

US regulators give full approval to Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MATTHEW PERRONE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. gave full approval to Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine on Monday, Aug. 23, a milestone that may help lift public confidence in the shots as the nation battles the most contagious coronavirus mutant yet.

The vaccine made by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech now carries the strongest endorsement from the Food and Drug Administration, which has never before had so much evidence to judge a shot's safety. More than 200 million Pfizer doses already have been administered in the U.S. — and hundreds of millions more worldwide — since emergency use began in December.

"The public can be very confident that this vaccine meets the high standards for safety, effectiveness and manufacturing quality the FDA requires of an approved product," said acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock. "Today's milestone puts us one step closer to altering the course of this pandemic in the U.S."

The U.S. becomes the first country to fully approve the shot, according to Pfizer, and CEO Albert Bourla said in a statement he hoped the decision "will help increase con-

fidence in our vaccine, as vaccination remains the best tool we have to help protect lives."

U.S. vaccinations bottomed out in July. As delta fills hospital beds, shots are on the rise again — with a million a day given Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Just over half of the U.S. population is fully vaccinated with one of the country's three options, from Pfizer, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson.

The FDA's action also may spur more vaccine mandates by companies, universities and local governments. This month New York City, New Orleans and San Francisco all imposed proof-of-vaccination requirements at restaurants, bars and other indoor venues. At the federal level, President Joe Biden is requiring government workers to sign forms attesting that they've been vaccinated or else submit to regular testing and other requirements.

Anxious Americans increasingly are on board: Close to 6 in 10 favor requiring people to be fully vaccinated to travel on airplanes or attend crowded public events, according to a recent poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

"Mandating becomes much easier when you have full approval," said Dr. Carlos del Rio of Emory

University. "I think a lot of businesses have been waiting for it."

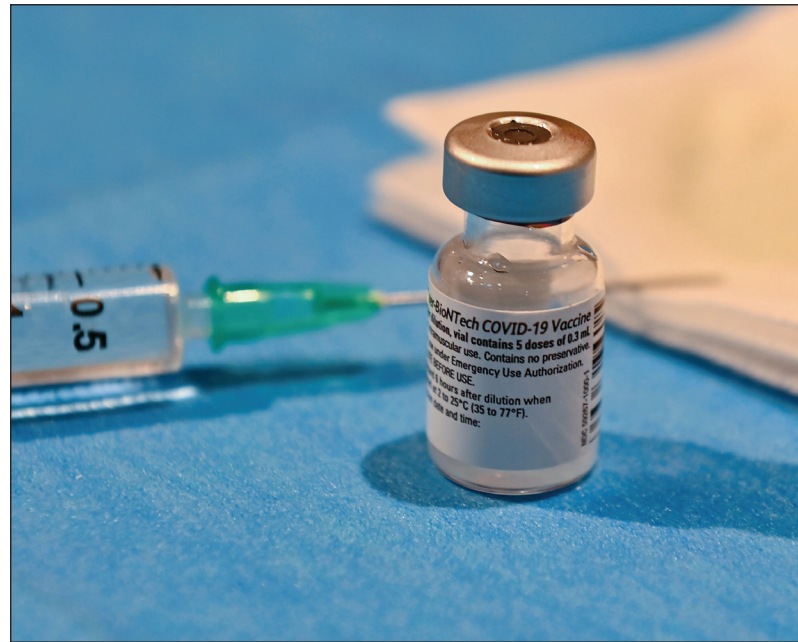
The FDA, like regulators in Europe and much of the world, initially allowed emergency use of Pfizer's vaccine based on a study that tracked 44,000 people 16 and older for at least two months — the time period when serious side effects typically arise.

That's shorter than the six months of safety data normally required for full approval. So Pfizer kept that study going, and the FDA also examined real-world safety evidence in deciding to fully license the vaccine for people 16 and older; those studied the longest. Pfizer's shot still has emergency authorization for 12- to 15-year-olds.

Even after hundreds of millions of shots, serious side effects — such as chest pain and heart inflammation in teens and young adults — remain exceedingly rare, the FDA said.

As for effectiveness, six-month tracking of Pfizer's original study showed the vaccine remained 97% protective against severe COVID-19. Protection against milder infection waned slightly, from a peak of 96% two months after the second dose to 84% by six months.

