

Swapping clubs for skis

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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Quail Ridge Golf Course won't be ready for putts and chip shots for a couple months, but the sprawling property with its rumpled topography is hosting another brand of outdoor recreation this winter.

Cross-country skiers.

Peter Johnson, general manager of the Anthony Lakes Outdoor Recreation Association, which manages the city-owned 18-hole golf course, this week started grooming a route, mainly on the course's fringes following cart paths, for Nordic skiing.

The groomer creates a "corduroy" path — five feet wide, with shallow longitudinal grooves — designed to accommodate skiers, said Chelsea Judy, marketing director for Anthony Lakes, which also runs the ski area in the Elkhorn Mountains.

Judy said Johnson has been waiting for enough snow to start grooming at Quail Ridge, which is in south Baker City off Indiana Avenue.

The groomed routes cover about 1½ to 2 miles, Judy said.

Johnson groomed the trail on Sunday, Jan. 2, and again on Tuesday, Jan. 4, following the

latest snowstorm that brought about four inches to Baker City the previous night.

There is no charge to ski on the course, which also lures snowshoers and hikers during the winter.

Some of its steeper hills also attract sledders.

The parking lot, at 2801 Indiana Ave., is plowed and open for parking.

"It's another option for getting outside during the winter," Judy said.

Late on the morning of Jan. 4, a few skiers were gliding along the groomed path at Quail Ridge.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

A cross-country skier at Quail Ridge Golf Course in Baker City on Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022.

Oregon shatters daily COVID case record

BY SARA CLINE

Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND — The Oregon Health Authority reported 4,540 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, Jan. 4 — shattering the state's previous record of daily cases, set just five days earlier.

Currently, 510 people are hospitalized with COVID-19 in the state, which is less than half the number during the delta variant surge. However local scientists estimate that roughly 1,650 coronavirus patients will be hospitalized statewide on the predicted peak in late January due to the highly contagious omicron variant.

Across the country, daily case count records have been surpassed. The num-

ber of new COVID-19 cases across the U.S. reached a record-breaking average of 480,000 this week, and some primary care providers fear they will soon be overwhelmed by the surge.

Dr. Laura Byerly, the chief medical officer with Virginia Garcia Memorial Medical Center in northwestern Oregon, said her primary care clinics are quickly transitioning back to a telehealth model in anticipation of more staffers getting sick or requiring quarantine.

"We have to do a lot more telemedicine visits than face-to-face because we don't have the staff to handle the bodies in the building," Byerly said. "It's heartbreaking because so much

care has been deferred because of previous telehealth needs."

On Monday, Jan. 3, Oregon officials reported more than 9,700 new cases of COVID-19 from the holiday weekend, smashing a previous record for weekly coronavirus cases. During that time the state also hit a single-day high for new cases on 3,534 confirmed or presumptive infections. However that record has been replaced by Tuesday's case count.

In addition 18.2% of COVID-19 tests administered over the long weekend were positive for the virus, the Oregon Health Authority said. That's the highest positivity rate seen in the state so far.

Peter Graven, a data scientist at Oregon Health and Science University and

author of the influential COVID-19 statewide forecast, predicts that if people take steps to reduce the spread of the virus — such as getting vaccinated and boosted — the surge in hospitalizations would be slightly higher than the number of people hospitalized during the peak of the delta variant, 1,187 people on Sept. 1.

But officials say that increase threatens the state's already strained hospitals who are still dealing with the influx of patients hospitalized during the delta surge.

Currently there are 59 available adult intensive care unit beds and 94% of the state's staffed adult non-ICU beds are full.

During previous surges, to free up space hospitals have postponed elective procedures.

In addition, last month Gov. Kate Brown extended Oregon's declaration of a state of emergency as health officials prepare for an expected surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the coming weeks. The declaration is necessary in order to provide resources for the state's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts — allowing for the use of volunteer medical providers in hospitals and at vaccination clinics, providing flexibility around professional health licensing and ensuring that the state has access to federal disaster relief funds.

Former columnist Kristof makes case for Oregon residency

He wants to seek Democratic nomination for Oregon governor

BY ANDREW SELSKY

Associated Press

SALEM — Former New York Times journalist Nicholas Kristof told Oregon's top election official Monday, Jan. 3, that his having voted in New York state in 2020 doesn't disqualify him from being a candidate for governor in Oregon.

