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Data shows covid contagion rates

The tribal organization is set to re-open on Monday, August 17.

Tribal Council and the Warm Springs Covid-19 Response Team plan to meet this Friday to review and further discuss this matter.

In late July and early August, Council and the Response Team were considering re-opening the organization this week; however, further testing then showed an increase to more than 70 active Covid-19 cases on the reservation.

Council and the team then agreed another week of closure was in order.

Some good news this week is the number of active cases fell by about half from the early August high of the more than 70.

The current number is still high, though more manageable, said Caroline Cruz, general manager of Health and Human Services, and Response Team member.

Data graphics

A series of compelling graphics, produced by Warm Springs health experts and management, help to tell the story of the incidence of the coronavirus on the reservation. The following are some of the findings from the compilation of this critical public health data.

The numbers reflect the situation at the end of July and into

early August. According to the data:

By far the most likely place that people on the reservation have contracted the virus is through the household (see page 7 graphic).

The second most likely place of contagion is while visiting at gatherings.

The third most likely place is listed as "unknown." And by far the least common place to contract the virus is at the work place.

This could be attributed to the shut-downs since late March; and the many precautions—distancing, masks and plexiglass dividers, temperature taking, cleaning and sanitizing—adopted at tribal places of work.

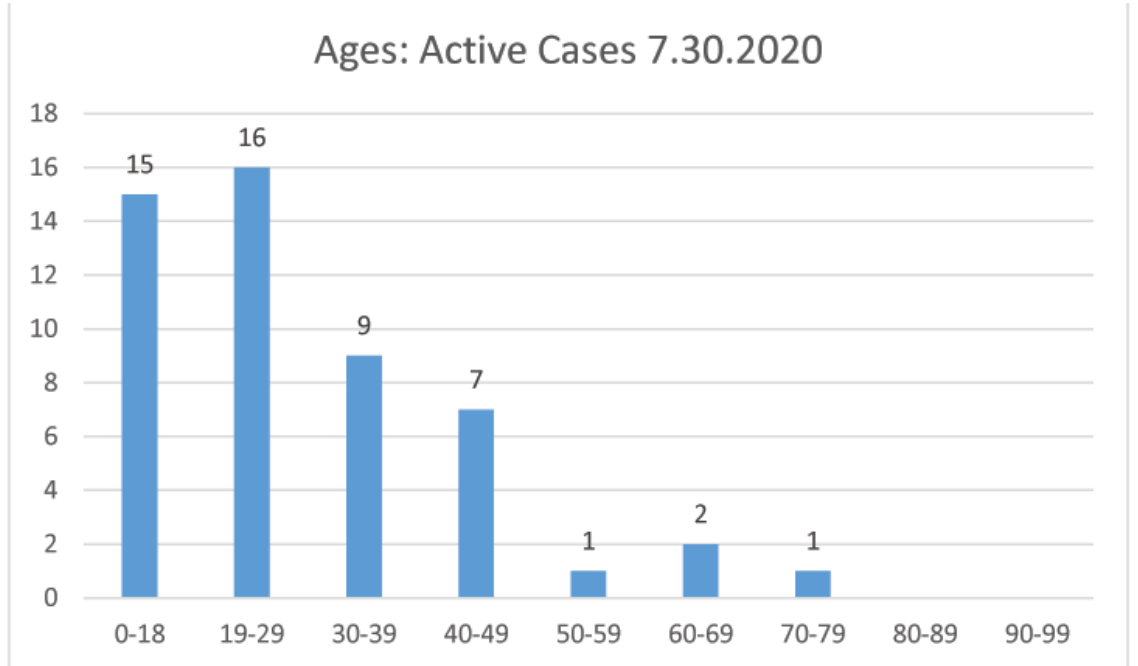
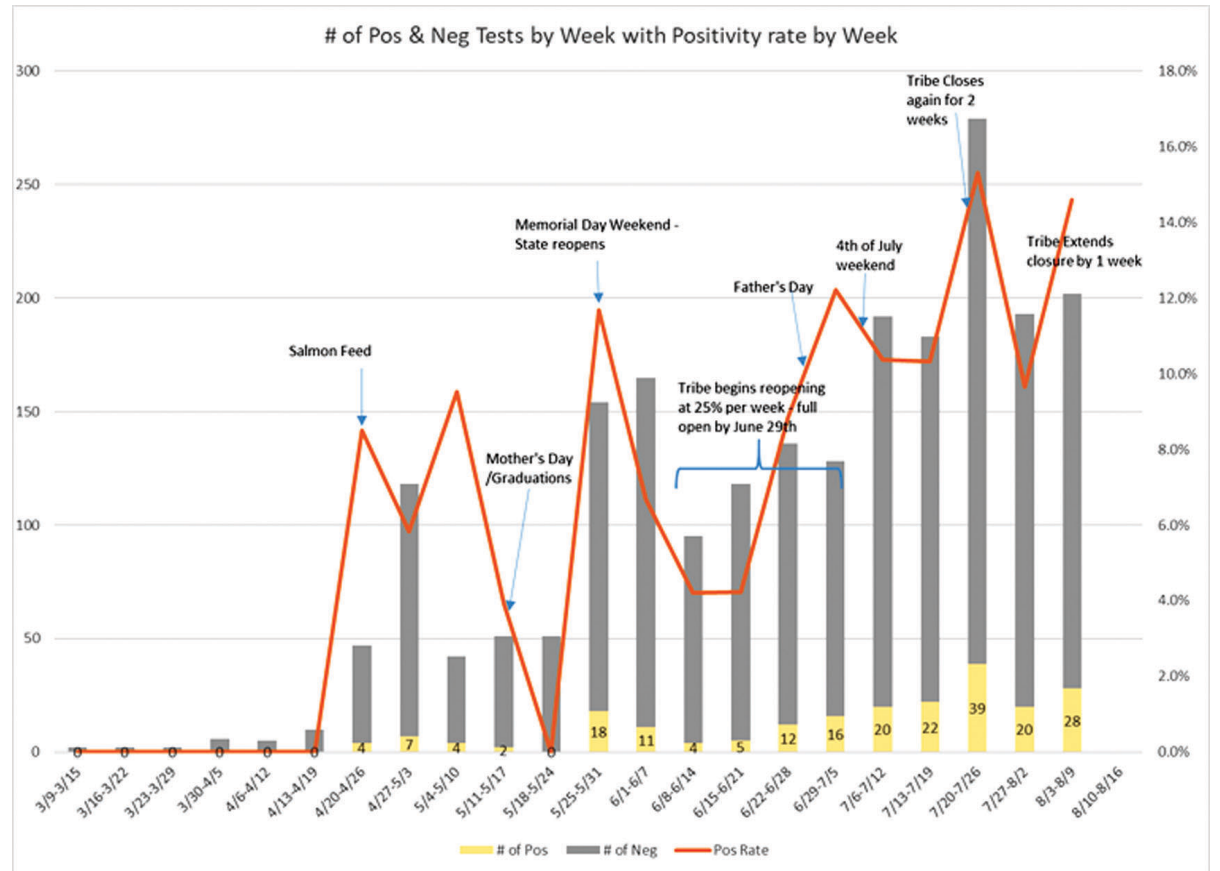
Most people on the reservation who have contracted the virus were listed as 'Not working.'

