

Educators: 186,896 Oregonians have received their first dose

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forward with confidence that doses will be received prior to the Jan. 28 event, according to Fiumara.

Health officials earlier this week received 1,000 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, allowing them to begin inoculating long-term care homes on Thursday, Jan. 21.

And on Friday, Jan. 22, the health department held an event at the Pendleton Convention Center where it planned to bring 500 doses to a group specified by the Oregon Health Authority, including long-term care providers and patients, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their caregivers, home health providers and health care workers who provide home-based health care.

The latest shipment to Umatilla County came just days after the health department learned that it wouldn't be receiving any vaccine from Monday, Jan. 18, through Jan. 22. Days later, however, the county health department reached an agreement with state officials to receive the 1,000 doses from a batch originally reserved to be second doses but had yet to reach the arms of Oregonians.

The health department's agreement with the state, according to Fiumara, stated the county would help immunize eight long-term care facilities that were not



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Syringes with doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine sit ready to be administered during a drive-thru COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the Pendleton Convention Center on Friday, Jan. 22, 2021.

covered in the Federal Pharmacy Partnership, a national effort to send retail pharmacists into nursing homes to speed up COVID-19 immunization efforts after a slow initial rollout.

Fiumara said he's confident that if the county receives ample doses, those long-term care homes will have each received their promised vaccines by the end of January.

Health care professionals have immunized more than 2,500 people in Umatilla County against COVID-19 as of Jan. 21 — approximately 3.1% of the county's population, according data from the health department.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Retired registered nurse Sharon Waldern volunteers to draw up doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine during a Umatilla County vaccination clinic at the Pendleton Convention Center on Friday, Jan. 22, 2021.

Rachael Bank, the public health director for the Oregon Health Authority, said in the press conference.

Bank added she was confident the state will be able to immunize "most educators" before Feb. 8, despite the sluggish statewide and national vaccine rollout.

Oregon is one of two states in the country to allow educators to be immunized before older residents, as reported by *The Oregonian*, while 45 other states have already begun or will soon be inoculating some of their oldest and most vulnerable residents. The move defies guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which recommends vaccinating the elderly, people with underlying health conditions, and people at high risk of exposure first.

Reported COVID-19 deaths continue to surge to record-breaking heights in Oregon, according to OHA, with 195 reported deaths between Jan. 11 through Jan. 17. The total exceeded the previous record set a week before.

Weekly COVID-19 cases, however, recently declined, as health officials reported 7,860 new daily cases between Jan. 11 and Jan. 17, a 4% decline from the previous week. The percentage of positive tests also dropped recently to 5.9% for the week of Jan. 10 through Jan. 16, according to OHA.

In all, 186,896 Oregonians have been inoculated against the virus, with 31,517 of those having received their second dose, making them fully immunized against COVID-19, according to OHA.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Echo residents have expressed concern that the shifting Umatilla River will affect this bridge leading out of Echo.

Landscape:

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the 2020 floods.

Ramos and others in Echo are also worried about how the shifting river will affect the bridge leading out of Echo, which is part of the state highway system that forms a loop connecting Highway 395 and Highway 207.

Andrew Kilgore said he has reached out to the Oregon Department of Transportation and Army Corps of Engineers to urge them to take action to protect the bridge and road from the river, but was unsatisfied with their response.

"It's heading closer to the highway," he said.

Tom Strandberg, public information officer for ODOT's Region 5, said the department sent someone to assess the bridge on Tuesday, Jan. 19, after receiving calls about it. He said there are no "immediate issues" with the bridge, which is protected by large rocks around it, but the department will be keeping an eye on the situation.

"We'll continue to monitor our bridges and greatly appreciate those who have brought the high water and river channel changes to our attention," he said in an email, adding that concerns specifically about the river channel should be directed to the Army Corps of Engineers.

For Ramos, the recent erosion of the property he bought in 2019, and the flood's effects on more property he already owned upstream, have been frustrating. He joined the Mid-Umatilla River Coalition, which Echo-area residents formed in 2020 in order to work together on lobbying state legislators and agencies for the funding and permission to do projects along the river that they hope will reduce the impact of future flooding.

Ramos said agencies like

the Army Corps of Engineers have mostly taken the position that rivers naturally change over time and the Umatilla River should be allowed to meander. But Ramos said he believes some parts of the river should be managed, or property owners at least compensated for their losses. He said he understands and supports the idea of avoiding man-made disturbances in the river that would harm fish and other wildlife, but said the amount of soil caving into the river now wouldn't be good for fish either.

He said he feels like they're making progress on working with the agencies, but funding is still a question mark.

"A major project on that stretch of the river could be six figures easily," he said.

