

# Local & State

## Invasive weed of the week

By Jeffrey Pettingill

### The Enemy

Flowering rush (Botomus umbellatus)

### The Strategy

This perennial ornamental plant invades waterways and is found in the Mid-Columbia Basin water system, but not locally, YET. This plant has triangular stems and produces pink to white flowers that are shaped like an umbrella. This rhizomatous plant needs to have its bulbous roots in water or mud and can grow 3 to 5 feet above the water surface. The leaves of this plant will spiral toward the tip but are normally not noticed as the plants stems dominate the appearance.

### Attack

The plant can grow into thick vegetative pockets thus prohibiting the water from flowing as well as interfere with motor boats. In irrigation systems it can replace the holding capacity of the system. The plant can wind itself around propeller shafts and plug jet boat motor intakes. When it appears in marshy areas, it normally dominates as it is undesirable for food and the wildlife selects and out competes the forageable plants (even cat-tails), which leaves the rush behind to grow. It also causes an increase in mosquitoes due to the amount of undisturbed water.

### Defense

The greatest defense for



Jeffrey Pettingill/Contributed Photo

Flowering rush is a perennial that can invade waterways.



Jeffrey Pettingill/Contributed Photo

Flowering rush produces pretty blooms but its effects are nothing to celebrate.

this weed is to not spread it around. It has been found in some ornamental ponds, so don't plant it or move it to another site. Ensure that

your watercraft is clean of plant material when leaving the launching site (throw the plants onto the ground, not into the water).

Once established, digging this plant is difficult but may be your only option. Herbicides are a challenge as this plant has very little leaf surface and herbicides may not be used in many situations. Most groups use mechanical control as either chaining or possibly a specialized buck/rake on an excavator. Help stop the spread of the weed by not moving the plant to new sites.

*Jeffrey Pettingill is the weed control supervisor for Baker County. He encourages people with noxious weed questions to call him at 541-523-0618 or 541-519-0204. He also encourages people to like the Baker County Weed District's Facebook page.*

## Counties that move into extreme risk level get grace period from restrictions

By Gary A. Warner  
Oregon Capital Bureau

Counties that might fall back into the state's most restrictive extreme risk level for COVID-19 spread will be given a two-week grace period on heightened restrictions, Gov. Kate Brown announced Thursday, March 4.

Brown said the state's low overall infection rates and its steep trend downward since the winter holidays allowed for "a bit more time" for some state trouble spots. The state currently ranks 49th of the 50 states in new infections per 100,000 people — only Hawaii scores better. With a positive test rate of 3.9%, Oregon is firmly on track for numbers to continue downward statewide, and 1 million vaccine shots have been administered to residents.

The governor said she made the decision to waive the restrictions "recognizing the challenges businesses encounter when facing a switch back and forth between extreme risk and other risk levels," Brown said.

The drop to the higher risk

level meant that restaurants could offer limited indoor dining, a key change during the cold, wet winter months that have stretched into March.

Higher numbers would have required a return to the tighter restrictions on businesses, dining, and activities. Brown's message did not include any changes to rules covering counties already in the extreme risk level. Brown had announced Feb. 23 that 10 counties had dropped out of the extreme risk level, the highest of the four-tier rating system that also includes high risk, moderate and lower. The higher the risk level, the more restrictions are in place on businesses, dining and activities.

It was a dose of good news after a period in which most of the state had been in extreme risk at one point or another.

"For the second time in a row, we are seeing great progress in stopping the spread of COVID-19 across Oregon and saving lives," Brown said on Feb. 23.

Of the counties on the

extreme risk rating prior to Feb. 23, Brown announced seven had dropped one step to higher risk: Crook, Jackson, Lane, Marion, Polk, Umatilla and Yamhill counties. Malheur and Union dropped to medium, while Wasco fell all the way to lower risk.

Five counties — Benton, Coos, Douglas, Jefferson and Josephine — are currently on the extreme list.

Risk level adjustments are made every two weeks. But measurements are taken every Friday and analyzed each Monday. The numbers are published weekly, with the period between reassignments called "the warning week."

With the next assignment of risk levels set to be announced March 9 and go into effect March 12, state officials evidently saw some counties trending back up to extreme risk.

Brown's office did not say what counties were of concern. The "warning week" numbers indicate trends, but the final status would also be determined adding in the as-yet unknown statistics of this

week through Friday.

Of those that dropped out of the extreme risk category but are showing a reverse in trends during the warning week are Jackson and Malheur counties. Among medium and small counties, Baker showed an increase in cases and infection rate.

Less clear is the status of Marion County, which includes the state capital of Salem. It has seen a moderate upswing in numbers. State health officials and the governor will make the final decisions based on the most recent data.

The drop in infections was part of the recent good news that has seen overall new infections down from their winter holiday period highs. A third vaccine, made by Johnson & Johnson has arrived in the state and the first 100 doses sent to each county, with a total of 34,000 expected to immediately follow.

But there was cautionary news as well. Two potentially more virulent and easier to spread versions of the virus showed up in Oregon.

## State fines hotels for price gouging during fires

PORTLAND (AP) — Four Oregon hotels will pay \$105,600 in penalties and reimburse at least 100 customers to settle allegations of price gouging during wildfires last year.

The fires burned more than 1 million acres and forced thousands of Oregonians from their homes. Some people reported sharply increased hotel prices and Gov. Kate Brown issued a directive to crack down on price gouging.

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum said Thursday, March 4, that the hotels have agreed to settle price-gouging allegations by paying financial penalties. The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

The Department of Justice says Capital Inn & Suites in Salem typically

charged \$60 to \$80 a night for rooms but was charging as much as \$146 during the wildfires. Capital Inn has refunded \$1,342 to those customers and has agreed to reimburse others. The hotel will also pay a \$38,000 penalty to the state.

