

Vaccinations replace infections as key to lower COVID-19 limits

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Medford area has less than half the number of COVID-19 cases than the Bend area.

But restaurants in Deschutes County can have twice as many customers as Jackson County's in their dining rooms starting on Thursday, May 27.

The virus is spreading at twice the rate in Portland than in La Grande.

But last call will be about a half hour before lights out at 11 p.m. in Union County bars while down at the Moda Center in Multnomah County, people packed together without masks at an NBA playoff game. Afterward, they can party until midnight.

The comparisons underline the new reality in Oregon this week: COVID-19 cases are no longer the only measuring stick for how tight restrictions are placed on counties.

The new key to opening up: vaccination rates. Get a shot of vaccine into the arms of 65% of eligible residents age 16 and up and any county could be dropped to the least restrictive level of rules.

"This disease remains dangerous for those in communities with high rates of unvaccinated individu-



Christina Garcia, right, receives her first shot of the COVID-19 vaccine from Sharon Waldern during a vaccination clinic at Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston on Friday, Feb. 12, 2021. Vaccination rates now are key to reopening Oregon counties.

als," Gov. Kate Brown said on May 25. "That's why I'm encouraging all Oregonians to roll up your sleeves, take your shot, and get a chance to change your life."

The new format explained why some counties with high vaccination rates but less than stellar marks on COVID-19 cases could be in the lower risk group while counties with lower numbers

might find themselves still facing moderate or high risk levels of restrictions.

From May 27 through June 3, the Oregon Health Authority has placed 15 counties in the high risk level, three at moderate risk and 18 at lower risk.

Twelve of the lower risk counties show smaller numbers of COVID-19 cases and lower percentages of

positive cases.

But six of the counties are on the lower risk level because of Brown's waiver for counties that have put vaccine in just under two out of three adults.

Deschutes, Multnomah, Washington, Lincoln, Hood River and Benton counties have passed the mark and will move to lower level restrictions as of May 27.

The "one shot" rule was put in place because most Oregon residents have been inoculated with either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, which requires two shots given about a month apart.

A smaller number of residents have received the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Normally, the risk level changes go into effect the Friday after the levels are announced. But the levels announced on May 25 will go into effect on May 27. The early start is to allow the Moda Center in Multnomah County to implement another new Brown plan tied to hosting the NBA playoff game that night between the Portland Trailblazers and Denver Nuggets.

When Brown and the NBA announced on May 24 that fans would be required to prove they were qualified to sit in the "vaccination sections," some Oregon Republicans criticized the rule. If the state wanted to have vaccination sections, it should practice an "honor code" and take people at their word that they have had their shots. But Brown said showing the vaccination card was a small step to take to protect fans and their families.

The rules at the NBA game are a template for events and businesses

around Oregon. If a county qualifies for lower level risk status, "vaccination sections" where certificates are required can open at theaters, restaurants and other places.

OHA said it would post additional details about the policy on its website May 27.

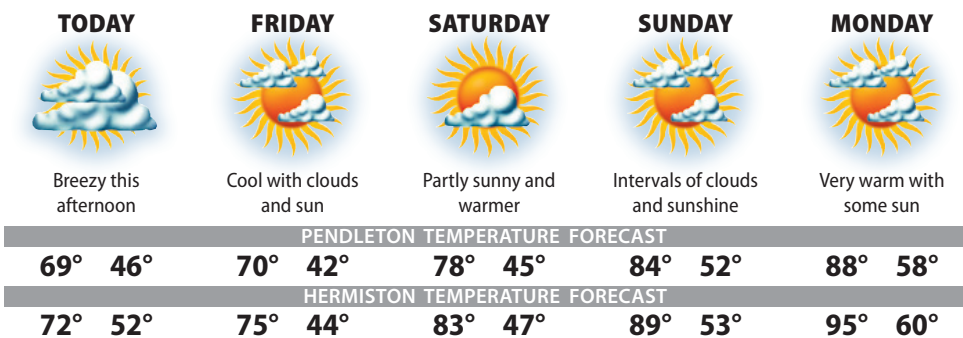
The next risk levels will be announced on June 1. Counties where infection rates and cases move them into a higher risk level will not have to immediately implement restrictions. OHA will allow a "caution period" of one week in which to get the metrics back down. If cases and rates stay high, the restrictions would then be imposed for the following week.

