

Risk:

Continued from Page A1

out of the classification.

County officials were flooded with calls on Feb. 20 from concerned residents after the state reported the backlogged tests, which showed that the county had a spike of 72 new coronavirus cases.

Halley Maloy, the county's epidemiologist, sorted through the tests over the weekend with county health officials to determine what cases should be included and what cases should be excluded from the county's reopening metrics.

Their analysis showed that 1,145 of those tests, accounting for 74 recently reported positive cases, were either from before Feb. 1, when the two-week time frame to determine risk levels began, or from inmates at local prisons. At least one of those cases was from as far back as June, said Joe Fiumara, the county's public health director.

"The way it got reported from the state, which I didn't like, very much made it seem like we screwed something up here locally," Fiumara said. "And that was not in fact what happened."

The approval from the governor's office to discount the cases drops reported cases over the past two weeks from 231 to 156, according to the health department, which dropped county case rates to 191 cases per 100,000 from Feb. 7 to Feb. 20 and made the county eligible to be lowered to high risk.

"The accurate collection and accounting of all COVID-19 case data informs OHA's ongoing response to COVID-19, and we are committed to informing the public when we identify any oversight," said Dr. Dean Sidelinger, state public health officer and epidemiologist. "When we identified the issue, we worked to correct our methods of capturing case data, and we want to thank the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation for the work they are doing to provide their case and investigation data to us."

A total of 58 of the reported cases were from Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center, which has been reporting cases to the state since the pandemic began despite being an entity of a sovereign nation that is not required to do so.

"We decided to be transparent with our data because we realize this will be an important part to fighting the virus and protect not only residents of the Umatilla Indian

COUNTY RISK CATEGORIES

County risk levels that go into effect Friday, Feb. 26:

LOWER RISK (10)

- Baker
- Clatsop (Moved from High)
- Gilliam
- Grant
- Lincoln (Moved from High)
- Sherman
- Tillamook
- Wallowa
- Wasco (Moved from Extreme)
- Wheeler

MODERATE RISK (10)

- Clackamas (Moved from High)
- Curry (Moved from Lower)
- Harney (Moved from Lower)
- Hood River (Moved from High)
- Lake
- Linn (Moved from High)
- Malheur (Moved from Extreme)
- Morrow
- Union (Moved from Extreme)
- Washington (Moved from High)

HIGH RISK (11)

- Columbia
- Crook (Moved from Extreme)
- Deschutes
- Jackson (Moved from Extreme)
- Klamath
- Lane (Moved from Extreme)
- Marion (Moved from Extreme)
- Multnomah
- Polk (Moved from Extreme)
- Umatilla (Moved from Extreme)
- Yamhill (Moved from Extreme)

EXTREME RISK (5)

- Benton
- Coos
- Douglas (Moved from High)
- Jefferson
- Josephine

Reservation but our community, county and state," said Lisa Guzman, chief executive officer for the Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center.

Four more cases were from Aegis Sciences Corporation, and nine were from inmates at local prisons. All those cases were excluded and do not reflect recent counts.

Eastern Oregon showed improvement, with Umatilla County's move and Union and Malheur counties making big jumps, going from extreme to moderate level. Morrow County remains at moderate risk.

toward foreseeable, inevitable insolvency," he said, emphasizing that it was only his personal opinion rather than the views of the board.

Even with his dire concerns, Puzey echoed his fellow board members in praising Green and her ability.

"I believe she is a team builder," he said. "She's certainly an advocate for community colleges. And she understands the system and what we're trying to do at Blue Mountain Community College as well as anyone I've ever met."

Interest in Green's appointment among staff and students was high. During the virtual public meeting, Hill noted that the total attendees swelled to 60 at its highest. Most of the staff who weighed in on Green's hiring left supportive comments in the chat.

Megan Van Pelt, the Associated Student Government president, asked Green what she would do to fulfill the college's "students first" motto.

Green said addressing student concerns and issues has to be the "guiding principle" of the school.

Overall, Green said she prefers a collaborative approach to solving the challenges the college faces, but she won't be afraid to take decisive action if the need arises.

"The goal is to get to the next president," she said. "But you don't want the president to learn and lift at the same time."

Green said her task will be to help the college lift.

"We need action, we need compassion, and we need hope," she said.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

People stand in line for a COVID-19 vaccination during a vaccination event at Wildhorse Resort & Casino in Mission on Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2021.

