

Oregon OKs 'more aggressive' climate protection program

PORTLAND (AP) — The Oregon Environmental Quality Commission has OK'd a new Climate Protection Plan for the state that targets a 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transportation fuels and natural gas by 2050.

The commission's 3-1 vote comes after years of unsuccessful attempts by state lawmakers to launch an economy-wide cap-and-trade program to reduce the carbon emissions that contribute to climate change, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.

"It has been an enormous lift to get this program to this point," Com-

mission Chair Kathleen George said after the vote.

Last year, Gov. Kate Brown ordered the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to develop a new set of administrative rules that would cap greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels and cut them over time.

The resulting Climate Protection Program caps emissions from gasoline, diesel, propane, kerosene and natural gas and makes the cap progressively more restrictive.

Set to launch in 2022, the program will distribute a declining number of emission credits to fuel suppliers

and allow them to buy and sell those credits as the cap comes down. It also creates a Community Climate Investment Fund that will permit companies to pay for emission reductions in communities most impacted by climate change.

The program will initially regulate 16 fuel suppliers and three natural gas utilities. Thirteen industrial facilities also will be regulated under a different system that creates individualized plans to reduce emissions using the best available technology. Companies that can't meet the emission reduction targets could face financial penalties.

Companies have protested the higher targets, arguing higher prices for gasoline, diesel and natural gas will result and have ripple effects throughout the economy.

Industry groups did their own analysis of the program and found it would be more costly for consumers than what the DEQ is projecting, based on its economic analysis.

If prices in Oregon increase by more than 20% of the fuel prices in other states, Oregon DEQ staff will do a review to determine whether the program needs to be changed, Nicole Singh, DEQ climate policy advisor, said.

POWDER

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Perfect timing

The storms from the weekend of Dec. 11 brought enough snow for the resort to reopen. While this year's opening date was a bit delayed compared to last year's opening right after Thanksgiving, those at Anthony Lake are not too concerned as long as the resort is open before schools let out for winter break.

"We really try to get open by at least that Saturday going into the holiday break," Judy said.

Judy noted that the rush of skiers on opening weekend makes a big impact on the resort's overall revenue for the ski season.

"It's supposed to keep snowing, so that's a bonus," Judy said. "It looks like we're going to see some awesome conditions for quite a while."

Revamped skiing experience

As the resort continues



Davis Carbaugh/The (La Grande) Observer

A group of skiers descend Road Run slope at Anthony Lakes during the resort's opening day on Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021. Ski resorts across the country have seen a significant increase in traffic during the COVID-19 pandemic.

to adjust to COVID-19 and create an enjoyable skiing experience, Anthony Lakes has started several new programs and ramped up its beginner education.

The resort has rebranded its learning center area as "Alice's Wonderland," with numerous slopes and training areas for begin-

ners and young skiers. The carpet lift was remodeled with a covered conveyor and renamed "The Caterpillar," while the handle tow is now called "Mad Hatter."

"It'll be a really fun learning experience this year," Judy said.

Another new feature will be an emphasis on sup-

porting local businesses in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Grant counties. Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort will be promoting "Support Local Thursdays," in which visitors can show a \$40 receipt from a local business in the area to receive a \$25 lift ticket on Thursdays.

"We're just trying to encourage local spending in the area," Judy said.

In addition to promoting local businesses in surrounding areas, Anthony Lakes has also seen a boost from being a more locally based ski resort. This recent trend — along with a rise in outdoor activities during the pandemic — has helped Anthony Lakes.

"People are really escaping the larger ski areas and traveling to the smaller ones," Judy said. "That is an industry trend that is benefiting us — we'll see a lot of locals and visitors."

Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort is set to stay open through Jan. 2. The area will close at 1 p.m. on Christmas Eve and be closed on Christmas Day.



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Snow berms along Washington Avenue between First and Second streets, looking west, on Monday morning, Dec. 20. Baker City Public Works Department crews will be hauling away the snow as quickly as possible, working on midnight shifts.

BERMS

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(As an illustration of how rapidly the weather can change, Fisk noted that just a week ago those graders were smoothing sections of the city's gravel streets.)

That crew was joined around midnight by a five-man crew that used loaders and dump trucks to haul snow after it was plowed into berms, Fisk said.

Another pick up crew was scheduled to start around midnight on Monday.

Usually it takes about three midnight shifts to truck away all the snow berms, Fisk said.

Hauling snow is a late night/early morning task because it's too dangerous to operate the heavy equipment when there's any significant volume of traffic, Fisk said.

Crews dump snow at two locations — a lot off 12th Street north of A Street that Baker Sanitary Service owns and allows the city to use, and the parking lot at Leo Adler Field along D Street, which the Baker County Fair Board allows the city to use.

