

FISH: Biologist worried sockeye mortality could rise to 80 percent

Continued from 1A

temperatures in the Columbia River to stay at or below 68 degrees to protect native salmon and steelhead. Rock Peters, senior fisheries biologist for the Army Corps' Northwest Division, said temperatures varied in 2015 but eclipsed 70 degrees in July.

Oregon snowpack was the lowest on record for the 2015 water year, and early runoff exacerbated low flows throughout the Columbia Basin. By July, more than a quarter-million sockeye had died in the Columbia and Snake rivers — at least half the total run, according to reports. One biologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration worried mortality could rise to 80 percent.

Environmental groups say dams are the main culprit. Peters did not specifically address the letter sent to Col. Aguilar, but said the Corps is working with NOAA and the state of Idaho on a report detailing what exactly happened in 2015, and ways they can keep the rivers cooler moving forward.

The report will also address fish passage issues on the lower Snake and Columbia dams, Peters said.

"We're looking at various operations that could offset the (fish) ladder temperature differences," he said. "Those discussions are going on."

Peters said that report will be presented to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, possibly in April. The council is made up of representatives from Oregon, Washington, Idaho

and Montana, and works to balance regional power needs with fish and wildlife.

Possible emergency measures might include closing off surface collectors at the dams when water temperatures get too high. Surface collectors take in water near the surface to help with juvenile fish passage, but can introduce warmer water into the dams' fish ladders that impede returning adults.

Another idea, Peters said, is to start catching and trucking fish at the dams earlier in the year when conditions arise. But nothing has been set in stone.

"I think we were all caught somewhat behind last year," he said.

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REFUGE: Judge said trial date tentatively set for April 29

Continued from 1A

judge: "You're the federal government; you're going to do whatever you want."

The judge tackled several procedural issues during the nearly two-hour hearing, which started with Bundy, sporting a fresh haircut, blowing a kiss toward Odalis Sharp and her children. The family gospel band traveled from Kansas in January to sing at the occupation. One daughter, 18-year-old Victoria Sharp, was at the traffic stop in which authorities arrested Bundy and fatally shot Arizona rancher LaVoy Finicum.

The judge said a trial date had been tentatively set for April 29, although court papers show an April

19 date. Assistant U.S. Attorney Ethan Knight said he expects to file a superseding indictment with additional charges after investigators finish examining firearms, electronics, American Indian artifacts and other evidence.

Brown warned Knight to make it snappy, saying the accused deserve a right to a speedy trial — not one in 2017. She also pressed prosecutors to start turning over FBI reports and evidentiary material to defense attorneys and their clients.

"They've been in custody for weeks. They need information," Brown said. She told prosecutors to produce at least some discovery material by March 4.

A total of 25 people are charged in connection with

the takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which began Jan. 2 and lasted until Feb. 11. The occupiers wanted the U.S. government to relinquish public lands to locals and free two Oregon ranchers who they say were wrongly imprisoned for setting fires.

Defense lawyers and their investigators plan to visit the refuge Thursday and Friday, their first look at the scene. The judge denied Bundy's request to tag along with his attorneys.

One of the defendants, Kenneth Medenbach, told the judge he plans to serve as his own lawyer and made a motion to have his case dismissed for lack of jurisdiction. Brown scheduled a hearing for next week to go over those issues.

WORK: Many companies creating their own workforce training programs

Continued from 1A

centers locating in the area, the college worked with those companies on creating a data center technician program that held its first class seven months later. Students from that first class are all in internships now, she said.

White-Zollman said the comprehensive study currently in the works would help the college launch that type of response on a broader scale across more industries.

"The college strives to be responsive to local employers' needs, and we hope the data helps us see those needs," she said.

Bower said the county plans to use the results to look at how it can most effectively help with workforce development without duplicating programs already in place. She said the idea for the study came out of worries that a shortage of skilled

workers might be hindering economic development in the county.

"The question is how does a lack of skilled workforce impact the ability to grow the area?" she said. "Are there employers that are well-positioned to expand but are hesitant to do so because they have trouble finding a workforce?"

A week after the survey was released online Bower said she already had about 80 responses and had interviewed about 20 employers. She said she is hoping to hear from hundreds of Umatilla County businesses over the next month, representing all different sizes and industries and cities.

"The more employers participate, the more reliable the data will be," she said.

She said she has already learned several things, including a concern from many local employers about their aging workforce and

what will happen as more and more of their top employees retire.

She has also learned that many companies are creating their own workforce training programs because they can't find people with the qualifications they need. Interpath Laboratories, for example, provides a training path for lab technicians and phlebotomists, and Good Shepherd Health Care System has a program for nurses.

The sooner employers complete the online survey, she said, the more she can use those responses to craft better questions for the one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions hosted by local chambers of commerce.

The 15-minute survey can be found online at www.surveymonkey.com/t/umatillaworkforceneeds.

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ELECTION: Hillary Clinton scored the endorsement of Nevada's Harry Reid

Continued from 1A

Rubio, the Florida senator who is soaking up Republican establishment support and thereby threatening to starve Kasich's effort of its remaining oxygen.

Trump exercised bragging rights with trademark gusto after Nevada handed him his third straight victory the night before.

Relaxed on stage at Virginia's Regent University, Trump fielded questions from Christian conservative figure Pat Robertson, ticking off Obama administration executive orders he wants to reverse as president and joking about his recent dustup with the pope.

He said earlier he might tone down his contentious rhetoric if he makes it to the White House — or not, since "right now it seems to be working pretty well."

And what of Rubio?

"So far he's been very nice and I think I've been very nice to him," Trump said on NBC's "Today" show. "We haven't been in that mode yet but probably it'll happen." He meant attack mode.

