



# Oregon declares emergency as coronavirus cases hit 15

By Les Zaitz  
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon health officials are taking emergency steps to confront the spread of the new coronavirus in the state as new cases emerged over the weekend.

Testing is focused on determining the extent of the outbreak across Oregon and who is most at risk, according to Pat Allen, director of the Oregon Health Authority.

Gov. Kate Brown on Saturday night declared a state of emergency.

"I find that the novel infectious coronavirus has created a threat to public health and safety and constitutes a statewide emergency," the governor said in her formal declaration issued Sunday.

As a result, major hospitals around Oregon are being cleared to conduct their own tests to detect COVID-19, a volunteer corps of retired medical professionals is being activated to help particularly in rural areas and work groups are devising counsel for communities to deal with vulnerable popula-

tions, including one for homeless and one for elderly in congregate care.

The extraordinary steps followed new test results Saturday that identified seven new cases of people presumed infected with the disease. That included five in Washington County, and one each in Douglas and Marion counties. On Tuesday, the first case was reported in Multnomah County. Statewide, health officials said 15 people have tested positive for the respiratory disease.

State and county health officials were releasing few details about those infected. They confirmed one case involved a student from a Hillsboro middle school, where cleaning crews worked Sunday to prepare for the school to open Monday morning.

Of the new cases, three people were hospitalized at the time of the diagnosis, and the other four were recovering at home with what health officials said were mild symptoms of COVID-19.

Four of the new cases involved

individuals who had contact with other infected people. But in three cases, health officials said they don't know the source, attributing the illness to "community spread."

In all cases, health officials immediately launched contact investigations, identifying where the infected person had been in the days before their diagnosis and with whom they had contact.

Individuals found to have had close contact with an infected

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## BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

### Elementary students showcase knowledge



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

From left, spectator Zion Bailey watches as competitors Silas Fansler, Eliza Bailey and Adie Judd listen to a question Friday at the Battle of the Books practice session at Humbolt Elementary School Feb. 28. At right is spectator Zach Bailey. Fansler, Eliza Bailey and Judd along Bristol Bailey (not pictured) will compete at the regional Battle of the Books tournament in Bend on March 14.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

Elsa Spence researches the answer to a question during a round of Battle of the Books at Humbolt Elementary. The school will send five students to the regional tournament March 14 in Bend.

### Cobb: 'We are trying to build children up to be adults who think'

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Later this month, a group of four students and one alternate from Humbolt Elementary will showcase their reading skills at Oregon's annual Battle of the Books regional tournament.

On Feb. 28, Eliza Bailey, Bristol Bailey, Silas Fansler, Adie Judd and alternate Alijah Phillips along with their coaches, librarian Shanley Cobb, Elsa Spence and

Anna Stargel, prepared for team's March 14 regional battle in Bend.

The Oregon Battle of the Books is a statewide reading motivation and comprehension program sponsored by the Oregon Association of School Libraries in conjunction with a Library Services and Technology Act grant.

Cobb said students read 16 books, dis-

cuss them, quiz each other on the details of the book and then compete in teams of four to answer questions based on the books in a "Jeopardy" format.

Cobb said the battle has far-reaching impacts for the students.

"Students who read 20 minutes a day

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## County ag producers express opposition to changes in water quality oversight

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Ranchers and ag producers packed the Grant County Airport conference room Thursday at the Grant Soil and Water District's annual meeting to voice their opposition to the Oregon Department of Agriculture's continued expansion of its water quality monitoring program.

Since 2003, the strategy to ensure compliance of water quality on farmlands was complaint driven. In 2014, the ODA moved to a more compliance-driven approach, using topographical maps and other publicly available information such as satellite and areal imagery to identify water quality concerns and violations.

The schedule for implementing



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

Pat Voigt, Grant Soil and Water Conservation District board chairman, kicks off the annual meeting Thursday at the Grant County Regional Airport.

the program, known as Strategic Implementation Areas, includes the North and Middle Fork of the John Day River and the Crooked River Basins in 2021, Middle John Day

River (downstream of Mountain Creek), Malheur River and the Silvie Basin (Greater Harney Basin) in 2022 and the Upper Mainstem and South Fork John Day Rivers in 2023.

Grant Soil and Water District manager Kyle Sullivan said he was pleased with the turnout. In all, he said 111 people attended the meeting.

"They let ODA know they had concerns," Sullivan said.

The scope of the ranchers' concerns included everything from legacy issues, such as land identified by the agency as noncompliant when it changes hands, to financial constraints, to an invasion of privacy, to overall frustration with the ever-changing goal posts of water regulations.

ODA's Director of Natural

Resources Program Area Stephanie Page and Brenda Sanchez, the agency's SIA program lead, both gave presentations and fielded questions.

Regarding concerns surrounding privacy, rancher Mike Moore, who has property in Bear Valley, said that ranchers, on the whole, are private people.

"At what point is this an invasion of our privacy?" Moore asked.

Sanchez said that ODA does not step foot on a landowner's property unless invited, and when there are concerns about a potential water quality violation, the agency contacts the landowner first.

Page, during her presentation, said the agency uses "publicly available aerial photos that they can get on the internet."

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