The city budget for the current fiscal year, which runs through June 30, 2022, includes \$115,000 for snow and ice control.

The amount the city actually spends varies widely, not surprisingly, based on the severity of the winter.

During the previous two winters, neither of which

was especially snowy, the city spent \$79,820 and \$55,173, respectively.

But during the winter of 2016-17, when snow depths exceeded two feet and snowplows were running for weeks straight, the city spent more than \$300,000.

Although Sunday was the first day snowplow and removal crews worked, Fisk said the city's sanding and salting trucks have been out a few times earlier this winter.

This week's plowing task is somewhat less daunting because Baker schools are on Christmas break, so crews don't have to concentrate on streets near the schools as they do when classes are in session, Fisk said.

Shoveling snow from sidewalks, driveways

A city ordinance states the property owners must clear snow and ice from sidewalks within 24 hours after snow stops falling.

Fisk urges residents to avoid shoving snow from sidewalks, or driveways, into the street, as that adds to the snowplowing burden.

On Main Street there is no park strip between the sidewalks and the street, so property owners have little choice but to shovel snow into the street, he said.

Fisk also recommends people avoid parking at the curb on Main Street and other downtown streets if possible, to allow snowplows to clear the entire width of the street.

GAMING

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The Attic's gaming offerings include Super Nintendo, Atari, Nintendo 64, Sony Playstation, Playstation 2 and Playstation 3, Xbox 360s, Wii, and a couple of modified systems.

"We probably have about 7,000 to 8,000 games in here," Eide said. "We need more TVs still. We need gaming chairs and we need entertainment centers."

The Attic also has ping pong tables and older arcade games such as DigDug. The owners have even more games in storage that haven't been installed.

The Attic also has a selection of board games.

Donations and volunteers are also needed at The Attic. Volunteers can be ages 16 and older.

Eide and Brown have received donations from Les Schwab, ranchers, and business owners. They are also looking into grant opportunities.

"Things are in the works," Eide said.

Eide said they need about \$5,000 to install elec-



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

Co-owner Tim Eide at The Attic in downtown Baker City.

trical outlets for additional gaming consoles.

"That's really our biggest need right now is funding," Eide said.

Admission to The Attic is \$5 per person, and they offer memberships.

"We have four different membership levels right now; you either pay a year in advance, pay three months, six months in advance or pay monthly," Eide said.

People who sign up for automatic pay for a

membership receive 20% discounts on merchandise, snacks, and other items. People will also receive 50% off entry fees for gaming tournaments that are planned, the first taking place Dec. 18.

"We're going to do a lot of old school tournaments like Street Fighter, Mortal Combat, hockey, and maybe baseball," Eide said. "There's almost an unimaginable amount of games we can play."

Eide has lived in Baker City off and on since he was five years old. He attended every school in Baker except Churchill.

The Attic is the eighth business he has started, and he said he only failed at one.

"My favorite part actually about business is just doing the business, designing it, and setting it up," Eide said.

He said one of his goals with The Attic is to show younger residents that entrepreneurship can be successful. He also hopes to develop a rapport with kids.

He worked as a barber for years and said he noticed kids who went in had their heads down and didn't really communicate.

"I think we're just really interested in teaching kids how to communicate," Eide said. "That's part of being in a barbershop; when you go in a barbershop, you learn how to talk to a man, how to shake a man's hand, how to look a man in the eye. This is kind of part of that too."

The Attic is open Wednesdays and Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., Fridays from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m., and Saturdays from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.

COVID

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Data from other countries where omicron is already the main variant show that it causes fewer severe cases and deaths than delta and earlier variants.

But Oregon officials fear that omicron, due to its greater infection rate, will still strain hospital capacity.

During a three-day drive-thru vaccination clinic Dec. 12-14 in Baker City, about 310 residents received a booster dose.

Staten said county residents who want a booster dose can call the Health Department at 541-523-8211, or their health care provider.

She noted that people who received the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine are now recommended to have a booster dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

She said county officials are talking about having another drive-thru vaccination clinic during January.

According to Oregon Health Authority (OHA) statistics, 38.1% of Baker County residents 65 and older have had a booster dose.

About 19.4% of residents ages 50 to 64 have had a booster dose.

Case counts

Baker County reported 22 new cases for the week Dec. 12-18. It was the fourth straight weekly decline, following weekly totals of 25, 35 and 37.

The total of 22 cases is the fewest in any week since Oct. 31-Nov. 6, when there were 20 cases, and the second-fewest since late July.

Daily averages have dropped since reaching a record-high of 15.5 cases per day during September.

The daily average dropped to 5.4 during October, and to 4.8 during November.

The daily average for the first 19 days of December was 3.4 cases.

That's well below the rate during December 2020, when the county recorded a then record high of 196 cases, an average of 6.3 per day.

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