

IN BRIEF

State reports dozens of virus cases in county

The Oregon Health Authority has reported dozens of new coronavirus cases for Clatsop County over the past several days.

The health authority reported 21 new virus cases on Tuesday and 104 new virus cases over the weekend.

Since the pandemic began, the county had recorded 3,822 virus cases and 37 deaths as of Tuesday.

County unemployment rate declined in December

Clatsop County’s unemployment rate was 4.6% in December.

The seasonally adjusted rate was down from a revised 4.9% in November and down from 7.2% in December 2020.

The state’s unemployment rate was 4.1%, according to the Oregon Employment Department, compared to 3.9% nationally.

CMH Field to open for public

CMH Field will open for public use on Sundays starting on Jan. 30.

The sports field, located on Williamsport Road, will be available from 1 to 4 p.m. every Sunday until further notice. The field will not be open on Feb. 13.

No drink, food or metal cleats are permitted on the turf.

— *The Astorian*

Recreational razor clamming reopens on peninsula

LONG BEACH, Wash. — Grab your shovel and get your favorite razor clam recipe ready, the next round of recreational razor clamming will reopen this weekend along the Long Beach Peninsula.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife approved five days of digs locally from Saturday through Wednesday.

“We have had some really good digging opportunity to start the new year and are excited to be able to finish out January on some really good minus tides,” said Zach Forster, a state coastal shellfish biologist, in a press release.

Diggers are reminded that the daily limit has reverted to the standard 15 razor clams. Under state law, a daily limit consists of the first 15 clams dug regardless of size or condition, and each digger’s clams must be kept in a separate container.

Not all beaches are open for every dig, so diggers are encouraged to make sure their intended destination is open before heading out.

All diggers age 15 or older must have an applicable fishing license to harvest razor clams on any beach.

— *Chinook Observer*

DEATHS

Jan. 23, 2022

HAUKE, Michael
Holden, 83, of Astoria, died in Portland. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Jan. 22, 2022

FERGUSON, Janet
Kay, 69, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Weapons charges

- Mindy Kate Riva, 58, of Astoria, was indicted last week for unlawful use of a weapon, menacing, pointing a firearm at another person and two counts of recklessly endangering another person. The crimes are alleged to have occurred earlier this month.
- Assault**
- Maria Fortunato Sanchez Garcia, 33, of Seaside, was indicted last week for assault in the fourth degree constituting domestic violence and harassment. The crimes are alleged to have occurred earlier this month.
- Theft**
- James Lee Ogier Jr., 25, of Astoria, was indicted on Tuesday for four counts of theft in the first degree. Each count involved the theft of a firearm. The crimes are alleged to have occurred between September and November.

DUII

- Torrie Mae Jones, 43, of Portland, was arraigned on Monday for driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving, three counts of assault in the third degree and seven counts of recklessly endangering another person. The crimes are alleged to have occurred in Clatsop County in October 2018.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Sunset Empire Transportation District Board, 9 a.m., (electronic meeting).

Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce Council, noon, (electronic meeting).



A hiker passes along Ecola State Park on the Oregon Coast Trail.

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

State still wants to bridge gaps on Oregon Coast Trail

By TIFFANY ECKERT
KLCC

The Oregon Coast Trail stretches along the state’s entire 362-mile coastline from Washington to California.

There are some gaps along the way — disconnected sections of trail that pose safety concerns for hikers. Now, the public is being asked to weigh in on plans to reconnect the trail.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is creating a plan for connecting the trail and improving access for hikers. The agency is gathering public comments through an online open house on the Oregon Coast Trail website.

About half of the Oregon Coast Trail is along sandy beaches. There are

THE OREGON COAST TRAIL WAS AUTHORIZED IN 1971 BY THE OREGON RECREATION TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL AND DEVELOPED AND IS MANAGED AS PART OF THE STATE PARK SYSTEM OF OREGON.

overland sections across headlands, forests, rivers and even through some coastal towns.

Diane Navarrete, with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, said about 10% of the Oregon Coast Trail has gaps.

“People have to either walk along (U.S.) Highway 101 in unsafe conditions,” she said. “Or there’s just a gap — and you cannot get from point A to point B

identify gaps in the hiking experience and determine actions and funding needed to improve and maintain the trail over time.

Navarrete said they hope to have a suite of possible solutions to present by this spring and a draft action plan by summer. She anticipates repairs and improvements will take years.

The Oregon Coast Trail was authorized in 1971 by the Oregon Recreation Trails Advisory Council and developed and is managed as part of the state park system of Oregon.

To learn about the Oregon Coast Trail action plan and give feedback, visit the online open house at bit.ly/OCTOpenHouse1 any time now through Feb. 11 to view a presentation of the project and provide feedback.

State seeks input on transportation projects

Part of the state’s share of infrastructure money

By PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon transportation officials want to hear from the public about how the state should spend more than \$400 million in flexible funds from the federal government over the next five years.

The \$400 million is part of the \$1.2 billion that Oregon will receive for transportation from the federal infrastructure package, which President Joe Biden signed into law in November. Oregon will get more money for other programs, such as water and sewer lines and broadband connections, that does not go through the state Department of Transportation.

In fact, \$200 million of the \$1.2 billion for transportation will go to TriMet and other public transit agencies. Much of the rest is earmarked for specific work by ODOT, such as bridge repairs and charging stations for electric vehicles.

The Oregon Transportation Commission will offer four scenarios for public comment through Feb. 17, when it plans a two-hour seminar. Robert Van Brocklin, the commission’s chairman, who lives in Portland, said the panel isn’t wedded to the numbers in any of them, but is likely to tailor its own plan after hearing from the public.

“It’s difficult to say there

‘WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED IS THAT THERE IS A NEED FOR MONEY ALL ACROSS THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.’

Travis Brouwer | an assistant ODOT director

is one scenario I feel comfortable with,” Julie Brown, a commissioner who is the general manager of the Rogue Valley Transportation District, said at a Jan. 20 meeting. “We have to weigh all of these things.”

Even before the meeting, ODOT received public comments adding up to 300 pages on how to spend the federal money. The agency also interviewed 1,500 people in 2021 — it conducts these surveys every couple of years — about what they would like to see from the transportation system.

Though the money would flow into three general categories, the commission would have to approve specific projects as soon as this spring. It plans a decision on the broad allocations on March 30.

- **Scenario 1:** About \$107 million would go into Fix-It, a list of maintenance projects for roads and bridges, and the rest evenly split between enhanced state highways and two other programs. For Safe Routes to School, ODOT has received \$4 in requests for every \$1 in available money. A new program of Great Streets would improve state highways that also function as main streets in communities.
- The aims of Fix-It are to

- \$40 million to help offset a projected shortfall in agency operations and maintenance.
- \$40 million to enable Oregon to compete with other states for a share of \$100 billion that the U.S. Department of Transportation will award for other projects. Possible Oregon contenders are two projects on Interstate 5: Rose Quarter widening and partial capping and a new bridge over the Columbia River to connect Portland with Vancouver, Washington.
- \$15 million to help communities with planning for climate change, including the transportation planning rule that seeks to reduce the need for travel between home, work and other activities. The rule dates back to 1991, but was updated in 2012.
- \$3 million to boost business and the workforce required for construction projects.

“What you have learned is that there is a need for money all across the transportation system,” said Travis Brouwer, an assistant ODOT director.

In the 2021 survey, large majorities gave priority — 90% or better — to six of 13 points, in descending order: Maintain roads and bridges; improve safety; reduce traffic congestion; protect the environment; seismic improvements; provide transportation for seniors and people with disabilities.

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