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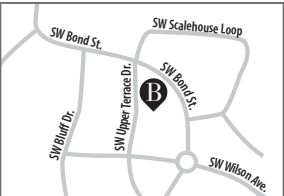
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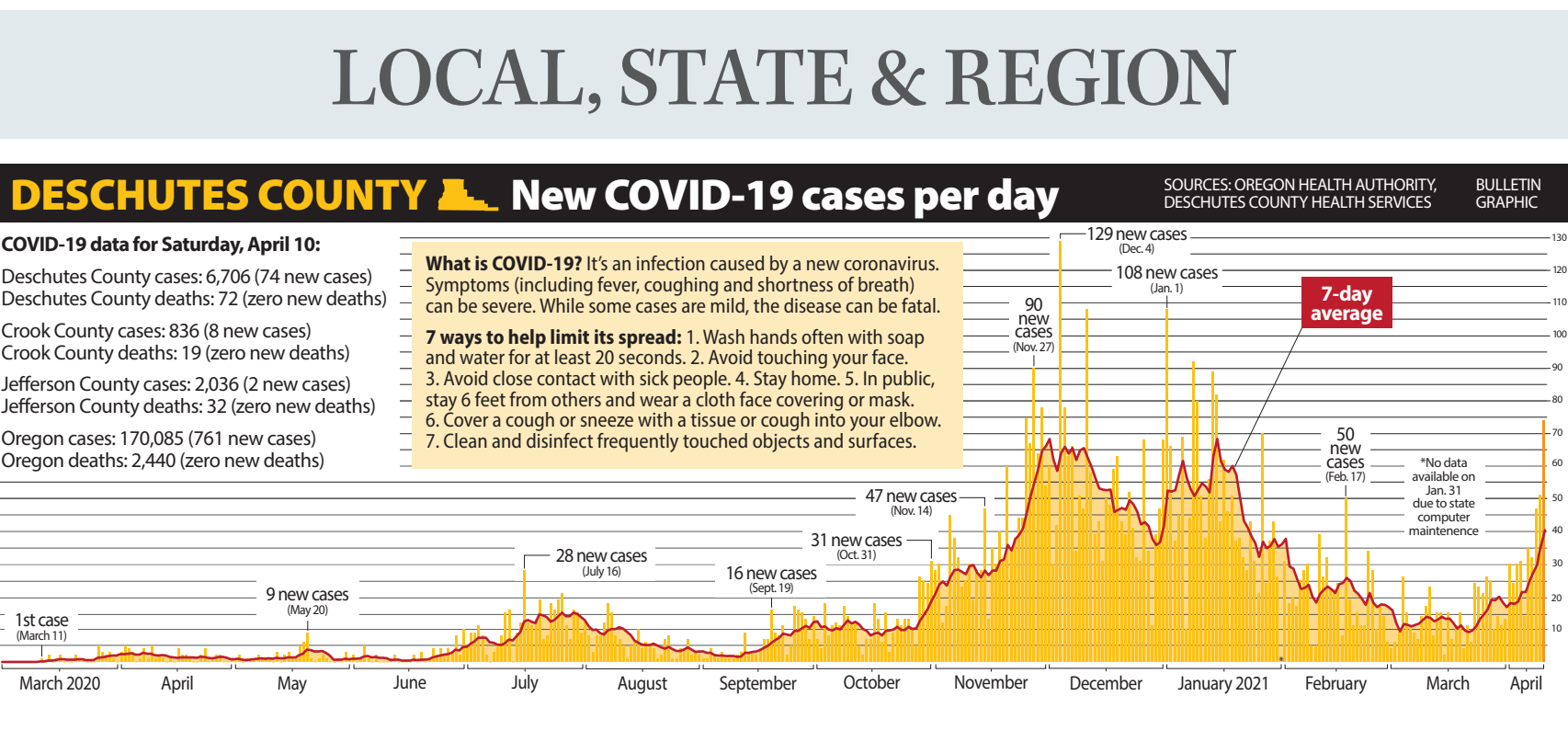
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■ Lottery results can now be found on the second page of Sports.



BEND TO LAVA LANDS

Comment period opens for paved path

BY MICHAEL KOHN
The Bulletin

The Deschutes National Forest opened up a 30-day comment period for the public to review and express opinions about a bike path planned to be built between Bend and the Lava Lands Visitor Center.

The paved path would parallel U.S. Highway 97 for 6.1 miles, from Baker Road to the Visitor Center. It is planned to be 10 feet with a two-foot shoulder.

The path will provide foot and bike connections between high use visitor attractions along Highway 97, including

the High Desert Museum, Lava Butte, Lava Lands Visitor Center and the Deschutes River.

The path will also make a connection between Bend and the Sun Lava path, which connects Sunriver and the Lava Lands Visitor Center.

The Forest Service's draft environmental assessment only analyzes the impacts from where the paved path crosses the National Forest boundary and goes south to Lava Lands, which is 4.1 miles of the proposed 6.1 miles.

The Oregon Department of Transportation and the Na-

tional Forest are working in partnership on the project, using funds from the Federal Lands Access Program.

Information about the project, which opened for comment on Thursday, can be found on the Forest Service website: www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57665

Comments may be submitted by email at: comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-bend-ftrock@usda.gov. Commenters are asked to put "paved path" in the subject line.