Cases by week, by age

According to the data: The number of cases by week—based on Health and Wellness Center testing—steadily increased from the week of June 15 to the week of July 20, then went down during the week of July 27. Specifically:

The week of June 15: Five cases. The week of June 22: Fourteen cases. The week of June 29: Sixteen cases. The week of July 6: Twenty-one cases.

Please see COVID-19 on 7



Comprehensive Distance Learning for 509-J schools

Like the other school districts in the state, Jefferson County 509-J will begin the 2020-21 school year using Comprehensive Distance Learning. Because of the coronavirus, there will be no on-site teaching at least for the first six weeks of the new school year.

State health metrics leave Comprehensive Distance Learning as the only teaching alternative available, at least for the start of the year. This is true of all or all but one of the other districts in Oregon.

School will start on the Tuesday after Labor Day, September 8. The week before will be an orientation time: This is an opportunity for students and families to become familiar with the Comprehensive Distance Learning approach.

This approach will be more involved and intensive than the distance learning employed during final months of last spring term, when all the schools initially closed.

This fall term there will be time during which the teachers and students will meet for face-to-face learning, though conducted virtually and online.

To ensure equity, the district has acquired many Chromebook devices that will be distributed to students and families who have no home computer. Students can then access the lessons online.

If a household has no internet, this would be provided through access to a hotspot, at a cell tower. This would accommodate nearly all of the district households. A solution will be developed for the very rural households that have no cell tower service.

The daily lessons would be accessed live with the teacher and students in virtual classrooms. Lessons may also be accessed later through digital video. Some aspects are being worked out as the new school year approaches.

In March of last year the district had to end on-site learning with almost no warning. This fall the learning sessions will be more intensive and comprehensive, as the district teachers and other staff have since gained much greater experience and training, said Ken Parshall, superintendent.

An idea earlier this summer was for the district to employ the 'hybrid' option as outlined by the state. This would have allowed students and families to choose either on-site learning or Comprehensive Distance Learning.

In the meantime the state—the governor's office, Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Authority—established new health metrics. By these metrics, the on-site learning option is no

longer possible in Jefferson County, as with other district in the state.

Specifically, an on-site learning health metric would require a Covid-19 positivity test rate of 2 percent for three consecutive weeks. In the 509-J district the current rate is 17 percent; so there is far to go in meeting the standard. The positivity test rate is one of the health metrics that apply.

Some districts are already planning for the entire 2020-21 to be under the Comprehensive Distance Learning model. "We're not ready to go that far," Mr. Parshall said.

Instead, as the year progresses, the district will develop its on-site learning model. This will require far more planning, as the on-site standards are more complex, due to obvious health and safety factors.

If the district at some point meets the health metrics, or if the metrics themselves were to change, the district could then implement the on-site or the hybrid plan.

The district is updating families every Thursday evening on the latest developments.

Listen to KWSO 91.9 FM at noon this Friday, August 14 for a talk show featuring superintendent Parshall, Warm Springs Academy Principal Bambi VanDyke, and Madras High School Principal Brian Crook.

Water notice continues for now, work complete

The Shitike Creek crossing water line replacement was completed this past weekend.

The boil water notice remains in effect, though, for the Agency area until the required samples are completed and reviewed by the EPA.

Water conservation efforts are still needed as the water tanks recover. The Water Distribution Center is closed until further notice.

Meanwhile, progress was noted on a potential federal funding source for a long-term reservation water line solution.

The pending federal legislation is the the Western Tribal Water Infrastructure Act, a proposed addition to America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018.

This bill is sponsored by Oregon's U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley.

If adopted by the full Congress and signed into law, the act would provide an additional \$20- to \$30 million for safe drinking water projects to West-

ern tribes.

The Confederated Tribes' water crisis last year was an inspiration for this bill: The current water crisis on the reservation has helped move the bill forward, as the situation was made worse by the pandemic.

And also meanwhile, Oregon lawmakers this summer approved more than \$3.5 million in emergency water system repair funding to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

The Oregon Legislature Emergency Board unanimously approved the expenditure from state reserves.

The money passes through the Oregon Business Development Department to the tribal government. The funding must be used by the end of the year.

The aid request originated with Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, whose district encompasses the reservation.

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