



# Hood River News



On Stage

## Dance and drama

Pages A12 and B1

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## Governor declares state of emergency for coronavirus response

*The number of confirmed cases in Oregon rises to 14; none reported in HR County*

By EMILY FITZGERALD  
News staff writer

Gov. Kate Brown has declared a statewide state of emergency to address the spread of the novel coronavirus after the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) identified four new cases of COVID-19 in Oregon on Saturday and an additional seven on Sunday, bringing the total to 14 as of Monday morning.

In total, eight of the confirmed cases are out of Washington County, two are in Jackson County, and Klamath, Umatilla, Douglas and Marion counties have one confirmed case each.

According to OHA, three of the new cases are travel-related, five were contacts of a known case and had been under monitoring, and three — one each in Washington, Marion and Douglas counties — are being investigated as community-spread cases, meaning that the origin of the infection is unknown.

"This news is concerning for all Oregonians, but my resolve and that of my administration to address this public health crisis is unchanged," said Brown in an official press release. "This emergency declaration gives the Oregon Health Authority and the Office of Emergency Management all the resources at the state's disposal to stem the spread of this disease. We will do everything it takes, within our power and in coordination with federal and local officials, to keep Oregonians safe."

The emergency declaration allows OHA to activate reserves of emergency volunteer health care professionals and grants broad authority to the State Public Health Director, OHA, and the Office of Emergency Management, said the press release, which "will allow the agencies to take immediate action and devote all available state resources towards containing the coronavirus in Oregon."

The state of emergency will remain in effect for 60 days but can be extended

"until the public health threat of the coronavirus is contained," said the press release.

"We are prepared to activate an unprecedented state and private effort to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Oregon by focusing specifically on at-risk populations," said OHA Director Patrick Allen. "We want to protect Oregonians at greatest risk of the most severe outcomes of this disease, including older adults, people with underlying conditions, people who are homeless and those who are vulnerable in other ways."

With the additional resources granted by the emergency declaration, OHA is finalizing agreements with major hospital systems to expand locations where COVID-19 tests can be conducted safely, preparing to mobilize Oregon's medical reserve corps, expanding telemedicine, and convening providers who serve older adults and vulnerable populations to mobilize an "aggressive outreach and prevention strategy to protect at-risk people," according to an OHA press release.

"By declaring a state of emergency, the governor and the Oregon Health Authority director are taking necessary steps to bring state government's broad powers to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Oregon," said Becky Hultberg, president and CEO of the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS), a nonprofit trade association representing acute care hospitals in Oregon. "Hospitals are on the front lines responding to the outbreak and are committed to providing critical inpatient and community health services to respond to this evolving situation. We are working with the state administration to address important issues such as inpatient capacity, additional supplies and equipment to keep our workers and patients safe, regulatory relief to ensure adequate staffing and clarity around changing requirements."

There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Hood River County, and locals are taking preventative action to try and keep it that way. Events throughout the county have been canceled or rescheduled due to concerns about the outbreak (see related story, below), and the Hood River County School District is keeping parents updated on the situation

See CORONAVIRUS, page A9



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

TIPPLE operators Jorge Esquivel and Genaro Martinez sort boards at Mt. Hood Forest Products, using hands and feet.

## County's only lumber mill hires 45 jobs, will add a second shift

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA  
News editor

The units of lumber are stacking up at Mt. Hood Forest Products near Odell and more employees are needed to keep up with the company's growing demand for two-by-four and two-by-six products.

Mt. Hood Forest Products, located on 125 acres at Neal Creek Road and Highway 35, is about to add a second shift for the first time in its 16-year history. The company replaced and upgraded outbuildings last year, has had three phases of upgrades since 2014, and needs more people to run the saws, sorting lines, and computers.

Mt. Hood Forest Products is the only lumber mill in Hood River County and, along with WKO in Carson and SDS in Bingen, one of three in the Gorge.

The mill is now fully automated.

See MILL, page A9

## MAY 19 PRIMARY ELECTION

## Long list of U.S. Dist. 2 hopefuls place names on the ballot

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA  
News editor

On March 11, Hood River News will provide an online list of all candidates to file for the May 19 Primary Election.

The deadline to file was Tuesday, March 10 at 5 p.m., which came after the print deadline.

Go to [hoodrivernews.com](http://hoodrivernews.com). As of Monday afternoon, no new names had entered any of the county races. Meanwhile a total of 10 Republicans and five Democrats have filed for the open U.S. House Dist. 2 races, according to the Oregon Secretary of State's website.

Ballots will go out in early May. Carrie Rasmussen, a deputy district attorney in Hood River since 2005, filed for the job of District Attorney, to be vacated by John Sewell, who will retire after 28 years in the



Carrie Rasmussen  
Deputy files for top job

post. Sean Kallery of Hood River has also filed for the DA job; he currently works as a deputy DA in Marion County.

Rasmussen said in an email, "I've dedicated my career to fighting for justice against some of our most hardened criminals, and as a champion for children, under-represented communities and vulnerable citizen. As our next district attorney, I will continue to make sure Hood River is a safe place to live, work and play. We should feel safe on our streets and in our homes, and I will make sure of that."

Prior to her 15-year tenure in Hood River County, she worked in several other counties and cities in

Oregon and handled hundreds of cases dealing with child abuse and child sexual abuse, domestic violence and restraining orders, serious drug crimes, homicides and other felony convictions.

### Dist. 2 candidates

Republicans — Jason A. Atkinson of Central Point, Cliff Bentz of Ontario, Knute C. Buehler of Bend, David R. Campbell of White City, Jimmy Crumpacker of Bend, Travis A. Fager of LaGrande, Justin Livingston of Bend, Kenneth W. Medenbach of Klamath Falls, Mark R. Roberts of White City, and Jeff Smith of Elgin.

