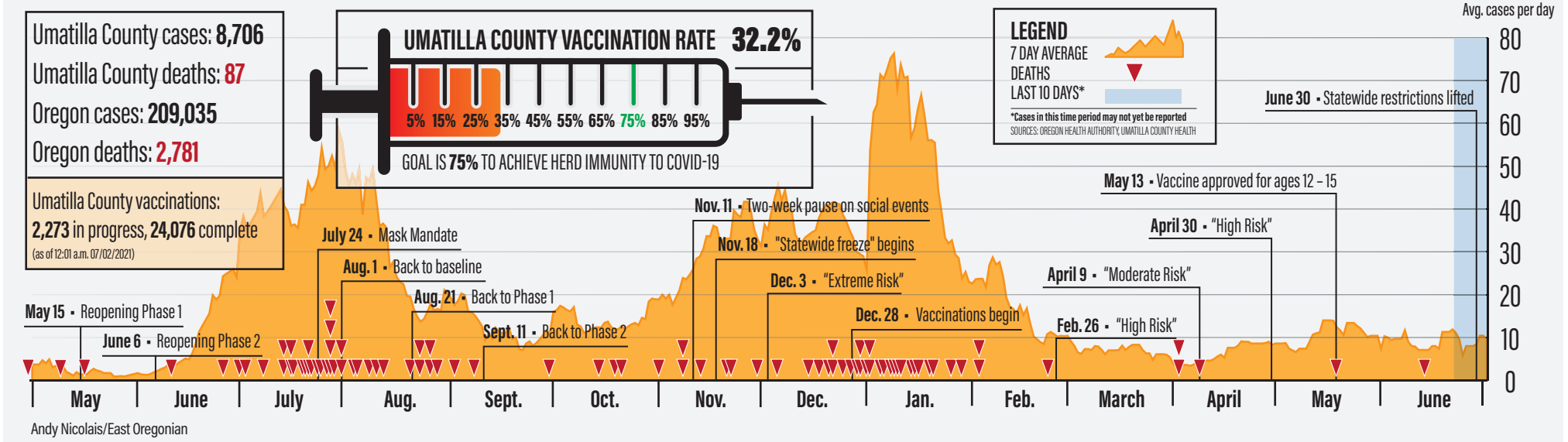


# UMATILLA COUNTY COVID-19 TREND - AS OF JULY 2



# EOTEC improvements continued during pandemic

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
*East Oregonian*

**HERMISTON** — The pandemic threw a lot at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, but General Manager Al Davis feels confident in its future. "COVID still kicked us in the gut, but we did a lot better than a lot of other venues," he said.

Part of that was thanks to EOTEC's outdoor areas, which were able to hold some events even as indoor conventions and dinners were canceled. The rodeo arena hosted a variety of rodeo-related events, Davis said. To help draw more of those kind of events, the center recently installed a second arena area using fencing, some movable bleachers and irriga-

tion. The space is on the same footprint that EOTEC's master plan calls for an indoor arena someday, so the infrastructure can be reused after basically placing a building on top of it. Davis said they've already picked up two world series events for roping later in the year that needed two arena areas, and it also has come in handy for other situations. "When we do barrel racing,

it's our warmup pen," he said. Davis also pointed out other recent improvements, including additional irrigation and new trees. "We're greening it up," he said. The trees are fast-growing varieties, he said, but people comparing the old fairgrounds on Orchard Avenue to EOTEC need to remember the big shade trees there came from

decades of growth. Indoors, EOTEC is serving a cooling station for the community this week. Davis said the center recently held its first wedding and first Quinceañera in more than a year, and he is optimistic more of those sorts of events will begin to come back as COVID-19 restrictions lift. During the pandemic, indoor use of EOTEC was

mostly limited to small meetings for groups that wanted to have more social distancing than their building allowed. "We would have like 10 people in the great room, sitting in opposite corners," he said. The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center is planning to host the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo Aug. 11-14.

# Pendleton area sees much warmer temperatures in June

*East Oregonian*

**PENDLETON** — The Pendleton area experienced much warmer temperatures during the month of June, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service Office in Pendleton.



Boaters on June 2, 2021, recreate on McKay Reservoir outside of Pendleton. According to the National Weather Service, the temperature that day in Pendleton peaked at 100.

