilities and employed hundreds of workers. Prineville now boasts more than 370 jobs in data processing, hosting, and related services, according to the Oregon Employment Department.

US expands Pfizer virus boosters to teens

Shots for 16, 17-year-olds

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MIKE STOBBE
Associated Press

U.S. health authorities again expanded the nation's booster campaign Thursday, opening extra doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine to several million 16- and 17-year-olds.

The U.S. and many other nations already were urging adults to get booster shots to pump up immunity that can wane months after vaccination, calls that intensified with the discovery of the worrisome new omicron variant.

On Thursday, the Food and Drug Administration gave emergency authorization for 16- and 17-year-olds to get a third dose of the vaccine made by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech — once they're six months past their last dose. And hours later, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lifted the last barrier as Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the agency's director, issued a statement strongly encouraging those teens to get their booster as soon as it's time.

Boosters are important considering that protection against infection wanes over time and "we're facing a variant that has the potential to require more immunity to be protected," Walensky said.

About 200 million Americans are fully vaccinated, including about 4.7 million 16- and 17-year-olds, many of whom got their first shots in the spring and would be eligible for a booster.

VACCINATIONS FOR CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS 5 JUST BEGAN LAST MONTH, USING SPECIAL LOW-DOSE PFIZER SHOTS. BY THIS WEEK, ABOUT 5 MILLION 5- TO 11-YEAR-OLDS HAD GOTTEN A FIRST DOSE.

"Vaccination and getting a booster when eligible, along with other preventive measures like masking and avoiding large crowds and poorly ventilated spaces, remain our most effective methods for fighting COVID-19," Dr. Janet Woodcock, acting FDA commissioner, said in a statement.

The Pfizer vaccine is the only option in the U.S. for anyone younger than 18, either for initial vaccination or for use as a booster. It's not yet clear if or when teens younger than 16 might need a third Pfizer dose. But Walensky said the CDC and FDA would closely watch data on 12- to 15-year-olds because if they eventually need boosters, "we again will want to act swiftly."

Vaccinations for children as young as 5 just began last month, using special low-dose Pfizer shots. By this week, about 5 million 5- to 11-year-olds had gotten a first dose.

The extra-contagious

delta variant is causing nearly all COVID-19 infections in the U.S., and in much of the world. It's not yet clear how vaccines will hold up against the new and markedly different omicron mutant. But there's strong evidence that boosters offer a jump in protection against delta-caused infections, currently the biggest threat.

"The booster vaccination increases the level of immunity and dramatically improves protection against COVID-19 in all age groups studied so far," BioNTech CEO Ugur Sahin said in a statement.

Complicating the decision to extend boosters to 16- and 17-year-olds is that the Pfizer shot — and a similar vaccine made by Moderna — have been linked to a rare side effect. Called myocarditis, it's a type of heart inflammation seen mostly in younger men and teen boys.

The FDA said rising COVID-19 cases in the U.S. mean the benefits of boosters greatly outweighed the potential risk from the rare side effect, especially as the coronavirus itself can cause more serious heart inflammation.

Health officials in Israel, which already gives boosters to teens, have said the side effect continues to be rare with third doses.

A U.S. study this week offered additional reassurance. Researchers from children's hospitals around the country checked medical records and found the rare side effect usually is mild and people recover quickly. The research was published Monday in the journal *Circulation*.

Associated Press reporter Matthew Perrone contributed to this report.

Call 503-325-2203 For Info

Old fashioned Christmas

in the Flavel House Museum



The air is cold, the leaves have fallen, and the Flavel House is decorated for Christmas... traditionally, a night with Santa would be right around the corner, but this year, to keep Santa safe and healthy for his annual journey, we are doing things differently. The elves have delivered a mailbox located on the front porch of the Flavel House. Children are invited to drop their letter to Santa in the box between now and December 19th. Then, return to visit the museum any day between December 21st and 23rd to pick up a special personalized stocking gift from the big man himself. Merry Christmas and Stay Santa Safe.

For more information about this event or other Clatsop County Historical Society activities, please call 503-325-2203 or e-mail: info@astoriamuseums.org

Our friends at Providence Seaside Hospital along with Kent and LJ Easom have helped us Stay Santa Safe by making this event possible.





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