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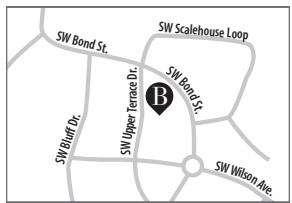
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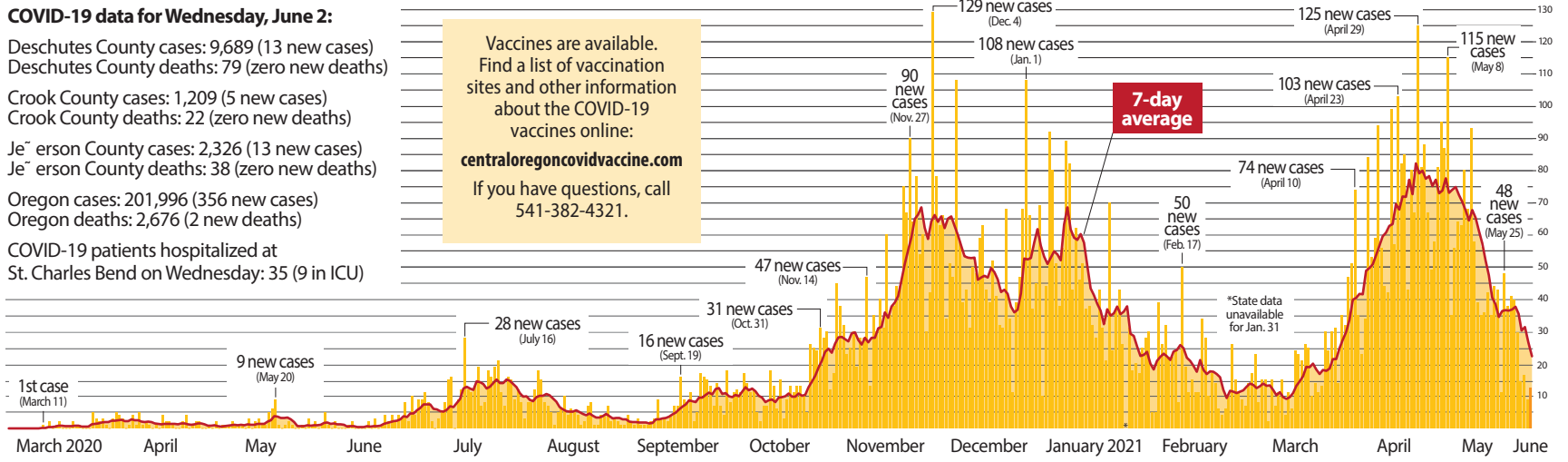
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Lottery results can now be found on the second page of Sports.

LOCAL, STATE & REGION

DESCHUTES COUNTY New COVID-19 cases per day

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



This beach grass doesn't belong here

Hybrid vegetation could mean trouble for the Northwest coast



Beach grass grows in the sand near Sunset Beach in Clatsop County. Courtesy OSU

Scientists at Oregon State University have confirmed that two widespread, invasive beach grasses are now genetically mixing, which could present additional challenges to communities and Pacific Northwest dune restoration.

Before the introduction of European and American beach grass, there was far more open sand on the Oregon and Washington coasts, according to an Oregon Public Broadcasting report. Where it is present,

native vegetation promoted lower dunes that tended to shift and morph. "The non-native grasses out-compete some of the native non-grass — like the herbs and the forbs (flowering herbaceous plants) that were part of our system 150 years ago. There are efforts to try to restore dunes back to that native state," said OSU coastal ecologist Sally Hacker.

On the other hand, it's often better for communities and infrastructure if those dunes don't move and instead provide a steady buffer against winter

storms and surges.

That's why European beach grass was brought in at the turn of the 20th century. Decades later, American beach grass was introduced in Washington, and eventually became the dominant beach grass in that state.

Now, where the ranges of the European and American beach grasses overlap in northern Oregon and southern Washington, scientists have found clusters of beach grass that don't look like either.

"We found this other kind of

strange grass that had intermediate characteristics of the two species. We didn't know, really, what was going on," Hacker said.

The researchers thought the new grass just might be a slightly different version, or variant, of one of the grasses. But they realized that the physical characteristics were too distinct.