The average temperature during the month was 72 degrees, 7.2 degrees above normal. High temperatures averaged 88.3 degrees, 10.1 degrees above normal, according to the monthly climate summary. The highest temperature was 117 degrees recorded on June 29. This was the second warmest June on record. The warmest was 72.8 degrees in 2015. Low temperatures averaged 55.8 degrees, 4.3 degrees above normal. The lowest temperature for the month was 39 degrees, recorded on June 7. Precipitation for the month totaled 0.31 inches, which was 0.67 inches below normal, the report said. Measurable precipitation — at least 0.01 inch — was received on five days, with the heaviest, 0.13 inches, reported on June 15. Precipitation for the year is 4.33 inches, which is 3.06 inches below normal. Since October 2020, the water year precipitation at the Pendleton airport has been 8.78 inches, 2.61 inches below normal. The highest wind gust was 52 mph on June 5, and just one day during the month when the wind exceeded 50 mph. The outlook for July from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation. Normal highs for the Pendleton airport during July are 87.9 degrees and normal lows rise are 57.5 degrees. The 30-year normal precipitation is just under 0.32 inches.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Crash kills two Umatilla County residents

**KENNEWICK** — Two Umatilla County residents died early Thursday, July 1, in a car wreck near Kennewick. The Washington State Patrol reported Maria D. Diaz De Benitez, 63, of Umatilla, and Andres V. Cabrales, 54, of Hermiston, both perished in the single-vehicle crash. The state patrol responded to a report of a crash at about 5:57 a.m. on the eastbound lanes of Interstate 82 about 8 miles south of Kennewick. According to WSP, Benitez

was driving a 2004 Mercury Mountaineer and Cabrales was the passenger when the sport utility vehicle left the road. Cabrales overcorrected, according to Washington State Patrol, and the vehicle struck the guardrail, plummeted down an embankment and landed on its top. Both were wearing seatbelts, according to WSP, and died at the scene. Washington State Patrol has no further information.

Wednesday, June 30, for about an hour on the south side of Interstate 84 just west of Pendleton. Pendleton Fire Chief Jim Critchley said sparks coming off the highway likely caused the fire, but the official cause is under investigation. The fire, which stretched between mileposts 206 to 207, was first reported to officials at around 6:36 p.m. and was fully contained about an hour later, Critchley said. Fire crews from multiple agencies responded to the fire. No injuries were reported, according to Critchley.

### Fire burns 30 acres

**PENDLETON** — Firefighters contained a roughly 30-acre wildfire that burned

— *EO Media Group*

## HERMISTON

# Watermelons weathering the heat

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
*East Oregonian*

**HERMISTON** — Hermiston's watermelon crop is hanging in there despite being pounded by a record-breaking heatwave.



Hermiston seedless watermelons sit in cartons outside of the Belling Farms store on Highway 395 in Hermiston in 2019. This year's crop is holding up in the extreme heat, according to Jack Belling.

"Overall, they're holding up pretty well," said Jack Belling of Belling Farms, describing himself as "cautiously optimistic." He said Tuesday, June 29, that he had just gotten done checking half his watermelon fields, and he was pleased with what he saw. They might have to start picking their earliest fields sooner than expected, he said, but the heat and drought haven't been as detrimental to watermelons as they have been to some crops.

"Lucky watermelons are desert plants," he said. "They originated in the Middle East, so they do pretty well in the heat." Scientists believe watermelons originated in northern Africa, specifically. Hermiston's soil composition, as well as its hot days and cool nights, helps create an ideal mix of conditions for the sugary, juicy watermelons Hermiston is famous for. While the nights haven't been as cool in the past week, with

a hotter-than-usual June, Belling said he is looking forward to testing the sugar content of this year's crop soon. Belling Farms also grows a variety of other crops, including some being harvested now, so Belling said during the extreme heat workers have been starting earlier, with most coming in around 5 a.m. "Some of my irrigators start at 3," he said.

Don & Catherine Pinkerton would like to thank all who fought the wheat fire and protected our home, this past Saturday, June 26th. Special thanks go out to the Tribal Fire Dept., Echo Rural Fire and Kyle Snow. We are grateful!

# Pendleton Public Library

## Hours of Operation

Monday: 10-7  
 Tuesday: 10-7  
 Wednesday: 10-7  
 Thursday: 10-7  
 Friday: 10-5  
 Saturday: 10-5

## Story Time

Thursdays at 10:15 am  
 Join us for books, songs, flannel board stories, and activities centered around a weekly theme.

## Crafternoons

Tuesdays at 4:30pm  
 Ages 2-14  
 Come craft with us. All supplies provided by the library. No registration required.

## eBooks & Audiobooks

Gain FREE access to our collection of digital eBooks & audiobooks using your Pendleton Public Library Card. Stop by the front desk and we will help you get set up using your phone or reading device of choice.

## Contact Us:

Phone: 541-966-0380  
 Visit us online: [www.pendletonlibrary.com](http://www.pendletonlibrary.com)

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT:  
[www.EastOregonian.com](http://www.EastOregonian.com)