

INSIDE PREP FOOTBALL KICKS OFF WITH KICKOFF 2021



Weekly vaccinations double, unvaccinated hit hard

More than 95% of COVID-19 cases from Jan. 1 to Aug. 26 were among people who have yet to get the vaccination shot

By **BRYCE DOLE AND NICK ROSENBERGER**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County's weekly COVID-19 vaccinations have more than doubled since mid-June, according to data from the health department. In addition, new state

data shows that people who have been vaccinated are less likely to get the virus. More than 95% of all confirmed COVID-19 cases from Jan. 1 to Aug. 26 were among people who have yet to get the shot, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

From late June to mid

July, the county reported some of its lowest vaccination rates since efforts began in December 2020. For the week of July 11, the county reported just 591 vaccinations, its second lowest all-time. By that point, weekly vaccinations in the county had declined for four straight months, and

Umatilla County had one of the lowest vaccination rates in Oregon.

But for six consecutive weeks now, weekly vaccinations have increased, bringing the county's overall COVID-19 immunity up by a few percentage points after it was entrenched below the 40% mark for months. Last week, the county reported 1,212 inoculations, the highest weekly total since late May.

"It's a good trend," said Joe Fiumara, the county's public health director.

In addition, county data suggests young people may be driving the slight uptick.

According to Fiumara, residents 20 to 29 had been the least vaccinated age group for months. That changed two weeks ago, Fiumara said, when the group surpassed people ages 30 to 39. Also, vaccinations among youth under the

age of 19 are continuing to increase, a promising sign to health officials as school gets underway.

The increase follows national trends of increased vaccinations as the delta variant infects large swaths of America's unvaccinated. In early August, all 50 states reported their COVID-19 vaccination rates were increasing.

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A MODEL FOR ALL



Sen. Ron Wyden, center, waves to students at the Families First Child Care Center during a tour Tuesday, Aug. 31, 2021, of the Neal Early Learning Center in Boardman.

U.S. Sen Ron Wyden touts Boardman child care center as a model for nation

By **ERICK PETERSON**
East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — The Families First Childcare Center in Boardman and the people making it happen impressed U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden.

"This is just incredible," Wyden said.

The Democrat visited the center Tuesday, Aug. 31, and afterward promised to bring this success story to Washington.

The center serves 53 children and has "maxed out" its space at 255 Olson Road in Boardman. It has four classrooms for students, who are between six weeks old to 12

years old. It is open from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. It operates on a \$50,000 budget each month. Sponsors provide \$30,000 of this budget.

The center fills a need in its community to care for children when their parents are at work. This is a local problem recognized in communities throughout the country.

"We need more supply," Wyden said, explaining child care presents a supply-side problem. This need is particularly strong among economically disadvantaged people.

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Dan Daltoso, associate director of Umatilla Morrow County Head Start, right, shows Sen. Ron Wyden through the program's operations Tuesday, Aug. 31, 2021, at the Neal Early Learning Center in Boardman.

Wyden defends River Democracy Act in virtual town hall event

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

HERMISTON — Legislation that would add nearly 4,700 miles of wild and scenic rivers across Oregon would have no impact on private land or existing property rights, according to the bill's chief architect, Sen. Ron Wyden.

Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, introduced the River Democracy Act in February based on more than 15,000 public nominations from all corners of the state.

Wyden defended the bill Tuesday, Aug. 31, during an hour-long virtual town hall. The legislation has faced opposition from rural counties over whether it would add new restrictions on grazing, timber harvest and recreational access.

Speaking from Hermiston, Wyden pledged the bill would not go forward without "loophole-free, airtight" protections for private property.

Rather, he said it applies only to federal lands and was written specifically not to interfere with existing property, grazing and water rights.

"Protecting existing rights was part of our effort to strike a balance," Wyden said.

If passed, the River Democracy Act would roughly triple the number of wild and scenic rivers in Oregon. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was established in 1968 to preserve rivers with outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values.

The bill also widens protective buffers from a quarter-mile to half-mile on both sides of designated streams, adding up to 3 million acres of protected land.

Earlier this year, the American Forest Resource Council, a regional timber trade association, conducted its own analysis of waterways nominated for inclusion in the bill.

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Boardman Coal Plant decommissioning moves along

Portland General Electric reclaims more than 40,000 tons of coal from site

By **NICK ROSENBERGER**
East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — Portland General Electric is decommissioning its old Boardman Coal Plant ahead of schedule and under budget.

The company gave an update of the process on Friday, Aug. 27, during a virtual meeting of the Energy Facility Siting Council.

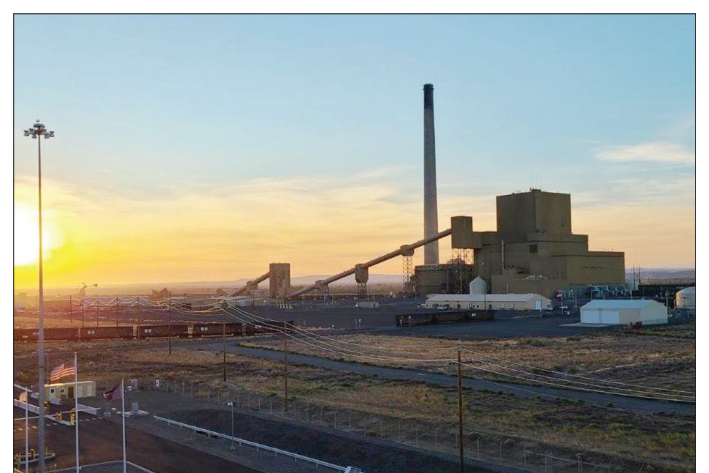
The Boardman energy production plant is one of the oldest facilities under the jurisdiction of the council. Portland General Electric's original plans stretched potentially into December 2022 according to

Lenna Cope, senior environmental specialist for PGE, but these plans have moved up to the end of March 2022.

According to Cope, the company has been prioritizing decommissioning the site to make it safe for demolition, which is now expected to start as early as October — a few months ahead of schedule.

Allison Dobscha, a spokesperson for PGE, said the decommissioning part of the process "is basically complete," as of Sept. 1, and is expecting to finalize a demolition contractor by the end of September.

"The Boardman closure was a long-planned closure that was a significant step toward our decarbonization goals," Dobscha said. "And the decommissioning process is going smoothly and according to schedule."



The sun rises near the Boardman Coal Plant on Oct. 15, 2020, on its final day of operations. Portland General Electric is in the process of decommissioning the former power producing facility.

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