■ Reporter: 541-617-7818, mkohn@bendbulletin.com



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin
A cyclist makes his way along a section of the Sun-Lava Path between Benham Falls and Lava Lands Visitor Center in 2020.

Oregon water outlook a matter of haves and have-nots

BY GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

The 2021 irrigation season is shaping up to be a tale of two Oregons.

River basins in the northern part of the state are in comparatively good shape, with snowpack at or above normal from Mount Hood to the Wallowa Mountains, according to the latest outlook from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Southern Oregon, however, is another story.

Exceptionally dry weather has pushed the region deeper into drought, threatening water supplies for both farms and fish. Local irrigation districts, facing all-but-certain shortages, are doing what they can to stretch what little water they have stored in lakes and reservoirs.

"It is looking to be a pretty dire year, particularly in Southern and Central Oregon," said April Snell, executive director of the Oregon Water Resources Congress. "It doesn't look like we're getting much moisture in those areas where we need it."

Scott Oviatt, snow survey supervisor for the NRCS in Portland, said March was particularly dry. Total precipitation statewide fell from 99% to 90% of average for the water year dating back to Oct. 1.

"The month itself was below normal and below average in all cases, just due to the lack of storm impacts," Oviatt said.

Though snowpack across the state has held steady at 111% of average, measurements show a clear disparity from north to south.

On the north side, the Hood, Sandy and Lower Deschutes



Owyhee Irrigation District via Capital Press
Jay Chamberlin, director of the Owyhee Irrigation District in southeast Oregon, said the district's board of directors approved a reduced water allocation for growers in 2021.

basins have 135% of their average snow-water equivalent — the amount of water that is contained in snow. The Umatilla, Walla Walla and Willow basins are also well above normal at 132%, and the Grande Ronde, Burnt, Powder and Imnaha basins are at 120%.

The Willamette Basin, home to the majority of Oregon's high-value and specialty crops, is also faring well at 121% of the average snowpack.

Meanwhile, the Rogue and Umpqua basins in southwest Oregon are at 85% snowpack, the Klamath Basin is at 77%, the Owyhee Basin is at 78% and the Lake County and Goose Lake basins are at 67%.

Oregon's snowpack typically peaks around mid-March, Oviatt said. That means time is running out to make up any

significant ground.

"We're past that now," Oviatt said. "Those opportunities have gone by the wayside."

Many reservoirs in Southern Oregon are sitting well below 50% full. Streamflows are also below 50% in some areas, ahead of the hot summer months.

Gov. Kate Brown has already declared a drought emergency in Klamath County. Jackson, Lake and Baker counties have requested drought declarations.

Irrigators in the Klamath Project, which serves approximately 230,000 acres of farmland in Southern Oregon and Northern California, anticipate their water allocation will be 130,000 acre-feet, less than one-third of historical demand.

Inflows into Upper Klamath

Lake, which feeds the Klamath Project, were just 74% of normal since Oct. 1, making it the worst year on record since 1981.

Jim Pendleton, manager of the Talent Irrigation District in the Rogue Basin, said they are facing a similarly critical situation.

Normally, the district stores 80,000-85,000 acre-feet of water in three reservoirs — Hyatt Lake, Howard Prairie Lake and Emigrant Lake.

This year, the three reservoirs combined have just 17,000 acre-feet of water, their lowest totals since 1961.

"Just running the numbers, we may not even start the system until the first of June," Pendleton said. "Even at that, I think we'll be lucky to make it to mid-August."

Looking east to the Owyhee Basin, Jay Chamberlin, manager of the Owyhee Irrigation District, said board members approved a reduced water allocation of 3 acre-feet per acre. Growers typically receive 4 acre-feet per acre during a full water year.

Owyhee Reservoir is currently 60% full, and Chamberlin said they will likely draw the reservoir down significantly in 2021.

"We're going to empty the tank," he said. "That really sets us up for a bad situation next year. We won't carry over any storage if we pull it all down to cover this year's demand."

The district started releasing water on April 6, which is several days early. Chamberlin said growers needed moisture on the ground to allow their onion and sugar beet crops to break through the dry, crusty soil surface.

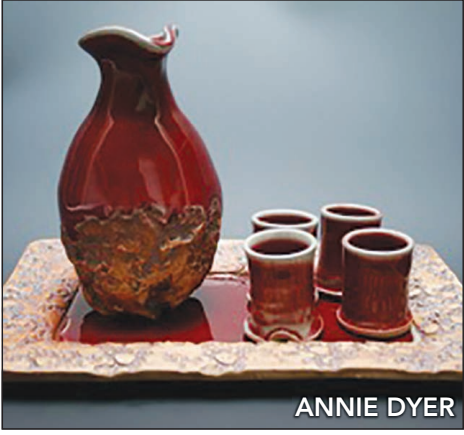
In addition, Chamberlin said the district will immediately begin pumping supplemental water from the Dunaway Pumping Station along the Snake River.

"We're in a drought," he said. "It's going to require us to do some extra type of measures to make sure we can stretch that (allocation) out."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center is calling for an increased chance of lower temperatures across much of Oregon over the next month, and an equal chance of increased or decreased precipitation.

Pendleton said he is holding out hope for a wet spring.

"We need something," he said. "Divine intervention, or whatever it takes."



"Mournful and yet grand is the destiny of the artist."
- Franz Liszt

ANNIE DYER

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