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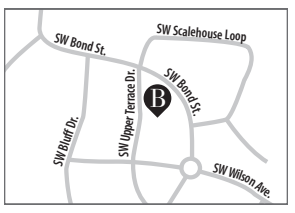

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LOCAL, STATE & REGION

COVID-19 data for Tuesday, Oct. 12

Deschutes County cases: 19,252 (92 new cases)
Deschutes County deaths: 122 (9 new deaths)
Crook County cases: 2,636 (63 new cases)
Crook County deaths: 43 (zero new deaths)
Jefferson County cases: 3,556 (63 new cases)
Jefferson County deaths: 50 (zero new deaths)
Oregon cases: 345,344 (1,413 new cases)
Oregon deaths: 4,084 (82 new deaths)
COVID-19 patients hospitalized at St. Charles Bend on Tuesday: 61 (10 in ICU).

The Bulletin had been tracking the seven-day average case count based on state data since local coronavirus cases were first reported in March of last year. Starting with the July Fourth weekend, the state stopped providing county-level data for weekends or holidays. When data is available, The Bulletin will continue to publish information about the pandemic.

Ex-Secretary of State Bev Clarno challenges redistricting map

BY DIRK VANDERHART
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Former Oregon Secretary of State Bev Clarno and three other Oregon Republicans have filed a challenge to new congressional districts recently passed by state lawmakers, arguing the plan amounts to blatant partisan gerrymandering that is unconstitutional and contrary to state law.

Clarno

The suit, filed Monday in Marion County Circuit Court, is the first such attempt to alter the six-district map that Democrats pushed through during a contentious special legislative session last month.

That session nearly ended in a Republican walkout after House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, reneged on a deal to grant the GOP an equal say in new congressional and legislative maps. Instead, Republican lawmakers showed up on the last possible day and allowed Democrats to pass a map that could lead to Democratic control of five of the state's now-six seats in Congress. Oregon picked up an additional U.S. House seat because of population gains recorded by the recent U.S. Census.

"The result of this highly partisan process is a clear, egregious partisan gerrymander, as has been widely acknowledged both in Oregon and across the country," the lawsuit reads. Later it notes: "Democrats are projected to win five of the six of Oregon's congressional seats in a typical year, results that are not even arguably justified by the Democrats' overall political support in this State or the political geography of the State."

Clarno, of Redmond, the secretary of state until this year, was joined by three other former Republican officials: Gary Wilhelms of Portland, a former House Republican leader; James Wilcox, former mayor of The Dalles; and Larry Campbell of Eugene, a former House speaker. They argue that Democrats' handling of the process harms them "by frustrating their ability to vote for and campaign for congressional candidates who share their values, and who share their views on issues such as gun rights, transportation, and water rights."

Current Secretary of State Shemia Fagan is named as defendant, which is required by state law.

They have asked the court to block the plan and draw its own, along with awarding the plaintiffs attorneys fees.

The court challenge to Oregon's congressional map will be the state's first time operating under a new system for resolving such conflicts. Under a law passed in 2013, a panel of five judges — one from each of the state's current five congressional districts — are the arbiters of the dispute. That panel has until Nov. 24 to decide whether to dismiss legal challenges to the new congressional maps.

Tuesday was the deadline for parties to file court challenges to the new congressional maps.

Feds sue over Upper Klamath Lake water releases

BY MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The U.S. government is challenging an order from Oregon water regulators that forbids water releases from Upper Klamath Lake to boost flows in the Klamath River.

The legal dispute pits the enforcement of state water rights against the federal government's obligation to operate the Klamath irrigation project in compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

To improve stream conditions for threatened salmon in the Klamath river, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation releases water through its Link River Dam under an operations plan for the irrigation project.

In April, the Oregon Water Resources Department issued an order prohibiting the bureau from making releases that would drain water from Upper Klamath Lake to which irrigators hold water rights.

George Plaven/Capital Press, file
The water in Upper Klamath Lake is central to a dispute between the U.S. government and the Oregon Water Resources Department.

Since then, the water resources department has twice issued notices of violation to the federal government for releasing water contrary to the order. The federal government said officials from the state agency have also threatened to impose civil penalties or take other enforcement actions.

The U.S. government is now seeking a declaration in federal court that the state lacks the authority to stop water releases from Upper Klamath Lake, as well as an injunction against the state agency's enforcement of the order.

Aside from preventing the Bureau of Reclamation from operating its facility consistently with the Endangered Species Act, the state agency's order would interfere with the water rights of the Yurok and Hoopa Valley tribes downriver in California, the federal government stated.

Under legal precedent set by the U.S. Supreme Court, the federal government must conform with state water law — however, state water law "must cede to federal authority" when it conflicts with federal statutes, such as the Endangered Species Act, according to the federal government.

Representatives of the Oregon Water Resources Department could not be reached for comment.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Redmond plans event for wetlands project

The city of Redmond will host a virtual open house so the community can learn about a planned wetlands complex.

The Redmond Wetlands Complex will expand the city's existing wastewater treatment facility, located at 5801 NW Way, utilizing ponds and wetlands engineered to treat effluent while creating a habitat for plants, wildlife and community recreational opportunities, a news release said.

The open house will be hosted online via Zoom Oct. 21, from 6-7:30 p.m. The open house will include information about the project's design, its timeline and opportunities for the community to share feedback on the city's plans.

Redmond has experienced significant growth since the installation of its current wastewater treatment facility in 1978, according to the release. This growth is projected to continue, with Redmond's population reaching 54,000 by 2045. The city's current system can process and treat 2.8 million gallons per day. The system will need to increase capacity to 4.6 million gallons per day to accommodate the projected growth.

"The Redmond Wetlands Complex is an exciting opportunity to meet Redmond's growing needs in a cost-effective and sustainable manner," said Ryan Kirchner, manager of Redmond's Wastewater Division. "The environmentally friendly treatment system will also create new opportunities to experience nature and view wildlife in our community."

City and project staff will be available during the event for questions. To send questions before the virtual open house or for more information on the project, visit www.RedmondWetlandsComplex.com or call 541-504-5083.

— Bulletin staff report

New York Times columnist forms an election PAC

New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof after months of public exploration has taken a step toward running for Oregon governor by forming a political action committee.

Kristof, 62, officially filled the committee paperwork Tuesday, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported. That allows him to raise money and hire staff ahead of an official announcement of his candidacy.

Carol Butler, a political consultant who has been working with Kristof as a volunteer, somewhat downplayed the significance of the filing, calling it "another step toward a potential run for governor."

"It allows us to continue exploration," she said.

Kristof in recent years has moved back to the Yamhill farm where he grew up, and he's been working to turn it into a vineyard and cider orchard.

Kristof

Kristof is viewed by political consultants and potential candidates as a possible contender for the Democratic nomination. Politics watchers expect he will have enough money to be competitive in a race against House Speaker Tina Kotek, Treasurer Tobias Read and others.

The Democratic primary will be open in 2022 as current Gov. Kate Brown finishes her second term and cannot run again.

Kristof's campaign had not reported any contributions as of Tuesday morning.

While considering a run for office, Kristof has taken a leave of absence from his duties at the Times, the paper reported last month.

— Associated Press

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