CTUIR: 18 guardsmen called in to help

Continued from Page A1

and helping medics with certain tasks, like retrieving more vials of vaccine. But its implications were greater. He hopes that by offering the vaccine to his community, he's helping bring his people closer to normalcy.

"People have been saying, you know, 'Thank you for doing this,' and being here right now makes me feel pretty good," he said.

Earlier this month, health officials from Yellowhawk received 975 doses of the Pfizer vaccine from the Indian Health Service to begin inoculating people en masse with first doses. And because of the sheer scale of the effort, they called upon 18 local members of the Oregon National Guard in an attempt to vaccinate as many people connected to the CTUIR as possible, including both tribal and non-tribal members.

"Speaking for Oregon guardsmen who have taken time away from their civilian lives and family to travel, they're very enthusiastic to be a part of this," said Col. Mark Maddox, the joint task commander for the Oregon Military Department. "The work that's in front of us to get us to a different place is probably some of the more important work that we've done in a public health space in probably all of our lifetimes."

A push toward immunity

By the morning of Wednesday, Feb. 24, 464 vaccines had been administered at the clinic, and more than 900 appointments were scheduled, with more walk-in vaccinations expected. Prior to the clinic, health officials had already vaccinated more than 1,000 people since efforts began in mid-December 2020. Yellowhawk officials expect that number to double by mid-March.

"If anything, I think this has pulled our team together closer," Lisa Guzman, the chief executive officer of Yellowhawk, said of the effort, which involved long

hours and countless ongoing operations from early morning into the evening.

Guzman said if all the allocated doses are to be administered this week, they will have to ramp up their efforts by reaching out to community members and moving people through the clinic quicker, while ensuring patients remain healthy and safe.

"This was something we took upon ourselves, realizing we needed to have a balancing act between providing health care services in the clinic, providing vaccinations and helping Umatilla County," she said. "We recognize Umatilla County has had hiccups to its vaccinations and we wanted to do as much as we could. We wanted to provide as much as was in our capacity to provide."

Those eligible for vacci-

ations have included all tribal members over the age of 16, employees from all CTUIR entities, all residents who live on the reservation, family members of CTUIR employees who live in the same household, and vendors and contractors who do work for CTUIR entities. Many of the vaccines administered at the Feb. 23 clinic were given to non-Indians, officials said.

The effort is a final push to quickly complete vaccination efforts on the reservation. By mid-March — when the health center will receive another shipment of 975 doses from IHS to fully immunize the population vaccinated this week — officials are expecting to have offered a vaccine to everybody so far declared eligible by the Tribes.

Aside from maintaining standard COVID-19 safety precautions, the effort will effectively allow tribal operations to return nearly to normal by April, according

to Chuck Sams, the interim executive director at the CTUIR. This means that tribal enterprises and government operations will reopen.

"By April 1, our hope is that will go back to what we consider a public health emergency issue, not an incident command issue, and that we'll be able to allow everybody to come back into the workplace," Sams said, adding that many tribal operations have been ongoing but limited throughout the pandemic because of the Tribes' proactive approach. "Which is why we want to ensure that we also vaccinated our contractors and our vendors, those who spend time in our buildings and around our people so that they will also feel safer."

Sams noted that disease has affected his community throughout history. Between

with eager patients. Guardsmen worked diligently in seven dimly lit booths, bringing a patient in and administering a shot in less than a minute.

Patients were then moved to a nearby waiting area that sat between two bowling alleys, where they were encouraged to take from a large table of bananas, trail mix and potato chips while health officials watched to make sure nobody had an adverse reaction.

"You've got to take care of the entire group if you're going to take care of our community," said Mystie Hanie, Yellowhawk's interim public health operation supervisor, whose son was working at the clinic as a member of the National Guard. "This whole thing is family. That's what makes it all the more beautiful. These are all local guardsmen. There are some deep ties here."

For weeks, tribal health officials have been planning the event and reaching out through emails, phone and social media to bring people to the clinic en masse.

One of them was Natasha Makin, an employee of Pendleton Bottling Co., a Pepsi distributor, and lifelong resident. When she heard she was eligible to be vaccinated, she was anxious to get the shot. She helps take care of her 77-year-old grandmother, and getting vaccinated was Makin's way of ensuring she is kept safe.

"YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE CARE OF THE ENTIRE GROUP IF YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE CARE OF OUR COMMUNITY, THE CTUIR COMMUNITY."

— **Mystie Hanie**, Yellowhawk's public health operation supervisor

President:

Continued from Page A1

Board member Chris Brown said Green will need to take a more active role than she did in her last stint at the college, where she was expected to take a more "passive" role while the college identified a new president.

This time around, Brown said Green would need to help the board and staff address important issues like the college's budget and strategic plan.

Green is assuming leadership over the college after it survived a tough 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the college to move most of its classes online, which was followed by declining enrollment and staff layoffs. Simultaneously, BMCC was fighting to keep its adult education program going at three Eastern Oregon state prisons. Although the program was saved, the new contract will likely lead to further staff reductions.

Given the issues the college is facing, Kim Puzey, the longest tenured member of the BMCC board, is concerned about the existential future of the institution.

In an interview after the meeting, Puzey pointed to a yearslong trend of declining enrollment and a state government that may be more interested in responding to ongoing crises like COVID-19 and the wildfire recovery rather than adequate community college funding.

"The college is moving

B2H:

Continued from Page A1

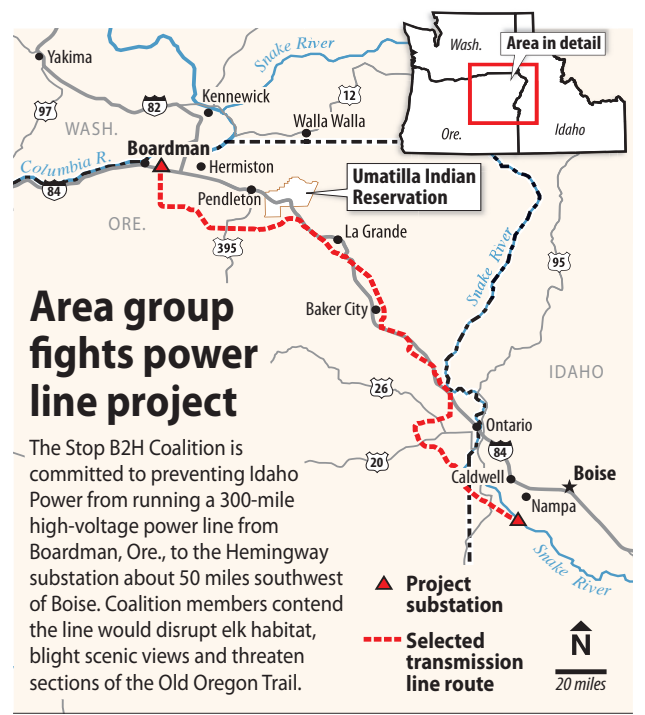
didn't properly evaluate the transmission line's "synergistic" effects with livestock grazing, which the group argues will have cumulative impacts on the sage grouse in the region.

The BLM and Idaho Power, the utility company that would construct the project, are defending an inadequate NEPA analysis of the transmission line's effects, Becker said.

"They really are trying to piece together and point the court in 25 different directions and say, 'We deserve deference,'" Becker said.

The BLM countered that its preferred route was a permissible "logical outgrowth" of alternatives examined in a draft environmental impact statement, or EIS, and doesn't require a supplemental NEPA study.

The agency wasn't



Source: Bureau of Land Management Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group

required to study burying a section of the power line and it sufficiently evaluated the implications of grazing while examining the route's effects on vegetation, said Krystal-Rose Perez, attorney for

the BLM. "The EIS is not organized in the way plaintiffs want, but it's up to BLM's discretion how to disclose that information," she said. Similarly, the agency

doesn't have to arrive at the conclusions preferred by the opponents, Perez said.

"I don't think there's any question NEPA does not mandate particular results," Perez said.

Beth Ginsberg, an attorney for Idaho Power, said both the Obama and Trump administrations have recognized the transmission line as a critical connection between the electrical grids of the Pacific West and Intermountain West.

"The importance of a project like this cannot be understated," Ginsberg said. "No shortcuts were taken. Every I was dotted, every T was crossed."

The BLM conducted the necessary analysis of the project's impacts on sage grouse populations, but this information doesn't need to be isolated in a special "cumulative impacts" section, she said.

"This is a 'gotcha,'" Ginsberg said. "This is another example of trying to weaponize NEPA."