

The Bulletin

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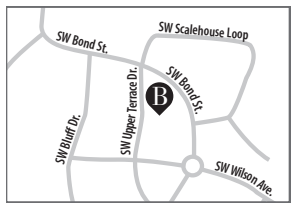
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Lottery results can now be found on the second page of Sports.

LOCAL, STATE & REGION

DESCHUTES COUNTY New COVID-19 cases per day

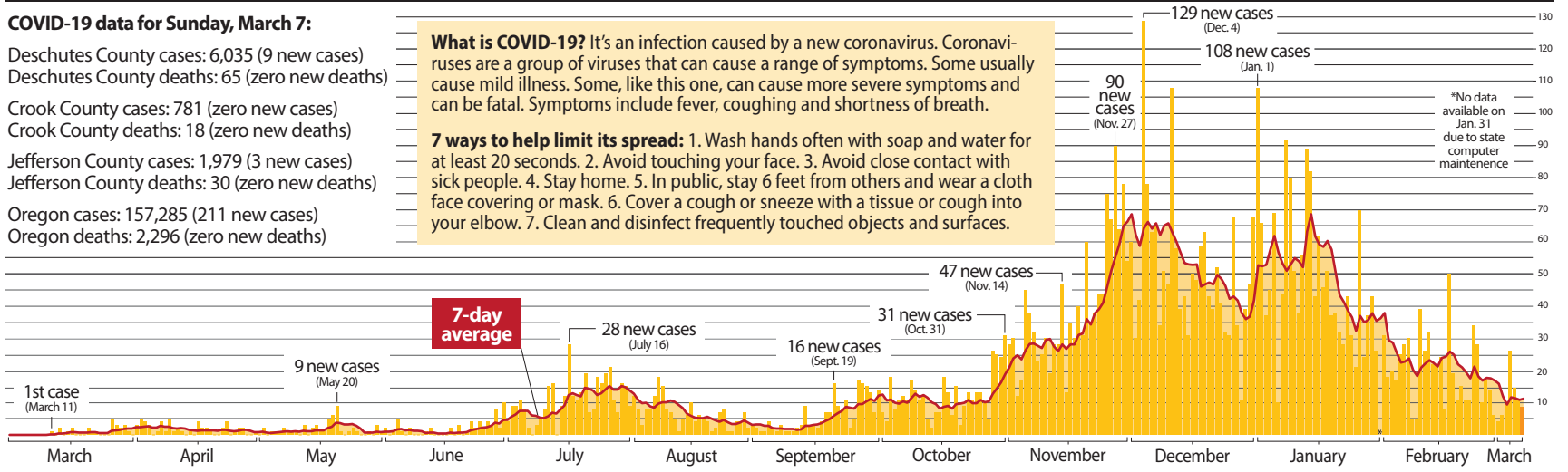
SOURCES: OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY, DESCHUTES COUNTY HEALTH SERVICES, BULLETIN GRAPHIC

COVID-19 data for Sunday, March 7:

Deschutes County cases: 6,035 (9 new cases)
Deschutes County deaths: 65 (zero new deaths)
Crook County cases: 781 (zero new cases)
Crook County deaths: 18 (zero new deaths)
Jefferson County cases: 1,979 (3 new cases)
Jefferson County deaths: 30 (zero new deaths)
Oregon cases: 157,285 (211 new cases)
Oregon deaths: 2,296 (zero new deaths)

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.



NORTHEAST OREGON



ROCK FIGHT

Union County locals line up against proposal for massive quarry

BY PHIL WRIGHT

The Observer (La Grande)
UNION COUNTY — People here are lining up against a proposal for a massive rock quarry near Perry and La Grande.

David Moyal, of La Grande, is leading the charge to block the 250-plus-acre Ponderosa Quarry Project that would operate on more than 4,700 acres where Robbs Hill Road meets Interstate 84 near the community of Perry. Locals know Robbs Hill Road as a place to pick huckleberries, Moyal said, ride bikes or just go for a beautiful drive. The quarry would end that, he said, and the effect on Perry would be drastic.

“With the dust, and noise and the pollution — it’s unenviable,” he said.

But the downside as Moyal painted it does not stop at Perry.

Interstate 84 from Pendleton to the Grande Ronde Valley is special, he said, and designated as a scenic corridor. Plunking this large mining site with a crushing facility and railroad access near the interstate and in full view of the entrance to the Grande Ronde Valley, he said, “is just an objectionable idea” with “absolutely no justification for doing it beyond profit.”

Application makes a comeback

James A. Smejkal, of Banks, submitted the application to the county on Sept. 18, then provided a pair of updates before the end of the year. According to the site plan application, the project would create the quarry approximately 2.5 miles west of La Grande and about a mile from Perry and involve rock crushing, screening, washing and stockpiling. The project would build a railroad spur to ship aggregate across the western United States. The Union County Planning Commission is holding a public hearing Monday to consider approving the application.