Counties with low vaccination rates are far from qualifying for the waiver. They will have to live with more restrictions for a longer time.

OHA reports eight mostly smaller counties have vaccinated less than 40% of residents. Larger counties in the group include Umatilla (34%) and Douglas (39%).

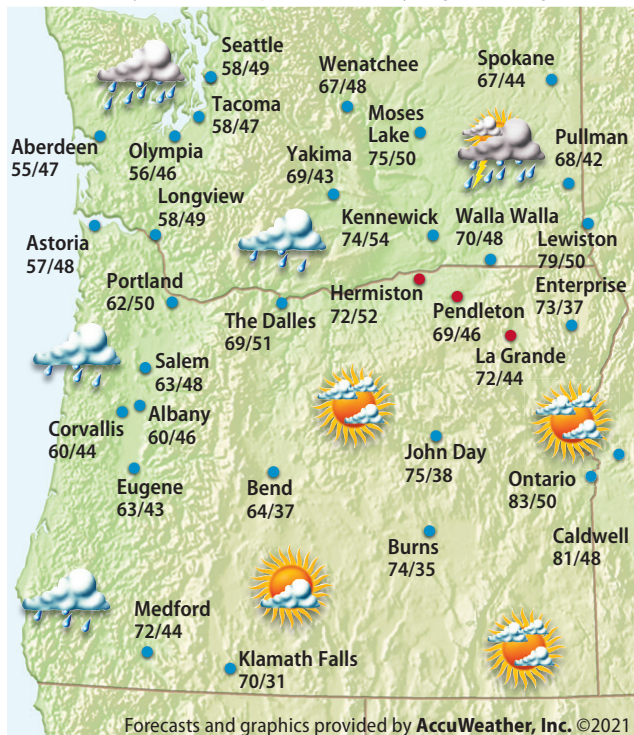
Unless there is a major shift to higher vaccinations and lower infections, many counties will have to wait until Oregon registers an overall 70% mark for residents with one shot of vaccine.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



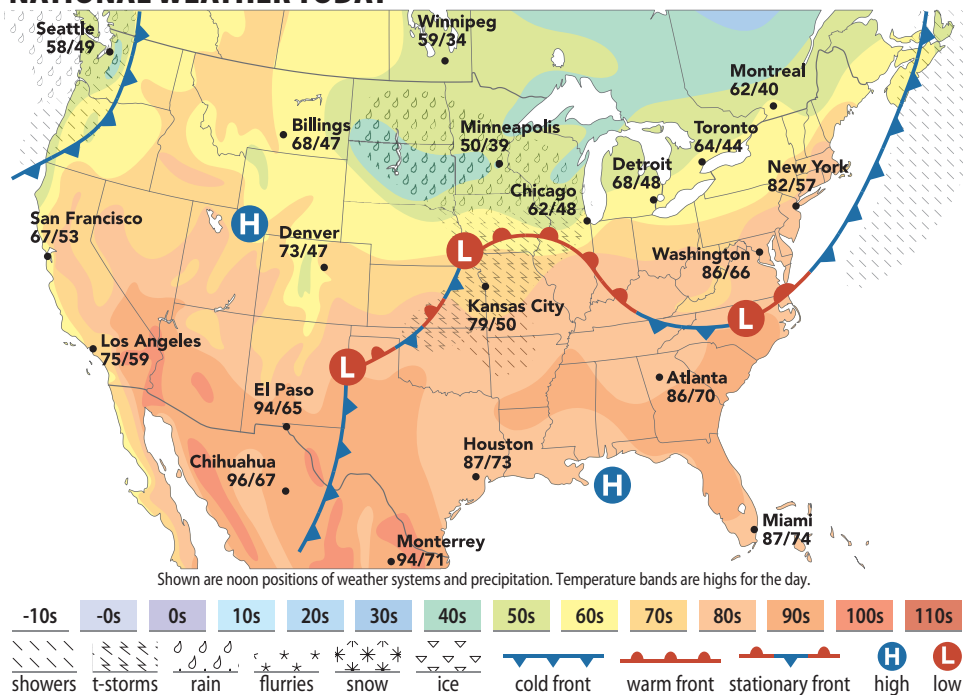
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	73°	48°	
Normals	73°	49°	
Records	99° (1936)	29° (1918)	
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.		
Month to date	0.47"		
Normal month to date	1.11"		
Year to date	4.03"		
Last year to date	7.58"		
Normal year to date	6.22"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	78°	49°	
Normals	75°	49°	
Records	100° (1947)	34° (1999)	
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.		
Month to date	0.00"		
Normal month to date	0.42"		
Year to date	0.94"		
Last year to date	1.70"		
Normal year to date	4.93"		
WINDS (in mph)	Today	Fri.	
Boardman	W 10-20	WSW 8-16	
Pendleton	WNW 8-16	W 8-16	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	5:12 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	8:33 p.m.		
Moonrise today	10:39 p.m.		
Moonset today	6:08 a.m.		
Last	New	First	Full
June 2	June 10	June 17	June 24