Le Chateau Inn in Florence raised rates more than 15% for at least 18 rooms during the wildfires, officials said. The hotel will pay nearly \$2,200 to those customers and \$21,600 to the state.

The Rodeway Inn Willamette River in Corvallis raised rates more than 15% in 15 rooms, the state said. The Rodeway will pay \$918 in refunds to 23 customers and \$15,000 in state penalties.

The Days Inn in Roseburg had rooms that typically cost no more than \$150 a night going for \$200 to \$300 a night during the wildfires, state officials said. The hotel will repay \$4,860 to 31 customers and pay \$31,000 in penalties to the state.

Oregon is investigating other allegations, according to the Justice Department. It's also looking into hotel price-gouging allegations during last month's ice storm.

"We also are trying our best to make it clear that Oregon businesses shouldn't try to take advantage of people during difficult times," Rosenblum said in a written statement Thursday.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### First semester honor roll students announced at Eagle Cap School

Eagle Cap Innovative High School has announced its first semester honor roll recipients.

The students are: Abigail Densley, Ethan Fletcher, Seth Hammons, Sage Joseph, Mackenzie McMurdo, Marquesa Peterson, Luke Tracy, Evelyn Bedolla, Hannah Dustin, Kyle Handyside, Reggie Anderson, Malachi Miller, Aiden Rush, Jaden Martin, Hailey McMurdo, Kaci Anderson, Chase Berndt, Rebecca Frazier, Grant Gambleton, Cadance Penning, Gavin Stetcher

### Volunteer training sessions planned this month at Baker Heritage Museum

The Baker Heritage Museum will have a series of volunteer training sessions during March. The training is for all volunteers, both new and returning.

All sessions will be at the Museum, 2480 Grove St. in Baker City.

The schedule:

- Monday, March 8, 2 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 10, 6 p.m.
- Tuesday, March 16, 10 a.m.
- Thursday, March 18, 6 p.m.

Registration is recommended, but not required. To register, call Gracie Hardy at 541-523-9308 or email ghardy@bakercounty.org

### High school, middle school students planning fundraisers for future trips

Baker High School and Baker Middle School students are planning several fundraisers to support future EF Tours, which provide the opportunity for students to visit foreign countries as well as Washington, D.C., and New York City.

The first fundraiser is selling fresh tulip bouquets from the Woodburn Tulip Farm. Bouquets will cost \$7 for a bunch of 10 tulips. Flowers will be delivered the week after Easter. Orders must be in by April 2.

The second fundraiser is a raffle to win a handmade blanket donated by Wendy Ballou's family. The purple-and-gold blanket measures 46 inches by 60 inches. Tickets are \$1 each or six for \$5. Raffle tickets must be turned in by April 2.

Anyone interested in supporting these fundraisers can contact Chelsea Hurliman at Baker High School, 541-524-2600. Or email her at chelsea.hurliman@bakernsd.org.

### Baker County Library District offers email alerts when new items arrive

The Baker County Library District is offering to send free "Wowbrary" email alerts to patrons that showcase the district's newest items, including books, movies, music CDs, audiobooks and more.

"This is a great new way to enjoy and use your public library more," said Perry Stokes, director of the library district. "People are truly amazed when they see in one place just how many great new titles we purchase each week, which they can reserve and borrow at no cost. And we cover all age groups and many diverse interests."

Stokes said the Wowbrary alerts, in addition to showing newly arrived items, note whether the item has been checked out from any of the district's branches.

The emails help people interested in specific topics, said Missy Grammon, the district's youth specialist.

"It only takes a mouse click to see the newest arrivals appropriate for your child or teen," Grammon said.

Wowbrary alerts are free and do not require a library card. Go to [www.wowbrary.org](http://www.wowbrary.org) to sign up or learn more.

For more information, visit [www.bakerlib.org](http://www.bakerlib.org) or call Stokes at 541-523-6419.

### Prekindergarten preenrollment starting April 1 for Haines Elementary School

HAINES — Haines Elementary School has announced that preenrollment for its prekindergarten program will begin April 1.

Students must be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2021, to enroll for the 2021-2022 school year, a press release stated. Priority will be given to students residing in the Haines enrollment area.

From there, it will follow the policy on the District's website under Board Policies, Students, Remote Rural Schools Enrollment at [policy.osba.org/baker/JJC%20R%20D1.PDF](http://policy.osba.org/baker/JJC%20R%20D1.PDF)

Pre-K hours are 7:45 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. Monday through Thursday. More information is available by calling Kathleen Christensen, school secretary, at 541-524-2400.

## New At The Library

Patrons can reserve materials in advance online or by calling 541-523-6419. Drive-in hours at 2400 Resort St. are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.

### FICTION

- "Dark Sky," C. J. Box
- "Colors of Truth," Tamera Alexander
- "A Simple Murder," Linda Castillo
- "The Affair," Danielle Steel
- "An Unexpected Peril," Deanna Raybourn

### NONFICTION

- "Beyond Order," Jordan Peterson
- "Walk in My Combat Boots," James Patterson
- "The Movement," Thomas Holt
- "Good Enough," Carly Newberg
- "Three Wise Men," Beau Wise

### DVDS

- "Every Night's a Saturday Night: the Rock 'n' Roll Life of Legendary Sax Man Bobby Keys" (Documentary)
- "First Ladies Revealed" (Documentary)
- "Molly Moon and the Incredible Book of Hypnotism" (Family)
- "The Best of Enemies" (Drama)
- "The Pirates of Penzance" (Musical)