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FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 2019

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Ron Wyden holds town hall in Cottage Grove



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Sen. Ron Wyden addresses a crowd of community members and high school students in the Cottage Grove High School gymnasium during a Feb. 19 town hall meeting.

By Damien Sherwood
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Oregon's senior U.S. senator Ron Wyden visited Cottage Grove Feb. 19 to hold his second in a series of town halls throughout the state.

As part of his six-county tour, Wyden stopped by the Cottage Grove High School gymnasium to hold his Lane County event. The assembly made it his 928th since promising Oregonians that he would hold at least one annual town hall in each of the state's 36 counties.

Wyden began the town hall by applauding attendees for coming out. "As far as I'm concerned, you all are the faces of democracy in America," he said. "This is what the Founding Fathers wanted it to look like."

The gathering, which included a mixture of students and residents, followed a basic question-and-answer format. Over the course of an hour, 17 questions covering a variety of issues both local and national came from a broadly approving audience.

The Gray Wolf

The first question came from a student in regard to holding accountable hunters who violate law by killing the Gray Wolf, a protected species.

"We have a quaint idea that if you break the law, you have to face consequences," Wyden responded.

The law has been the subject of controversy regarding state and federal laws

See WYDEN 6A

Lack of funding, fees could impact water testing

By Damien Sherwood
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Water suppliers around the state may be facing higher fees and while losing the ability to meet Oregon water testing standards following a series of legislative moves.

"There are a hundred plus cities throughout the state that are affected by this," said Ray Pardee, Row River Water Treatment Plant Superintendent.

In December the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) introduced permanent standards for cyanotoxin testing, the culmination of months of temporary rules.

Cyanotoxins are harmful bacteria produced by blue-green algae and can reach poisonous concentrations when conditions allow the algae to bloom.

Cottage Grove is among 58 public water systems around the state listed by OHA as susceptible to harmful algae blooms and thus subject to the new permanent cyanotoxin rules.

Pardee noted that the new state standard exceeds those of the nation.

"Normally we follow all EPA regulations," Pardee said. "The EPA has not at this time created a regulation on cyanotoxins, but Oregon has."

Upon implementation of the cyanotoxin testing standards, funding was included for smaller community systems to cover the cost of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) laboratory's sampling organization, shipping costs and testing fees through June 30, the end of the 2018-19 fiscal year.

However, the release of the Governor's Budget for 2019-2021 raised some eyebrows for its notable lack of funding for DEQ laboratory cyanotoxin testing.

"That means we're still mandated by Oregon rule to check for cyanotoxin and that we would have to bear the burden of that," said Pardee.

The administrative rules on cyanotoxin testing state that a water supplier may choose between using the DEQ laboratory or an accredited laboratory approved through the Oregon Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program.

"The problem is, there are no labs that are approved for the Oregon regulations to do the testing," said Pardee.

The mandatory testing is set to begin May 1, giving cities two months of state-funded testing before they must come up with the funding themselves.

In addition, OHA has eliminated funding for some of its regulatory drinking water services — services which benefit smaller cities by covering regulatory performances such as water systems surveys.

In their place, a new fee structure has been introduced in the form of SB 27, a bill working its way through the Oregon legislature that allows the OHA to impose fees on water suppliers to recover the costs of its periodic

See WATER 8A

Winter storm puts The Grove into deep freeze

By Damien Sherwood
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Cottage Grove was inundated last Sunday night by a winter storm which stretched across the Pacific Northwest, shutting down highways and causing sweeping power outages. Dumping more than a foot of snow in some areas, the storm crippled traffic in and around Cottage Grove, downing trees and power lines throughout the city.

As early as 8 p.m. Sunday night, the city experienced a reported 8 inches of snow and its first string of power outages as reports of sporadic power surges and photos of fallen trees spread across social media.

By Monday morning, Cottage Grove was completely without power save for those with generators. Downed poles and fallen trees tangled in power, phone and cable wires were widely reported in the area.

Expectedly, all area school districts were closed and grocery stores and gas stations soon followed suit as the storm showed no signs of letting up. All South Lane School District schools remained closed Tuesday as well due to power outages and unsafe travel conditions

The city's main electricity provider, Pacific Power, reported more than 3,300 Cottage Grove customers affect-



ZACH SILVA/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The entrance to Cottage Grove's Historic District is blanketed by snow following the winter storm that rolled through the valley early last week, bringing the region to a standstill with power outages.

ed by the power outages and 44,000 throughout its coverage area. As of press time on Monday, the company had predicted electricity to return between midnight Monday and Tuesday

afternoon. Emerald People's Utility District, which provides power to parts of Cottage Grove proper but mostly the rural area, stated that more than 10,000

customers were without electricity on Monday and that members should prepare to be without power for a

See STORM 9A

Lane County Recycling Guide gets user-friendly update

By Damien Sherwood
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The Lane County Waste Management Division released its 2019 Recycling Guide last week, updating its 10-year-old predecessor. The 36-page booklet provides a comprehensive guide to various waste disposal methods, tips to prevent waste, resources for schools and businesses and basic instructions for roadside recycling.

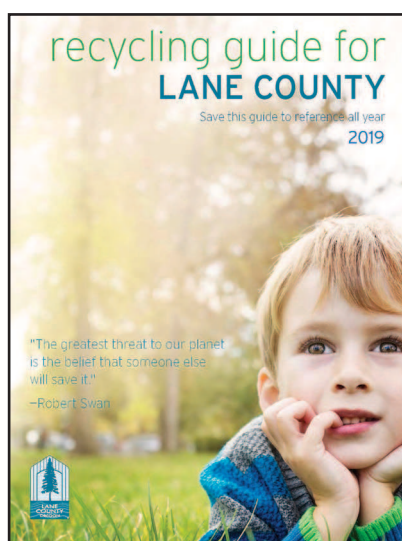
Lane County leads the state in recycling recovery rates at 52.8 percent and has a stated goal to increase that number to 63 percent by 2025.

The recovery rate refers to the pro-

portion of waste recycled among all materials in the waste stream.

"The numbers highlight our community's understanding of the benefits of recycling," said Waste Management Division manager Jeff Orlandini in a press release. "This includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions and conserving water and forests — all things that protect our beautiful environment and what residents value."

According to an Oregon Department of Environmental Quality report, in 2016 Oregonians generated about 5.3 million tons of waste, recovering 42.6 percent. However, since China's 2017 decision to stop the in-



flow of foreign plastics for recycling, communities around the state have been left struggling with how to manage an influx of plastic waste which often simply ends up in landfills.

For Cottage Grove's part, of all solid waste, about 12 percent is processed for recycling. One reason plastics do not find their way into that percentage is the high volume of "soiled" material, which includes food and oil contaminants.

"If there's a bunch of contamination in there with it, that contamination has to come out of the system some

See RECYCLE 8A

COMMUNITY

Carousel Board
The Carousel Board welcomes newest, youngest member



CHATTERBOX

Betty Kaiser
The needy, the helpers and the guards at the US-Mexico boarder.

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