On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton scored the endorsement of Nevada's Harry Reid, the party's Senate leader, in advance of a primary Saturday in South Carolina, where she looks strong. She prevailed in the Nevada Democratic caucuses days before the GOP contest there, dulling rival Bernie Sanders' drive and making Super Tuesday of crucial importance to him.

On Tuesday: Republicans will award 595 delegates in 11 state races, with 1,237 delegates needed to clinch the nomination.

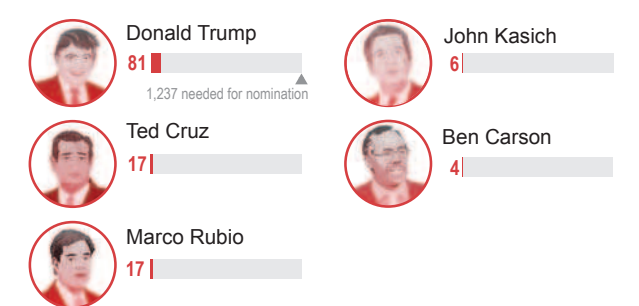
Democrats will award 865 delegates in 11 states and American Samoa, with 2,383 needed for the nomination.

The election calendar suggests that if Trump's rivals don't slow him by

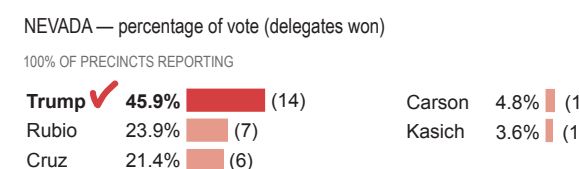
ELECTION '16

GOP delegate count

Donald Trump, leading in delegates a week before Super Tuesday won the Nevada Republican caucuses Tuesday.



Latest state results: Feb. 23



Next contest: Feb. 27
South Carolina Democratic primary

SOURCE: AP Election Services AP

METH: Seven other people were arrested Tuesday, unrelated to the BENT investigation

Continued from 1A

Seven more were indicted on drug charges but were not arrested — two were in the Oregon Department of Corrections system, one is in federal prison and three are still at-large.

In addition to the original 20 indictments, three indictments for delivery of a controlled substance were issued for people already in custody on unrelated charges, and five for people that haven't been located by

authorities.

"The investigation, like many BENT conducts, was based on information obtained from concerned citizens, law enforcement and informants," Police Chief Stuart Roberts said.

An additional seven people were arrested Tuesday unrelated to the investigation.

- Bradley Baker, 51, Hermiston, fugitive and meth possession
- Tyler Stone, 22, Irrigon, probation violation
- Noe Viesca, 40,

Umatilla, probation violation

- Alex Rivera, 27, Boardman, probation violation
- Jason Miller, 42, Umatilla, probation violation
- Twila Jones, 31, Irrigon, probation violation
- Curtis Drury, 34, Boardman, failure to appear in court
- Christine Johnston, 36, Boardman, failure to appear in court
- Cody McCullough, 22, Hermiston, failure to appear in court

Putin pushes Syria truce deal amid skepticism

BEIRUT (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke Wednesday with key players in the Syria conflict, including President Bashar Assad, ahead of a U.S.-Russia-engineered cease-fire, as the opposition voiced concerns that the truce due to begin later this week will only benefit the Syrian government.

Government troops backed by Russian warplanes waged fierce battles to regain control of a strategic road southeast of Aleppo from the Islamic State group. The extremist group seized the town of Khanaser and surrounding hills on Tuesday, cutting the main land route to Aleppo.

The state-run news agency said 18 people were killed in IS shelling of government-held neighborhoods in the city over the past 24 hours.

A key element of the agreement on a "cessation of hostilities" is humanitarian access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

The United Nations announced the first high-altitude airdrop of 21 metric tons of aid Wednesday over Deir el-Zour, which is under siege from Islamic State extremists. But the World Food Program said later it faced "technical difficulties" and indicated the drop may have been off target.



Alexei Druzhinin/Sputnik, Kremlin Pool Photo via AP, File
In this Oct. 2015 file photo, Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, shakes hand with Syrian President Bashar Assad in the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia.

The truce agreement, which is set to take effect at midnight Friday local time, does not cover the Islamic State group, Syria's al-Qaida branch known as the Nusra Front, or any other militia designated as a terrorist group by the U.N. Security Council.

It's not clear exactly where along Syria's complicated front lines the fighting would stop and for how long — or where counterterrorism operations could continue. Also unresolved are how breaches in the truce would be dealt with.

It remains shaky at best and major questions over enforcement are still unresolved.

In a further reflection of the complicated terrain,

Turkey's president said Wednesday that a U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish militia group — which Turkey regards as a terror organization — should also be kept outside of the scope of the agreement. Turkey has in the past few weeks been shelling the group known as the People's Protection Units, or YPG, in northern Syria.

The comments by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan suggested Turkey may not stop bombarding the group, which has been a key fighting force against IS.

Addressing dozens of local administrators in Ankara, Erdogan also voiced serious concern that the proposed truce will strengthen Assad and lead to "new tragedies."

Friday Meals

February 26 from 5 to 7:00 p.m.
@ the St. Anthony Hospital Blue Mountain Cafe

- Cedar Plank Salmon - \$7.50/Adults - \$7.00/Children & Seniors**
with Rice Pilaf & Buttered Green Beans
- Baked Potato Bar - \$4.00/with toppings All you can eat.**
- Salmon/Potato Bar Combo - \$11.50**
- Clam Chowder Bread Bowl - \$4.25**
Single Cup \$1.25

CHI St. Anthony Hospital

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