According to Oregon law, a candidate must have been a resident of the state for at least three years before an election. His having voted in New York in November 2020 has raised questions in the Oregon Secretary of State's office about his eligibility to run in the November 2022 election, and it had asked him for more information.

Kristof is running in a crowded field for the Democratic nomination for governor and has raised some \$2.5



Kristof

million for his campaign war chest. He noted in his affidavit that he had residences in both New York state and Oregon and had registered to vote in New York for convenience.

"By voting in New York, I had no intention of renouncing Oregon as my home," Kristof said in an affidavit filed with Secretary of State Shemia Fagan, Oregon's top election official.

For years, Kristof was a globe-trotting foreign corre-

spondent and columnist for The New York Times. The two-time Pulitzer Prize winner retired from the newspaper last year.

Lydia Plukchi of the secretary of state's office earlier said candidate eligibility is typically vetted by checking voter registration records and since he had voted in New York, she asked Kristof for any additional "documentation or explanation" to show he was an Oregon resident for three years prior to November 2022.

Kristof's campaign also offered to Fagan a legal opinion

by retired Oregon Supreme Court Justice William Riggs that Kristof has been a resident of Oregon since at least November 2019 "and likely much longer."

Riggs said that Kristof's voting in New York would undermine his Oregon residency only if it established that he didn't intend Oregon to be his permanent home.

Kristof pointed out that he moved as a 12-year-old with his parents to a farm in Yamhill, Oregon, in 1971, and has considered it to be his home ever since. He has purchased

additional acreage nearby since then.

The 62-year-old Kristof, in his sworn statement, said that after he dies he wants to be cremated and his ashes spread on the farm and on the Pacific Crest Trail.

Molly Woon, a spokeswoman for Fagan, said experts in the Secretary of State's elections division will be reviewing Kristof's response with attorneys at the Oregon Department of Justice.

"We hope to make a final determination later this week," Woon said.

US close to ending buried nuke waste cleanup at Idaho site

BY KEITH RIDLER

Associated Press

BOISE — A lengthy project to dig up and remove radioactive and hazardous waste buried for decades in unlined pits at a nuclear facility that sits atop a giant aquifer in Eastern Idaho is nearly finished, U.S. officials said.

The U.S. Department of Energy said last week that it removed the final amount of specifically targeted buried waste from a 97-acre landfill at its 890-square-mile site that includes the Idaho National Laboratory.

The targeted radioactive waste included plutonium-contaminated filters, graphite molds, sludges containing solvents and oxidized uranium generated during nuclear weapons production work at the Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado. Some radioactive and hazardous remains in the Idaho landfill that will receive an earthen cover.

The waste from Rocky Flats was packaged in storage drums and boxes before being sent from 1954 to 1970 to the high-desert, sagebrush steppe of eastern Idaho where it was buried in unlined pits and trenches. The area lies about 50 miles west of the city of Idaho Falls.

The cleanup project, started in 2005, is named the Accelerated Retrieval Project and is one of about a dozen cleanup efforts of nuclear waste finished or ongoing at the Energy Department site.

The project involving the landfill is part of a 2008 agreement between the Energy Department and state officials that required the department to dig up and remove specific types and amounts of radioactive and hazardous material.

The agency said it removed

about 13,500 cubic yards of material — which is the equivalent of nearly 50,000 storage drums each containing 55 gallons.

Most of the waste is being sent to the U.S. government's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico for permanent disposal. Some waste will be sent to other off-site repositories that could be commercial or Energy Department sites.

The Energy Department said it is 18 months ahead of schedule in its cleanup of the landfill.

"The buried waste was the primary concern of our stakeholders since the beginning of the cleanup program," Connie Flohr, manager of the Idaho Cleanup Project for the Energy Department's Office of Environmental Management, said in a statement. "Completing exhumation early will allow us to get an earlier start on construction of the final cover."

Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson represents the area that benefits from millions of federal dollars brought into the state by research work done at the Idaho National Laboratory.

"What exciting news for DOE and the Idaho Cleanup project," he said on Twitter about the landfill work. "A successful clean-up means protection for the region and the Snake River Plain Aquifer."