Moyal said he plans on calling in and will speak against the project, which he did in 2018 the first time the planning commission considered the plan. The commission at that time deemed the application to be incomplete.

This time, as Moyal put it, the application is more robust — stacking up to about 400 pages. He said he was not aware the project had come



Alex Wittwer/The Observer photos

The site for the proposed Ponderosa Quarry reflects in the sunglasses of David Moyal on Tuesday. Moyal is a vocal opponent to the project that would sit less than a mile from the community of Perry. At top, a train passes off Interstate 84 near Perry.

back for reconsideration until Feb. 1 when he received a notice that the planning commission would consider the new application plan for the quarry in seven days. But the county postponed the meeting. That gave Moyal a month to prepare.

“So I thought, if I’m going to do anything with that, I’m going to have to do grassroots organizing,” he said.

Raising awareness

Moyal drafted flyers to raise awareness about the meeting and express concerns with the quarry and handed them out in Perry and to businesses in La Grande. He created a Facebook page, Stop the Robbs Hill Road Quarry, which as of Wednesday had 52 followers. And Moyal started an online petition against the quarry on change.org. More than 530 people have signed the document.

Moyal said if the county gives the approval, the problems with the quarry will be here in the Grand Ronde Valley for a long time.

Depending on what part of the application you read, he said, the lifespan of the quarry is 89 years or 137 years and would extract 300 million tons of rock. Per the application, one gallon of diesel via rail can transport 1 ton of aggregate 440 miles, and the plan is to ship 2,000 tons a day every day of the year to Western states. Doing the math, he said, and being generous with doubling the distance, requires almost 1.47 million gallons of diesel a year.

“The carbon footprint is truly alarming,” Moyal said. “This is an immense amount

to I-84?” he said.

Dan Steele lives in Perry and also does not want the quarry to go in. A retired railroad worker, he said he spent a long time around the Harney rock pit, and big quarries mean heavy equipment and inevitable breakdowns that lead to diesel spills and more. All of those fluids, he said, would end up in the Grande Ronde River.

“There’s just a lot of things wrong with the whole thing,” he said, including possible depreciation of property values. Steele also joined the chorus in questioning the placement of the project.

The Harney pit for example, he said, is far from any scenic area and homes. Steele said his home, where his grandchildren often visit, would be half a mile from the Robbs Hill Road pit.

“There’s got to be a million places more appropriate for such a quarry,” Steele said.

Preparing for the longer fight

Moyal said he has put together about 35 pages of specific objections for the county planning commission to consider. The real purpose of gathering all the details he can, he said, is to be ready with an appeal to the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals, the tribunal that serves as the arbiter of local land use decisions in the state.

The application states the quarry would create five to seven full-time jobs. Moyal argued the quarry also would cost Union County jobs.

The LUBA application would place 4,550 acres into a conservation easement with the Mule Deer Foundation to protect habitat for mule deer and elk. According to the application, the easement would allow cattle grazing and timber management.

Moyal called the easement a way to make the quarry more palatable for the county planning commission.

The meeting Monday will be a public hearing, with the applicant getting to present arguments for the quarry, and then public comments for and against.

If the planning commission gives its stamp of approval to the project, Moyal said he is ready to step up his opposition with more community organizing and even fundraising to pay for a lawyer to take up the fight.

Portland schools HQ vandalized in ‘malicious act of arson’

The Oregonian
The headquarters of Portland Public Schools was vandalized overnight Friday in what the district superintendent is calling “an attack on our city’s public school system.”

Multiple school district vehicles were set on fire, office windows were broken and graffiti was scrawled on the district headquarters, 501 N. Dixon St., Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero said.

“While I am relieved that no one was hurt and there was no further damage to the building, this malicious act of arson and property destruction last night was criminal and it has no place in our community,” Guerrero said in a statement posted to the district’s Twitter account Saturday. “This was an attack on our city’s public school system.”

Food delivery trucks and maintenance vans were destroyed.

“This act of violence will not deter us from our commitment to educating our students, providing them meals, or any of the other work we are privileged to carry out every day in support of students and families,” Guerrero said.

Portland Fire & Rescue extinguished the fires before they caused additional damage, according to Guerrero. Cleanup began before sunrise Saturday.

A crew was putting up plywood to patch five large broken windows near the building’s main entrance Saturday morning. Graffiti was visible on the building. No burned vehicles were present.

Schools reopening soon

The vandalism came as the district is preparing to return students to school buildings. On Friday, Gov. Kate Brown ordered Oregon schools to shift into in-person instruction by spring break. She has increasingly faced pressure from parent groups and some lawmakers to reopen the state’s public schools.

Guerrero said he was confident the district would meet Brown’s deadline. He pointed to the district’s late February announcement that schools would begin offering hybrid instruction by mid-April.

The Portland Police Bureau said it was increasing the number of on-duty officers in other parts of the city over the weekend, amid growing public concerns over shootings and protest-related property destruction.

It was unclear Saturday who was responsible for the school headquarters damage or what their motivations were.