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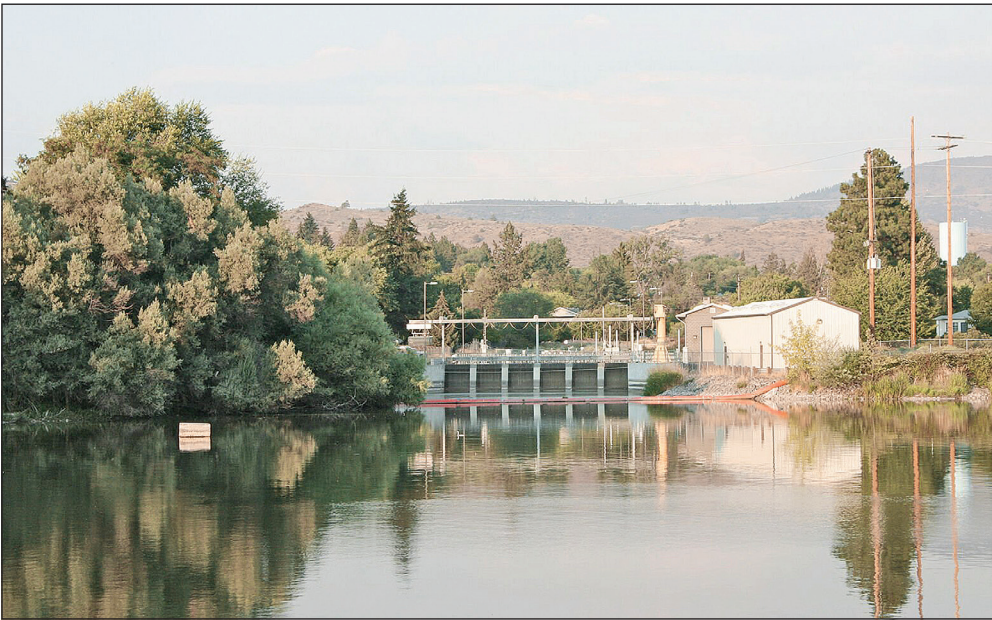
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LOCAL, STATE & REGION



The head gates of a canal on the Klamath Project in Klamath Falls as seen in August.

Irrigators, tribes object to extending interim plan for Klamath Project

BY GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

KLAMATH FALLS — Farmers, ranchers and tribal members alike are urging the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to let its interim operations plan for the Klamath Project end, describing it as “unworkable and irrational.”

The operations plan provides a formula for how much water will be allocated each year to farmers and ranchers for irrigation, while also balancing the water needed for endangered fish in the Klamath River and Upper Klamath Lake.

Brian Person, a senior adviser for the Bureau of Reclamation in Klamath Falls, said the current interim plan was formalized in March 2020 and set to expire Sept. 30.

Instead, the bureau expects to extend the interim plan as it anticipates the removal of four hydroelectric dams on the lower Klamath River, which is expected to open about 400 miles of fish spawn-

ing habitat.

“Dam removal is going to literally change the landscape and geomorphology in the Klamath River,” Person said.

Under the Endangered Species Act, the bureau is required to consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure the Klamath Project does not jeopardize the survival of imperiled fish.

The resulting biological opinions — one for coho salmon in the lower Klamath River and one for Lost River and shortnose suckers in Upper Klamath Lake — dictate operations for roughly 200,000 acres of farmland straddling Southern Oregon and Northern California. The suckers are also known as C’waam and Koptu by the Klamath Tribes.

Three consecutive years of record drought have only increased tensions in the basin. This year, irrigators will get 15% of the water they say they need, and last year, the project

was shut down entirely.

The Klamath Tribes, meanwhile, are suing the government for failing to meet minimum water levels in Upper Klamath Lake needed to provide shoreline spawning habitat for suckers.

Officials from the Interior Department, which oversees the Bureau of Reclamation, heard from irrigators and tribes during a two-day visit to the Klamath Basin that wrapped up Wednesday.

Person said the primary assertion is the interim operations plan simply does not work in such extreme drought, when there is so little water available in the system.

Rather than extend the interim plan, Person said stakeholders asked if agencies could conduct consultations each year to determine water supplies and protections for endangered fish.

“Reclamation is still evaluating that request,” Person said. “There will be some follow-up discussions.”

LOCAL BRIEFING

CDC: Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson counties reach high COVID levels

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention raised the COVID-19 community levels Thursday to high for Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson and 12 other Oregon counties.

The increasing spread means 24 Oregon counties are now at high levels of community spread. Nine counties were at high levels as of June 23.

All other Oregon counties were listed Thursday at medium levels.

It’s the first time all three Central Oregon counties have been ranked at high levels since restrictions were removed in March.