Those data came before the extra-contagious delta variant be-



Pascal Guyot/AFP via Getty Images-TNS

A Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine vial.

gan spreading, but other data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows the vaccine is still doing a good job preventing severe disease caused by that mutant.

As for all the talk about booster doses, the FDA's licensure doesn't cover those. The agency will decide that separately.

The FDA already is allowing emergency use of a third dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine for people with severely weakened

immune systems, such as organ transplant recipients who don't respond as strongly to the usual two shots. For everyone else who got those vaccinations, the Biden administration is planning ahead for booster starting in the fall — if the FDA and CDC agree.

Also still to be decided is vaccination of children under 12. Both Pfizer and Moderna are studying youngsters, with data expected in the fall.

Wallowa Lake Dam funding goes through

By BILL BRADSHAW

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Now that the \$14 million in state lottery funds has been approved by the Oregon Legislature for the refurbishment of the century-old Wallowa Lake Dam, the big question that remains is what kind of fish passage the dam will include.

State Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, confirmed last month the lottery funds were approved by the Legislature and Gov. Kate Brown was expected to sign the budget.

"We've got the funding across the goal line, and now it's implementing the application of it," Hansell said. "Now the baton will be handed off to where they sell the bonds."

He said the bonds are expected to be sold in the spring of 2022 and the actual funds will come through later. He said he is unsure of the exact timeline.

"As far as I know we're back to what we've always done," he said.

He added the stakeholders in the dam project can begin spending on it before getting the proceeds from the bonds, but they do so at their own risk.

The four major stakeholders are the Wallowa Lake Irrigation District — the owner of the dam — the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Nez Perce Tribe's Department of Fisheries Resources Management and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Minor stakeholders also are involved, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has jurisdiction over bull trout; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

A year ago, lottery sales were far too low to fund the bonds.

"We didn't collect enough to spend what we'd authorized," Hansell said.

The project originally called for a \$16 million refurbishment of the dam that would improve the spillways, include a fish passage, add more concrete for weight, replace the five conduit gates with new ones and to upgrade the electrical and instrumentation, according to the June 23, 2020, Wallowa County Chieftain.

Dan Butterfield, president of the irrigation district, was encouraged by the news from the Legislature.

"We keep gaining," he said. "Everything's looking good."

The \$2 million difference between the lottery funds and the overall cost is supposed to be made up by "other sources," Butterfield said, adding that the stakeholders may need to reassess the final cost given the increasing cost of building materials.

Jim Harbeck, the field office supervisor for Nez Perce Fisheries, said the latest cost estimates were from 2017.

"I imagine those costs are higher now," he said.

Butterfield said the stakeholders have applied for a grant through the American Rescue Plan Act



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Swimmers on July 30, 2021, enjoy the water of Wallowa Lake near the Wallowa Lake Dam. Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, confirmed the Legislature approved the \$14 million in state lottery funds being counted on to pay the lion's share of replacing the dam.

that could help with the extra funding.

He said the project has been in the works for about 20 years. Now, he said they are planning to begin construction in fall 2022 and have it ready by spring 2023.

"That's what our engineer's designing for and planning for," he said. "We sure would've loved to have had that dam this year. ... We'll be able to go another 8 feet (of water) with the new dam. Having that extra storage will be huge for this valley."

Fish passage options

But it's up to the engineer, McMillen, Jacobs and Associates of Boise, Idaho, to determine the type of fish passage that will be included and to finalize the plans for the dam.

Wallowa County native Mort McMillen, the engineer on the project, said a fish passage to allow both upstream and downstream migration of fish is being worked into the project. It will be determined by the stakeholders based on the plans his firm comes up with.

"Everybody has their preferences," McMillen said. "We haven't arrived at the final selection. ... We're working really good as a group."

The fish passage is a crucial element of the dam's new design. In fact, Harbeck said, state law requires the inclusion of a satisfactory fish passage.

There are different options for the type of fish passage. The tribe prefers a "volitional passage" — one that allows fish to ascend to or descend from the lake at their own volition. That allows adults to swim upstream to spawn and juveniles to swim downstream once hatched.

"It lets fish pass when they so choose as opposed to putting some type of human time stamp on it," he said.