OSU graduate student Rebecca Mostow began studying the new grass, documenting the physical traits and conducting a genetic analysis that confirmed the new grass is a hybridized cross between European and American beach grass.

The results were published in the journal *Ecosphere*.

The height of beach grass matters because taller grass creates taller dunes. Different dune formations offer differing levels of protection for coastal communities.

"And so now we have this new type of grass growing on the dunes and we don't totally know what kind of dune it will build. But because it grows taller than the parent species, we have this guess that maybe it'll change the dune shape," Mostow said.

It's also unknown how the hybrid will impact dune ecosystems and efforts underway to protect them from invading grasses. This is a significant focus of the conservation and restoration work underway at the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area on the central Oregon coast.

"We're expecting some differences in sand capture... and so that may affect the speed with which the grasses move," said Siuslaw National Forest restoration botanist Armand Rebeschke, who works at the Oregon Dunes to remove encroaching vegetation. "But... it's not an immediate concern."

Migrant communities distrust Oregon's drinking water, report finds

BY DIANNE LUGO

Salem Statesman Journal

A report from the Oregon Water Futures Project reveals widespread distrust in drinking water among communities of color and a sharp disconnect between communities and policymakers when it comes to water policy.

Oregon Water Futures Project staff began interviewing members of native, Latinx, Black and migrant communities across the state in 2020, attempting to understand their water resource priorities. Partnering with Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, Euvalcree, Unite Oregon, Verde, NAACP Eugene-Springfield, and the Chinook Indian Nation, 104 people across eight counties were able to participate.

According to the report, climate change, aging infrastructure and a lack of investment in clean water has stressed the state's water systems, disproportionately risking the health, safety and economy of Ore-

gon's rural and low-income communities of color.

"There are serious information gaps about water bills, water quality and emergency preparedness that must be addressed," said Alai Reyes-Santos during a media overview about the report.

Reyes-Santos is one of the lead authors of the report and a professor at the University of Oregon.

The University of Oregon is one of the institutions that comprises the Oregon Water Futures Project, which hopes to "elevate water priorities" and "impact how the future of water in Oregon is imagined." Others involved in the collaboration include the Coalition of Communities of Color, Oregon Environmental Council and Willamette Partnership.

Those interviewed shared stories of inability to afford their water bills, buying bottled water because they don't trust their tap water, rationing bottles to afford the added expense and boiling their water

first or using other culturally specific practices to purify water. Water filters, they said, did little to assuage their fears about bad water quality.

"The experience of severe water scarcity in Mexico and Guatemala shapes water perspectives today," said Dolores Martinez, community engagement director at Euvalcree.

Euvalcree, a nonprofit led by Latinos in Umatilla and Malheur counties, helped conduct 35 phone interviews.

The majority of the participants immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico and Guatemala and many of them did not have potable running water in their country of origin.

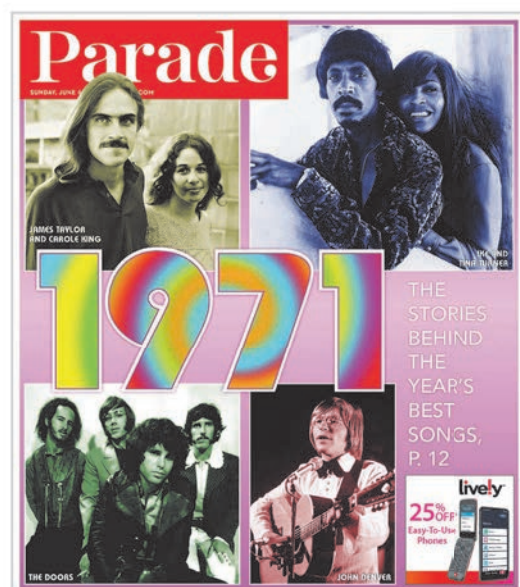
"They learned how to source and clean water before using it to drink and cook. Some people still use this practice at home in Oregon because of a lack of trust in drinking water sources," Martinez said.

Umatilla and Malheur counties were identified in a 2019

study among 16 counties in the Northwest with the highest rate of drinking water violations. Those violations were higher in low-income and communities of color.

Communities relying on well water are also increasingly concerned with poor regulation of domestic wells. Across different regions, participants thought there was not enough routine testing and they shared experiences with pollution of well water.

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