David Slaght, Echo's city administrator, shares the frustrations and concerns of the city's residents regarding the river. He said it seems certain the town will face more flooding in the future, but in some ways the city's hands are tied. The Main Street bridge, for example, is ODOT's jurisdiction, not the city's.

Most of the projects that could help protect homes from flooding would also need to take place on private property, although Slaght said he has been working with the property owners in question and they seem open to cooperating if the proper permits and funding could be secured.

Beyond the Ramos property and bridge, he is also particularly concerned about a collection of homes on the south side of Echo that flooded last year and are vulnerable to flooding again.

He said the Mid-Umatilla River Coalition is making more progress than he expected on working with state agencies to get permission for flood protection projects.

"It's just not happening as fast as the river is eating away (property)," he said.

Restaurants: Approval as early as Jan. 26

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grant of up to \$5,000 for four months. If a restaurant can't stay open during a lockdown, the grant would turn into a loan that would be forgiven for each month it stays open after reopening. Should a restaurant reopen before the four-month period is up, they would be eligible for an additional month to help with reopening.

The majority of the restaurants for the program are inside the urban renewal district, meaning the Pendleton Development Commission can use urban renewal funds for the program. But the proposal also calls for using money from the city's community development fund to offer grants to seven restaurants outside the district.

"If this isn't the answer, we'll just keep working," Rosenberg said, calling the grant program "a Band-Aid on a gunshot wound."

Five thousand dollars is unlikely to cover all the monthly expenses of most Pendleton restaurants, but a couple of longtime restaurateurs still saw a benefit to the program.

Since the shutdown, Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub has dramatically scaled back its operations, now mostly operating as a growler filling



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Osa Range, left, and Alexia Miller work the front counter at Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co. in Pendleton on Friday, Jan. 22, 2021.

station while it waits for the state's COVID-19 restrictions to lift. Prodigal Son co-owner Tim Guenther said that even if the state began to loosen restrictions, he would want to wait until enough were lifted that reopening would make financial sense.

Guenther said the grant program would help Prodigal Son pay the bills on the fixed costs they need to be able to meet.

Addison Schulberg, a manager at the Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., said his restaurant isn't pushing for

a full reopening, especially considering the health risks of gathering crowds of people together in an indoor space during the pandemic.

But he added that Great Pacific is still making an effort to pay its staff as much as possible despite a cut in hours. Other costs, like packaging, have gone up as Great Pacific processes more take-out orders.

Schulberg said the money would go toward making long-term improvements that would help the restaurant come back stronger

once it reopened.

Guenther is also looking into using the down time for improvements like making some building renovations and revamping the menu.

The members of the council didn't seem to have any major objections to the program. Councilor Kevin Martin, the chairman of the development commission, said the commission would hold a special meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 26, instead of workshop, meaning the grant program could be approved as soon as Jan. 26.

Opportunity: Jameson Hays will take over sex crimes

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and returned to the community after law school, and in 2019 was Hermiston High School's Distinguished Alumni's of the Year. She said while she was thrilled to receive the job offer, she is sad to leave Umatilla County and small town life behind.

"In some ways (living in Portland) will be more of an adjustment than the job, because the law is the law, and I know the law," she said.

Still, she is excited for the opportunity, and said she may still be involved in trying cases that originated in Umatilla County or involve Umatilla County residents. According to the U.S. Attorney District of Oregon website, the office has 44 prosecutors working to enforce federal criminal law in Oregon, from narcotics trafficking to child pornography to terrorism.

Jenkins has worked for



East Oregonian, File

Umatilla County lead deputy district attorney Jackie Jenkins is leaving to become a prosecutor for the U.S. Attorney's District of Oregon office in Portland. Her last day with the local district attorney's office is Jan. 29.

the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office since 2009. She handles the county's sex crime cases, but has also prosecuted a variety of other crimes, including homicide cases.

She said Jameson Hays, who according to the *East Oregonian's* archives joined the district attorney's office

in 2015, will be taking over sex crimes, while her other open cases will be divided among other staff.

"I think he will do well," she said.

She said working with victims of sex crimes is about understanding people, not just the law. The survivors have been traumatized

and often betrayed by someone they trusted, and Jenkins said it isn't uncommon for someone to tell her they thought no one would believe them. Sometimes the victims are children, and sometimes the children's parents refuse to believe them, while other times the parents are wracked with guilt for not seeing what was going on.

Jenkins said the work is "heavy," but also honorable and rewarding when done right. While she will miss the people she was able to help here, she said she is looking forward to new opportunities to help people at the federal level. It's one of the reasons she is taking on the role, rather than sticking around and perhaps eventually becoming a judge as she had imagined earlier in her career.

"I want to be able to hug victims and tell them it will be OK, and I can't do that if I'm a judge," she said.