Democrats — Nick L. Heuert of Central Point, John P. Holm of Medford, Jack Howard of LaGrande, Alex Spenser of Klamath Falls, and Isabella Tibbetts of Talent.

Incumbent Greg Walden (R-Hood River) decided not to seek re-election.

## COVID-19 cancellations announced

*Columbia River Gorge Commission, others, cancel or change plans*

Coronavirus concerns are impacting more and more local organizations, including Columbia River Gorge Commission, which canceled its March 10 in-person session, and will shift to remote technology to conduct business.

Chairman Robert Liberty said in a weekend email, "As a bi-state agency I think we should be respectful of Gov. Jay Inslee's advice yesterday to avoid nonessential meetings of 10 or more people or to hold them virtually."

Liberty said, "Until there is more information about coronavirus, the

Gorge Commission will be scheduling and holding our next meeting (and possibly more) using online video technology such as Zoom. We will send out email notices and will post the new date of our first online commission meeting in the next week, so please check our website for the call-in information."

### 2020 Wind Challenge

In what should have been its seventh year, the 2020 Wind Challenge has been canceled in relation to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, announced officials with Gorge Technology Alliance (GTA).

The event brings over 200 middle- and high-school students and dozens of volunteers from across six counties together for a one-day competition to build the best wind turbine. This event had been planned for March 14 at Fort Dalles

See CANCELATIONS, page A9

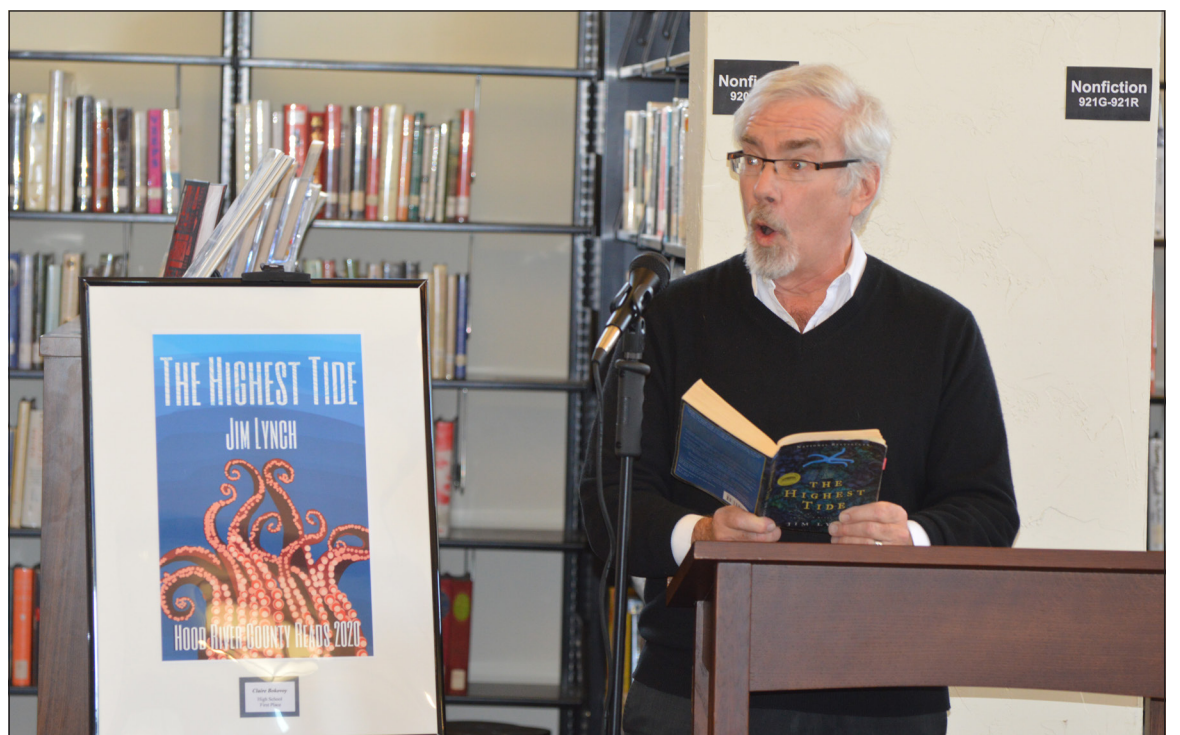


Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

## 'THIS IS A BOOK TO READ ALOUD'

Richard Withers reads from "The Highest Tide" Saturday at Hood River Reads kickoff. See pages A8 and B5 for more details. Meanwhile, Saturday's Feast of Words at the Library is among events postponed due to coronavirus. Details at left.

## INSIDE

- Classifieds ..... B6
- Entertainment ..... A3
- Greater Gorge ..... A2
- Happenings ..... B3
- Kaleidoscope ..... B1
- Legal Notices ..... B5
- Obituaries ..... A6

- Opinion ..... A4
- Sports ..... A7
- Yesteryears ..... B2

*"I can say from personal experience that they will never regret being bilingual." — Peggy Dills Kelter, B2*

## BRIEFS

### Parkdale Carnival

Parkdale Elementary PTO hosts its annual school carnival, March 13 from 5-8 p.m. Admission is free; food, game tickets and raffle tickets available for purchase.

### Tax Aide continues

Tax Aide volunteers are ready to assist on Mondays at the Hood River Library and Thursdays at the Hood River Valley Adult Center, from 2-6 p.m. Free; more information on page B3.

### Values and environment

Hood River Library hosts Monica Mueller for "How Do Our Values Influence Environmental Policy" on March 12 at 6:30 p.m. Free; more at [www.columbiaorgetourismalliance.org](http://www.columbiaorgetourismalliance.org).