The Lake Erie-sized Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer supplies farms and cities in the region. A 2020 U.S. Geological Survey report said radioactive and chemical contamination in the aquifer had decreased or remained constant in recent years. It attributed the decreases to radioactive decay, changes in waste-disposal methods, cleanup

efforts and dilution from water coming into the aquifer.

The report said contamination levels at all but a handful of nearly 180 wells are below acceptable standards for drinking water as set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The nuclear site started operating in the late 1940s under the Atomic Energy Commission, a forerunner to the Energy Department, and contamination of the aquifer began in 1952, according to the U.S. Geological Survey report.

Contamination reached the aquifer through injection wells, unlined percolation ponds, pits into which radioactive material from other states was dumped, and accidental spills mainly during the Cold War era before regulations to protect the environment were put in place.

Tritium accounted for most of the radioactivity in water discharged into the aquifer, the U.S. Geological Survey report said, but also included strontium-90, cesium-137, iodine-129, plutonium isotopes, uranium isotopes, neptunium-237, americium-241, and technetium-99.

In 1989, the area became a Superfund site when it was added to the National Priorities List for Uncontrolled Hazardous Waste Sites.

The Energy Department shipped nuclear waste to Idaho until a series of lawsuits between the state and the federal government in the 1990s led to a 1995 settlement agreement.

The agreement was seen as a way to prevent the state from becoming a high-level nuclear waste repository. It also required cleanup and removal of existing nuclear waste, which continues.

Snoqualmie Pass sees most snowfall in 20 years

The Associated Press

NORTH BEND, Wash. — Authorities say Snoqualmie Pass in Washington state has received the highest snowfall in 20 years as of Monday, Jan. 3.

The Washington State Department of Transportation says by the afternoon of Jan. 3, 236 inches of snowfall was re-

corded, more than the 229 inches by Jan. 3 that was recorded in 2007 and 212 inches in 2004.

On Jan. 3, blowing snow closed Interstate 90 over Snoqualmie Pass. The state's main east-west highway was closed much of the day due to zero visibility and avalanche concerns.

Suspect in New Year's Eve shootout on Interstate 84 dies

East Oregonian

PENDELTON — The Pendleton Police Department in a press release Saturday, Jan. 1, reported the suspect law enforcement pursued on New Year's Eve from Union County into Umatilla County died.

Police identified the suspect as Nicholas Russell Proudfoot, 30, of North Bend, Washington.

The pursuit began the morning of Friday, Dec. 31, after the theft of a vehicle in Ukiah at 6 a.m., according to a press release that day from the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office. The Union County Sheriff's Office at about 10:45 a.m. attempted to stop the vehicle in Union County.

The report from Dec. 31 stated law enforcement caught the suspect at 11:53 a.m. and took him into custody at gunpoint. Officers took the suspect to a hospital for medical attention.

But the press release Jan. 1 from the Pendleton Police Department presented more information.

Pendleton police reported the chase ended on Interstate 84 at approximately milepost 223 on Cabbage Hill, about 13 miles east of Pendleton.

The suspect fired several rounds at an Oregon State Police trooper and civilians as he fled and carjacked occupied vehicles on the interstate, Pendleton police reported. The trooper and one civilian who was a victim of a carjacking returned fire at the suspect.

"The incident ended after the suspect's stolen vehicle became disabled," according to the press release, "and he was found unresponsive with an injury to his head."

Pendleton police reported law enforcement performed life-saving efforts and an ambulance took Proudfoot to a hospital, but he succumbed to his injuries Dec. 31 at 9 p.m.

No civilians or law enforcement officers were injured during this chase and shooting.

At approximately noon that day, Pendleton Police Department, at the request of the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office and in compliance with the Umatilla County Deadly Physical Force Plan, assumed control of the investigation. Police also reported there will be an autopsy to determine the manner and cause of Proudfoot's death.

The investigation of multiple crime scenes led to the shutdown of I-84 between mileposts 237 and 223 on both the east and westbound sides until about 9:30 p.m. Dec. 31. The investigation also is relying on resources from Hermiston Police Department, Umatilla Tribal Police Department, Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, Union County Sheriff's Office, Oregon State Police and its crime lab and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"Once the investigation is complete," according to the press release, "all material will be turned over to the Umatilla County District Attorney."

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