

Omicron's New Year's cocktail

SORROW, FEAR, HOPE FOR 2022

BY JOHN LEICESTER AND NICK PERRY
Associated Press

PARIS — Sorrow for the dead and dying, fear of more infections to come and hopes for an end to the coronavirus pandemic were — again — the bittersweet cocktail with which the world said good riddance to 2021 and ushered in 2022.

New Year's Eve, which used to be celebrated globally with a free-spirited wildness, felt instead like a case of *deja vu*, with the fast-spreading omicron variant again filing hospitals.

At the La Timone hospital in the southern French city of Marseille, Dr. Fouad Bouzana could only sigh Friday when asked what 2022 might bring.

“Big question,” he said. “It's starting to become exhausting, because the waves come one after another.”

The mostly muted New Year's Eve celebrations around the world ushered in the fourth calendar year framed by the global pandemic. More than 285 million people have been infected by the coronavirus worldwide since late 2019 and more than 5 million have died.

In the United States, officials took a mixed approach to the year-end revelry: nixing the audience at a countdown concert in Los Angeles, scaling it back in New York yet going full speed ahead in Las Vegas, where 300,000 people were expected for a fireworks show on the strip.

Yet by Thursday, rapper LL Cool J had dropped out of the New York telecast after a positive COVID-19 test, “The Music Man” was shuttered



Fireworks explode over the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge as New Year's Eve celebrations began in Sydney on Friday.

Dean Lewins/AAP via AP

on Broadway after lead actor Hugh Jackman tested positive, and restaurant owners battered by staffing shortages and omicron cancellations throughout the holiday season struggled to stay open.

“I'm really scared for our industry,” said restaurateur David Rabin, a partner in the Temple Bar, Skylark and other city venues who watched reservations and party bookings disappear this month. “No one made any

money in December. The fact they may have a good night tonight, it has no impact.”

The pandemic game-changer of 2021 — vaccinations — continued apace. Pakistan said it had fully vaccinated 70 million of its 220 million people this year and Britain said it met its goal of offering a vaccine booster shot to all adults by Friday.

In Russia, President Vladimir Putin mourned the dead, praised Russians

for their strength in difficult times and soberly warned that the pandemic “isn't retreating yet.” Russia's virus task force has reported 308,860 COVID-19 deaths, but its state statistics agency says the death toll has been more than double that.

“I would like to express words of sincere support to all those who lost their dear ones,” Putin said in a televised address broadcast just before midnight in each of Russia's 11 time

zones.

Elsewhere, the venue that many chose for New Year's celebrations was the same place they became overly familiarly with during lockdowns: their homes. Because of omicron's virulence, many cities canceled traditional New Year's Eve concerts and fireworks displays to avoid drawing large crowds.

Pope Francis also canceled his New Year's Eve tradition of visiting the life-sized manger set up in St. Peter's Square, again to avoid a crowd. In an unusual move for Francis, the 85-year-old pontiff donned a surgical mask for a Vespers service of prayer and hymns Friday evening as he sat in an armchair. But he also delivered a homily standing and unmasked.

“A sense of being lost has grown in the world during the pandemic,” Francis told the faithful in St. Peter's Basilica.

Face masks again became mandatory Friday on the streets of Paris, a rule widely ignored among afternoon crowds that thronged the sunbathed Champs-Élysées, where a planned fireworks display was canceled.

In Florida, all four parks at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista were sold out on Friday, according to the company's website.

Australia went ahead with its celebrations despite reporting a record 32,000 new cases. Thousands of fireworks lit up the sky over Sydney's Harbor Bridge and Opera House at midnight. Yet the crowds were far smaller than in pre-pandemic years.

Plans for OSU-managed coastal research forest move forward

BY SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

Oregon State University continues to consider potentially managing a 91,000-acre research forest in Oregon's southern coastal range, spanning Coos and Douglas counties.

Researchers presented a financial analysis Dec. 21 as part of the years-long effort to transform the Elliott State Forest into a publicly owned state research forest.

In December 2020, Oregon's State Land Board voted for OSU to further explore how the forest might be used as a research hub. A year later, OSU has a clearer outline for what kinds of research will take place in the forest.

The research forest, experts say, could benefit OSU researchers and students, foresters, small-woodland owners

and scientists worldwide.

“This is a very rare opportunity to start a research forest of this size,” said Kathleen “Katy” Kavanaugh, associate dean for research in OSU's College of Forestry. “This would be one of the largest research forests in the world.”

Research would include experiments on the role areas near streams and rivers play in the recovery of endangered species, exploration of potential new timber harvest systems and the study of steep forest terrains, including geological hazards.

Thomas DeLuca, dean of Forestry at OSU, said experimental plots — different sections of forest organized by watershed — will be managed differently. When a natural fire occurs in the region, researchers will then study which treatments were most fire-resilient.



OSU

A view of the Elliott State Forest.

Shannon Murray, Elliott State Research Forest director, said the project proposal includes construction of research and laboratory spaces, offices,

classrooms and living quarters for researchers living in the forest on a temporary or long-term basis.

“It's exciting thinking about

the future of research there,” said Murray.

But the project still has a long way to go. The proposed research start date is 2024, but several pieces of the puzzle must snap into place before that can happen.

