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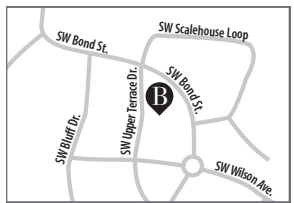
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Lottery results can now be found on the second page of Sports.

LOCAL, STATE & REGION

DESCHUTES COUNTY New COVID-19 cases per day

SOURCES: OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY, DESCHUTES COUNTY HEALTH SERVICES, BULLETIN GRAPHIC

COVID-19 data for Sunday, Feb. 21:

Deschutes County cases: 5,849 (11 new cases)
Deschutes County deaths: 58 (zero new deaths)

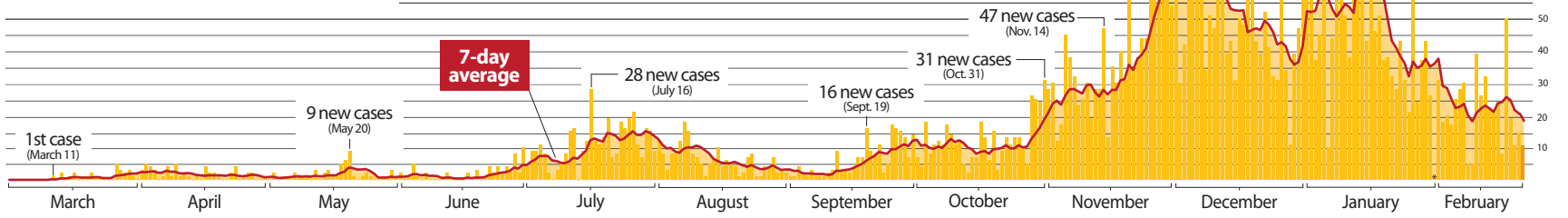
Crook County cases: 765 (zero new cases)
Crook County deaths: 18 (zero new deaths)

Jefferson County cases: 1,921 (3 new cases)
Jefferson County deaths: 27 (zero new deaths)

Oregon cases: 152,818 (111 new cases)
Oregon deaths: 2,155 (1 new death)

What is COVID-19? It's an infection caused by a new coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that can cause a range of symptoms. Some usually cause mild illness. Some, like this one, can cause more severe symptoms and can be fatal. Symptoms include fever, coughing and shortness of breath.

7 ways to help limit its spread: 1. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. 2. Avoid touching your face. 3. Avoid close contact with sick people. 4. Stay home. 5. In public, stay 6 feet from others and wear a cloth face covering or mask. 6. Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue or cough into your elbow. 7. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



A YEAR AFTER THE BIG FLOOD



Barricades mark the closure of Pendleton's Riverside neighborhood as floodwaters from the Umatilla River continued to inundate the area on Feb. 27, 2020. Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian file

PENDLETON — Helicopters buzzed overhead as Pendleton City Manager Robb Corbett helped the sandbagging effort at Riverview Mobile Home Estates on Feb. 6, 2020.

Corbett later realized that the helicopters, which were en route to rescue efforts further up the Umatilla River, were an indication that the situation was about to be much worse than the river runoff city staff were preparing for.

Overall, Corbett said he was pleased by the way the city responded to the floods. But a year after Pendleton's Riverside neighborhood was briefly submerged into the swelling waters of the Umatilla, Corbett said his staff continue to meet on how the city can improve its flood prevention procedures.

One of the key talking points is the city's changing climate. Corbett said people could call it what they want, but the region's weather patterns are changing. 2020 marked the second year in a row that Pendleton had weathered a significant flood, following the McKay Creek floods of 2019. Two years later, Corbett said the city was still working on mitigation efforts for McKay.

"We are planning for the worst — there are new weather patterns that we are now dealing with — and hoping for the best," he said.

Corbett said these events used to be considered anomalous, but Umatilla's water level was 30% higher than any levels in the city's recorded history. Should they get too much higher, Corbett said the water risked flowing over the Pendleton River Parkway, threatening the thousands of people who live in the flats.

City officials may not have been able to prevent the flood, but they would have been able to react to it earlier if they had checked water gauges upstream from Pendleton. Corbett said the city is now tracking a wider variety of sources to anticipate any future flooding.

The city is also encouraging more residents to sign up for Alert-Sense, the city's electronic notification service that sends out texts and emails during emergencies.