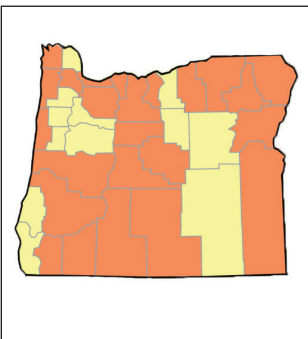
The CDC has been monitoring community levels of COVID-19 to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data. Levels can be low, medium or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used, hospital admissions and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area.

Precautions the CDC recommends for communities with high levels:

- Wear a mask indoors in public
- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines.
- Get tested if you have symptoms.
- Additional precautions may be needed for people at high risk for severe illness.

Cougar spotted in Deschutes River Woods

A cougar was spotted on



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday raised the COVID-19 community levels to high in Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson and 12 other Oregon counties. Orange equals high levels and yellow equals medium.

an empty lot in Deschutes River Woods on Wednesday, the first reported sighting of a cougar in Bend in nearly two years.

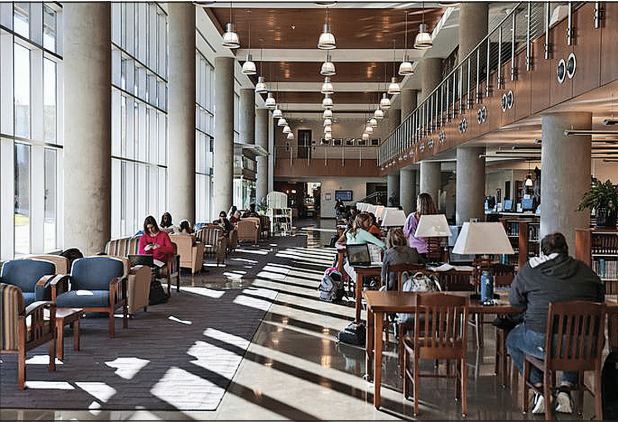
Deschutes County sheriff’s deputies were dispatched after a local resident reported the cougar at around 7:40 p.m. Deputies located the cougar on a nearby vacant lot and watched the animal until it left the residential area.

The cougar was seen heading into Deschutes National Forest land northwest of Deschutes River Woods. The incident was reported to the Oregon State Police and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The sighting was the first since July 2020, when a cougar was spotted outside Grocery Outlet in Bend. A resident saw that cougar at around 5 a.m. and followed the animal until it disappeared near the Bend Parkway.

Seven cougar sightings were reported across the region in 2019. On Feb. 9, 2019, state

PORTLAND



Students study in the library at the former Concordia University campus in Portland in 2016. The University of Oregon has bought the 19-acre site and will call it UO Portland.

UO completes purchase of former Concordia campus

BY ELLIOT NJUS
The Oregonian

The University of Oregon has finalized its \$60.35 million purchase of the former Concordia University campus in northeast Portland and plans to move in as soon as fall 2023.

The centerpiece of the 19-acre campus, which the university is calling UO Portland, will be a children’s behavioral health program funded with a \$425 million donation from Connie and Steve Ballmer. Connie Ballmer is a UO graduate and a former trustee. Steve Ballmer is the former chief executive of Microsoft.

But the university says it will also move all of the programs housed in its White Stag building in Portland’s Old Town. That includes various academic programs and research centers focused on journalism, advertising, architecture, sports product design and law.

It’s also considering relocating its Portland master of business administration program, which is housed in leased space in Old Town.

It’s not clear what might happen to the White Stag

property, which is owned by the University of Oregon Foundation, the nonprofit that oversees endowments and other major gifts to the school. UO spokesperson Kay Jarvis said a group is discussing the property’s future.

Concordia University closed suddenly in early 2020 when its parent church, the St. Louis-based Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, cut off funding over the Portland campus’ acceptance of LGBTQ students.

After Concordia closed, and presented with the Ballmers’ millions, UO sprang at the chance to buy a ready-built campus in a quiet corner of Portland.

The Ballmer Institute aims to create a partnership with local schools to address what the Ballmers and the university described as a growing mental health crisis among Oregon’s children, with its epicenter in Portland. The center will offer bachelor’s degrees and certificates to midcareer students. It expects to graduate more than 200 behavioral health practitioners a year once it’s up and running.

Roundabout opens on Wilson Avenue in Bend

After months of construction, the roundabout at Wilson Avenue and Ninth Street opened Thursday evening in Bend.

The roundabout is one of the first major projects to be completed as a part of the \$190 million transportation bond passed by voters in 2020.

It’s also Bend’s first bicycle-protected roundabout.

The roundabout will work like a single-lane roundabout, but has a protected bike lane around the outside between the sidewalk and vehicle lane, according to the city of Bend.

The city will move on to build improvements along Wilson Avenue between Ninth and 15th streets.

The goal is to make east-to-west travel along Wilson Avenue easier and safer, according to the city.

All of the improvements along Wilson Avenue are projected to be finished by the end of 2023. More information can be found at bendoregon.gov/wilson.

— Bulletin staff reports

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