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 101° in Palm Springs, Calif. Low 23° in Bridgeport, Calif.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



New wolf killing laws prompt push to revive protections for gray wolves

By MATTHEW BROWN
Associated Press

BILLINGS — Wildlife advocates pressed the Biden administration on Wednesday, May 26, to revive federal protections for gray wolves across the Northern Rockies after Republican lawmakers in Idaho and Montana made it much easier to kill the predators.

The Center for Biological Diversity, Humane Society and Sierra Club filed a legal petition asking Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to use her emergency authority to return thousands of wolves in the region to protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Republican lawmakers pushed through legislation in recent weeks that would allow hunters and trappers to kill unlimited numbers of wolves in Idaho and Montana using aggressive tactics such as shooting them from ATVs and helicopters, hunting with night-vision scopes and setting lethal snares that some consider inhumane. Idaho's law also allows the

state to hire private contractors to kill wolves.

Wolves in the region lost federal endangered protections in 2011 under an act of Congress after the species had rebounded from widespread extermination last century.

Hundreds of wolves are now killed annually by hunters and trappers in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. Yet the population remains strong — more than 3,000 animals, according to wildlife officials — because the wolves breed so successfully and can roam huge areas of wild land in the sparsely populated Northern Rockies.

The new laws had been opposed by some former wildlife officials and reflect an increasingly partisan approach to predator management in state houses that are dominated by Republicans. Supporters of restoring protections say the changes will tip the scales and drive down wolf numbers to unsustainable levels, while also threatening packs in nearby states that

have interconnected populations.

They argue the changes violated the terms that allowed state management of wolves, and want Haaland to act before the looser hunting rules start going into effect in Idaho on July 1.

"The (U.S. Fish and Wildlife) Service was very clear that a change in state law that allowed for unregulated, unlimited take of wolves would set off the alarm," said attorney Nicholas Arrivo with the Humane Society of the United States. "This is essentially an attempt to push the population down to the very minimum."

The petition seeks to restore protections across all or portions of at least six states — Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Eastern Washington, Eastern Oregon and a small area of northern Utah. It steps up pressure on the administration over wolf populations that were declared recovered when President Joe Biden served as vice president under former President Barack Obama.

IN BRIEF

Oregon woman arrested for violating Hawaii quarantine rules

WAILUKU, Hawaii — An Oregon woman was arrested last week after arriving in Hawaii because she violated travel quarantine rules meant to protect the islands from the spread of coronavirus, police said.

After arriving on a flight from Seattle, Kelsey Newcomer, 36, of Portland, did not have a negative pre-travel COVID-19 test from an approved facility and she did not have approved lodging where she could complete a mandatory 10-day travel quarantine, Maui police said.

She was taken to a police station in Wailuku and later agreed to leave Maui and return to Oregon, police said. She was traveling alone, according to Alana Pico, a police spokesperson.

Newcomer couldn't immediately be reached for comment on Tuesday, May 25.

Travelers to Hawaii must comply with the state's pre-travel testing program, even those who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Travelers must have a negative test result prior to departing for Hawaii in order to bypass the quarantine.

Hawaii authorities have been arresting people who violate the rules.

— Associated Press

CORRECTION: In the Page A1 story "I just feel really blessed," published Tuesday, May 25, a photo outline misidentified the name of a student. The student in the photo is Samuel Vander Stelt.

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

EastOregonian.com

In the App Store:



East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.

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Circulation Dept.

For mail delivery, online access, vacation stops or delivery concerns call 800-781-3214

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	Local home delivery	Savings (cover price)
EZPay	\$10.75/month	50 percent
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