The flood not only destroyed homes and displaced dozens of residents — it also breached one levee and seeped through another, eroded roads and exposed sewer lines.

Public Works Director Bob Patterson said most of infrastructure damage has been repaired, but it will likely take years to finish updating their mitigation efforts.

One of those long processes is

Eastern Oregon communities draw lessons from 2020 disaster: 'We are planning for the worst'

BY ANTONIO SIERRA, JADE MCDOWELL AND BRYCE DOLE • East Oregonian



The Umatilla River runs adjacent to the Umatilla School District athletic complex this month. The school district was forced to rebuild the berm separating the river and fields after high water flooded the fields last year. Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

updating the floodplain map. Corbett said both floods revealed areas that were outside the floodplain that ended up underwater.

Watching the snow as it fell on the afternoon of Thursday, Feb. 11, Corbett said he now looks at precipitation with a sense of wariness.

"I can't think of a rainstorm or snowstorm again and not be nervous," he said.

West Umatilla County rebuilds more carefully

While flooding was less severe on the west side of Umatilla County, it highlighted needs that some communities are trying to fix.

In Echo, the city and property owners abutting the Umatilla River have been working to identify opportunities for physical mitigation, such as berms, in an effort to redirect high water away from homes and farms that got hit in February 2020. They have formed the Mid Umatilla River Coalition to work together in lobbying state and federal agencies for permission to complete projects, and are searching for funding opportunities.

Umatilla School District Superintendent Heidi Sipe said the damage to the district's athletic complex behind the high school and berms along the Umatilla River there are "almost completely restored."

The district was allowed to rebuild the berm built along the river to keep the fields from flooding, and

Sipe said they built it not just bigger, but smarter — designed not only to keep the water out during most flooding, but to allow the water a way to drain out of the fields if the river breaches the berm again. Sipe said that should prevent a repeat of the 4-foot deep lake that lingered for days after the river receded.

"That said, I'm fairly certain people thought they did it right last time," she said. "I doubt they thought they did a halfway job."

In Hermiston, last year's flood spurred the city to move infrastructure at Riverfront Park out of harm's way. When the park was built in 2005, planners put the playground, restrooms, welcome kiosks and parking lot at the north end of the long park — directly in the path the river takes when it overflows its banks at the location.

The city plans to move the playground and parking lot to the south end of the park this summer, and the restroom at a later date. Parks and Recreation Director Larry Fetter said the new location may see some standing water during future flooding, but shouldn't be in the path of the rushing water that causes the most damage.

One disaster provides training for the next

Umatilla County Emergency Manager Tom Roberts said past floods taught the county lessons that could be used in 2020, and the 2020

flood helped identify more gaps to be filled before the next crisis.

"At the end of planning exercises, we take a close look at where there is room for improvement," he said. "We do the same thing after a disaster."

An example of a "gap" the flood identified was the need to pre-stage emergency supplies at more locations around the county. Roberts said while the emergency management department had plenty of sandbags and shovels, for example, they were stored in one location that took time to mobilize to everywhere they were needed. He said he is working with some communities to create staging areas to store supplies closer to where future flooding may occur.

One unknown when planning for disasters is how much non-profits and individual volunteers will step up to help, Roberts said, and the 2020 flood drew an "unreal" level of community support that will help the county have more confidence about a response for future events. He also said the support Umatilla County received from the emergency management community was unprecedented.

"We had 13 different emergency managers rolling through our center the first few weeks after the flood, lending their expertise. ... That model really helped set the stage for other disasters (in 2020)," he said.

While government agencies are working on an updated hazard mitigation plan, Roberts said improvements won't all happen overnight, especially as the pandemic continues to complicate efforts. He urged everyone to be "two weeks ready" with food, water and other supplies in case of future disasters.

"If people can use these lessons to better prepare themselves, that's one less item we have to worry about, one less person we have to worry about," he said.

Marilyn Lohman, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service in Pendleton, said now is a good time for people to assess where they live and the risks to their property as high water events become more frequent. She said counties and cities should also be looking at what adjustments they might need to make to their hazard mitigation plans.

"There's a lot of people looking at a lot of these issues around the area, and maybe their expertise can be drawn into help counties and cities, and better prepare their infrastructure," she said.