The biggest piece is ownership.

Initially, the plan was for OSU to both own and manage the forest, but earlier this fall OSU backed out of its plan to take ownership, saying the financial risk was too high.

The forest is supposed to be financially supported primarily by timber harvests.

According to OSU's models and data from Mason, Bruce & Girard, a consulting firm, harvests are expected to start at a maximum of 1,300 acres per year for the first five years, later dropping as low as 500 acres

per year after most major thinning is completed.

Although OSU officials predict profitable timber harvests, there are too many uncertainties, including potential logging limitations because the Elliott provides prime habitat for federally protected species. OSU has decided not to shoulder the risks.

The committee advising OSU and the Department of State Lands about the forest is now exploring an alternative plan: having OSU manage the forest but another entity own it.

One possible option is establishing a stand-alone entity, such as a public corporation or independent public agency, to own the forest. This would require legislation. Development of a formal legislative concept for the 2022 legislative session is underway.

Homeless

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Both proposals are from Central Oregon Villages, a nonprofit organization that was born out of local churches and other community members coming together last year to discuss ways to establish managed camps as a safer alternative for homeless people currently occupying unsanctioned homeless camps in the region. The nonprofit is partnered with SquareOne Villages, which creates similar kinds of camps in Eugene.

“We're not talking about moving an unregulated camp with sanitary issues into someone's neighborhood,” said Jim Porter, Bend's former police chief and the nonprofit's board president. “We're talking about getting individuals into a structured situation where laws and policies are obeyed.”

The organization has proposed two kinds of managed camps. One proposal is for a 10-unit village for older, unhoused women, with the goal to expand the village to 20 units, according to documents provided by Porter. If expanded, the goal would



Photos courtesy of Central Oregon Villages

A digital rendering shows what a managed homeless camp could look like at a city-owned property off Ninth Street in Bend.

be to offer spots to women and children escaping physical and sexual abuse.

If the contract is awarded to Central Oregon Villages, the goal would be to open something by Feb. 1, though the proposal does not specifically identify which property this village would be on.

The second proposal is a six-shelter micro village. The proposal doesn't identify a specific population it would serve, but envisions the village to be built in conjunction with a safe parking program, which allows people to legally camp in their vehicles or RVs in exchange for following community guidelines.

The micro village would be fenced and locked overnight, according to the proposal.

The Juniper Ridge location was suggested as a possible site, but the organization was flexible about where this village could be placed, according to the documents.

Any managed camp proposal that moves residents to follow certain rules to be able to stay in the village, such as not using drugs and contributing to the upkeep of the facility, Porter said. Residents would also have to meet with a staff member at the camp to help address physical and mental health needs, as well as work



CREATIVE LAE

A digital rendering shows the vision of what a managed camp could look like at a property off S. Third Street in Bend near a Les Schwab Tire Centers store.

on professional development to get into the workforce if the resident isn't already working.

So far, Central Oregon Villages has purchased 10 small shelters, which can house two to four people and can be broken down and moved easily, Porter said. So far, efforts

from the nonprofit are largely funded by a state grant of more than \$300,000 obtained by Bend Church and SquareOne Villages.

But other details, including specifics about staffing and ongoing, long-term funding, have yet to be discussed in the ne-

gotiation process with the city, Porter said.

Estimates in the proposals show startup costs for the village for older women would be \$268,560. For the micro village, estimates show startup costs being about \$98,000.

The hope is to find a way to fund operations for two to three years, Porter said.

The city of Bend earlier this summer set aside \$1.5 million dollars of American Rescue Plan Act money to go toward developing managed outdoor shelters.

Central Oregon Villages is also anticipating and trying to prepare for staffing shortage issues — a problem many organizations are facing.

“Our hope is we will be able to find like-minded individuals who have the same calling to serve with access to construction companies to help us stand something up quickly,” Porter said.

The city hopes to review proposals by the middle of January, according to Joshua Romero, a spokesperson for the city.

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Politics

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Two have previously made it to the final round of voting for governor before. Bud Pierce of Salem was the 2016 Republican nominee in the special election for governor.

Patrick Starnes was the Inde-

pendent Party nominee in the 2018 election.

Both Pierce and Starnes were defeated by Gov. Kate Brown, who can't run again this year because of term limits. Starnes endorsed Brown in the late stages of the 2018 campaign.

This time around, he's run-

ning as a Democrat.

In the end, it will come down to voters. According to the latest count by the secretary of state, in September 2021, there were 2,947,391 registered voters.

The big question mark is the 991,360 nonaffiliated voters. Most were automatically

registered to vote while getting a new driver's license at the Oregon DMV, then didn't mail in the card asking for their political party preferences.

Currently, Democrats and Republicans only allow registered party members to vote in primary elections.

The reality of “closed” pri-

maries is that they leave nearly 1 million people out of the process of choosing who is most likely to make it to the general election ballot.

Everybody, regardless of party registration, gets to vote in the general election.

Of those who have registered with a party, the totals are:

Democrats: 1,026,313
Republicans: 729,676
Independent Party: 138,489
Libertarian: 21,640
Working Families: 8,648
Pacific Green: 8,002
Constitution: 3,841
Progressive: 3,016
Other parties: 16,406

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