Jeff Yanke, a watershed manager with the ODFW, said it's up to the engineer to select a type of passage.

"We've been talking concepts and it's up to them to pick one," he said.

The "volitional passage" is often known as a fish ladder.

Another option is the "trap and haul" option, which is a type of water elevator to move the fish, Yanke said.

Do-it-yourself political redistricting

By GARY WARNER

Oregon Capital Bureau

It's a new video game that comes with a big prize.

It's not streaming on Twitch or play on an Xbox console.

It's on OLIS, which is not a gaming company, but the Oregon Legislative Information System.

The point of the game is to design a new political map of Oregon — a patchwork of blue and red.

The grand prize is political sway in Oregon for the next 10 years.

Normally this once-a-decade resizing of political districts has the legislature drawing maps, the legislature voting on maps and the governor signing off on maps. The public role is in hearings.

If all goes swimmingly — somewhat of a historical rarity — there is a new political atlas for the next election.

This year, mapmaking is going pro-am as amateur cartographers can get on the OLIS video game to draw their own political dream maps. They'll get the same recently arrived, deeply detailed U.S. Census tract information and software program as lawmakers use.

"Oregonians can begin drawing new lines using the gold standard data," said Shelly Boshart Davis, R-Albany, co-chair of the House Redistricting Committee.

The starting point is <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/redistricting>. After creating an account, taking a tutorial, and preparing a lot of patience to deal with the wonky program, mapmaking can begin.

As a template, the current districts with a 37-22 Democratic majority in the House and 18-12 edge in the Senate can be called up for reference. So can the U.S. House map of the delegation's four Democrats and one Republican.

A few valley curves, a straight-edge county line, following a river path, or run-

ning up against a mountain range will be challenging. But with enough effort and time, voila! your own version of the political landscape of Oregon.

The full slate of work includes:

- Six congressional districts of 710,000 people each
- 30 Senate Districts of 127,700 people each
- 60 House Districts of 63,850 people each

The computer will tell you whether your maps meet geographical requirements and demographic goals.

One of the biggest tripping points is Oregon's requirement that two House districts be completely "nested" inside each Senate District. So, for example, House Districts 59 and 60 fit completely inside Senate District 30.

There also are federal voting rights laws. Oregon's state directives say districts must be contiguous, be of

equal population, utilize existing geographical or political boundaries, not divide "communities of common interest" and be connected by transportation links.

The full set of does and don'ts, rules, laws, and other mapmaking stuff is on the website.

When done, the map can be submitted to the legislature for consideration. The deadline is Sept. 7 by 5 p.m.

A note of receipt of the map will be sent by email. Whether maps found to have flaws will be noted in time for resubmission is still undecided up in the air.

"It depends on how many maps we receive," said Allison Daniel, a legislative policy and research analyst.

Those that make the cut by checking all the boxes for size, shape, location, equity, and other items will pop up on the legislature's redistricting website.

New At The Library

Patrons can reserve materials in advance online or by calling 541-523-6419. Baker County Library's new additions include 50 new bestsellers, eight new movies, 12 new audiobooks, four new music CDs, 25 new children's books, and 116 other new books, including 70 that are available online. See everything new this week to Baker County Library District at wowbrary.org.

FICTION

- "Billy Summers," Stephen King
- "Second First Impressions," Sally Thorne
- "Seven Days in June," Tia Williams
- "The Noise," James Patterson and J.D. Barker
- "The Paper Palace," Miranda Cowley Heller

NONFICTION

- "American Marxism," Mark R. Levin

• "The Authoritarian Moment: How The Left Weaponized America's Institutions Against Dissent," Ben Shapiro

• "I Alone Can Fix It: Donald J. Trump's Catastrophic Final Year," Carol Leonnig and Philip Rucker

• "This Is Your Mind On Plants," Michael Pollan

• "The Truth About COVID-19: Exposing The Great Reset, Lockdowns, Vaccine Passports, and the New Normal," Dr. Joseph Mercola, Ronnie Cummins.

MOVIES

• "Buck Breaking" (Documentary)

• "The Great Buster: A Celebration" (Documentary)

• "The Greatest Adventures Of The Bible: Noah's Ark" (Family)

• "The Impressionists" (Documentary)

• "Older Wiser Workouts: Does It" (Documentary)

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