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Community update

On Monday of this week there were no new positive tests for Covid-19 on the reservation, of 61 who were tested. This is praiseworthy, health officials say, showing many in the community are following the covid-prevention guidelines.

Meanwhile since the start of the pandemic, the Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center has conducted 7,571 total tests for the coronavirus. Of the total, 6,869 have come back negative; while 675 have returned positive among the tribal community. Other facilities have also conducted testing of Warm Springs tribal members, adding another 76 positives, for the cumulative total among the membership of 751.

During the 11 months since the pandemic began, 78 tribal community members have been hospitalized with Covid-19. Seventy-four have been discharged, with four currently hospitalized. One of the patients is on a ventilator.

There have been 19 Covid-19 deaths in the community since last March.

St. Charles hospitals are at close to 74 percent occupancy, with the intensive care at 80 percent.

There are currently 22 people with active Covid-19 receiving daily monitoring by tribal and IHS staff; and 43 close contacts receiving daily monitoring by the health staff.

Students back in class next week

Most of the students in the Jefferson County 509-J school district will be back in class starting next week, if all goes as currently planned.

As in-class teaching resumes Monday, there will be many Covid-19 health precautions. For the district this will be the first in-class learning since March 2020.

Last week and this week, as priority workers, teachers and school staff are receiving their first Covid-19 vaccines. This is through the Oregon Health Authority and the county health programs.

Earlier this month the school

district conducted a survey of families and students to determine how many would like to return to school. The results were 80-percent for in-class, with 20-percent opting for the district online CASA program.

With these numbers the district was able to plan the logistics—for staffing, class and bus schedules, said Laurie Danzuka, school district board chairwoman.

The students will return next week on a staggered schedule, as the district adjusts to the new routine. At the high school, for instance, freshmen return first, then sophomores, juniors and seniors.

The return to classrooms will be

a great help to many students: Some have done fine with the Comprehensive Distance Learning, Ms. Danzuka said; while other students thrive more with the teacher-level support at school.

There will be some very noticeable changes in the schools. The students and teachers will be wearing masks inside and outside. The students' desks will be spaced six-feet apart. Breakfast and lunch will be served in the classroom. The drinking fountains are turned off, so students should bring their own water bottles. Bathroom breaks are scheduled by classroom. There is no sharing of school supplies. Parents and guardians are

not allowed in the buildings.

On the buses, there will be a vacant seat between each student. This requires a change to bus scheduling, with the drivers making two rounds each morning and afternoon. Like at school, the bus drivers will have extra masks in case a student forgets his or hers.

School sports will be back, starting with the fall activities of football, soccer and volleyball. Next will be the spring sports, then winter. There will be one week of practice and five weeks of Tri-Valley Conference play. All of these activities will follow the OSAA guidelines for safety.

— Dave McMechan

Rollout of vaccine continues at clinic

The Warm Springs Indian Health Service and tribal Community Health are making great progress with their Covid-19 vaccination program.

Since just before last Christmas, the clinic staff has administered 600 primary—the first of the required two—vaccine doses. This was the total number of primary doses the clinic had received.

Meanwhile, the Warm Springs Clinic has received 200 booster doses—the second dose

completing the immunization cycle. The clinic has administered all of these as well; so these 200 individuals are now immunized.

The clinic is administering the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine. This vaccine is “highly effective” against covid, according to Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The vaccine is estimated to provide 94-percent efficacy against the virus.

The clinic follows the CDC guidelines for administering vaccines in the community; and also

follows Tribal Council guidance for identifying essential and high priority groups.

This week the clinic begins immunizations for those in Phase 1 C (see the chart on page 3 for details on the vaccination schedule). The Phase 1 C group includes:

- Elders age 65 and older.
- Adults over 55 with underlying at-risk health conditions.
- Veterans.
- Traditional and culture keepers, as identified by Tribal Council.

When calling to schedule your vaccination appointment, the clinic staff will ask only for your name, date of birth, and if you are interested in receiving the Covid-19 vaccine. Do not give personal or financial information to anyone calling you about a covid vaccine.

Another reminder: Calls from the clinic will show as an unknown, restricted or private number. Please answer these calls, as clinic staff may be trying to contact you to schedule your appointment.

Covid risk for tribal fishers

by Dawn Stover
underscore.news
for the Spilyay Tymoo

Depleted salmon runs and government failure to improve fishing sites have already impacted culturally and economically important fish harvests.

The coronavirus pandemic is making it even harder for Native Americans to fish along the Columbia River.

The Brigham Fish Market was bustling on a Monday afternoon. Two women were sharing a meal at an outdoor table overlooking the Columbia River at Cascade Locks. In front of the entrance to the market, a couple dined at a streetside table behind a fish-patterned metal railing. Inside, an older couple pointed out a fresh Chinook salmon fillet in the glass-fronted display, and several people waited for takeout orders in an at-



Fishers clean the day's salmon catch at the Stanley Rock Treaty Fishing Access Site in Hood River.

tractive space decorated with Native American art, blanket samples, and historical fishing photos.

In the kitchen, Terrie Brigham, a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation who manages the market, was preparing a smoked-salmon quesadilla and Cajun-seasoned halibut and chips. Brigham's sister owns the business, which specializes in fresh and smoked fish from the Columbia River, mostly caught by family members.

Brigham says she is “one of the lucky ones.” The market has stayed open throughout the Covid-19 pandemic by relying on take-out orders, outdoor seating, and federal relief funding that helped keep employees on the payroll. A second location, called Brigham Fish 'n Chips and located in the new food court of the Wildhorse Casino & Resort outside Pendleton, opened in late September.

The Brigham market is surviving, but the pandemic has been

hard on many Native Americans who make their living selling fish from the Columbia.

Covid-19 has devastated the restaurant industry, causing a major downturn in the market for salmon. Meanwhile, the living conditions at tribal fishing sites and villages—long neglected by the federal government—have made it difficult for fishers to practice social distancing and other measures to prevent the spread of the virus. One of the lessons learned

... fishing in 2020 was 'not super amazing, though it could have been worse.'

from the pandemic is that Native American fishers camping or living year-round on the river need better access to health care and other services.

With 2020's relatively long fall season behind them, officials are planning for the possibility that COVID-19 will still be a threat when seasonal fishers return to the Columbia in the spring.

Claims fisherman's life

On the 147-mile stretch of the Columbia from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam, the only commercial fishing allowed is by the four Columbia Plateau tribes that signed treaties with the federal government in 1855.

The treaties ensure the fishing rights of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

TRIBAL FISHING continues on 7



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