

## Vaccines

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anyone 65 or older.

She told the Eagle that the health department would contact anyone who gets turned away to follow up with them when their sequencing category comes around.

Lindsay said the state sent an email Friday asking public health administrators if they would like to do a mass vaccine event, and if so, how many would they need and what demographic would they immunize. She said she replied 65 and older and 500 doses.

Lindsay said she had not heard back from the state as of Monday afternoon. She said other counties have not vaccinated everyone in Phase 1a and do not have vaccine doses to give.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

**From left, Jenelle Moulton, Blue Mountain Hospital employee, gives Doug Sharp, Grant Union High School baseball coach, the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine Friday at the Grant County Fairgrounds pavillion.**

She said it would not surprise her if the state did not send more shots until the rest of the state vaccinates everyone in their

respective Phase 1a groups.

Grant County educators said Friday they were not hesitant to get the Moderna

COVID-19 vaccine.

Grant Union High School baseball coach and teacher Doug Sharp said, if getting the vaccine means he can see people smile again, then why not.

"I just want things to go back to normal," Sharp said.

### Warning week

Grant County has seen 13 more positive COVID-19 cases since Jan. 13, according to the health department. Lindsay said she believes the county is likely to be moved into the moderate risk category beginning Jan. 29.

According to the Oregon Health Authority's web page, in the moderate category, at-home social gathering restrictions would move from 10 to eight people. Indoor dining would still be allowed; however, the state would man-

date restaurants and bars close at 11 p.m. instead of midnight. Restaurants and bars would also go from a maximum of eight to six per table.

Lindsay said each county gets a "warning week." She said the state typically publishes the "warning week" on Tuesdays.

"If your numbers do not drop, then you get notice a week later that you are going to go up (or down). It takes effect that Friday," she said.

She said, if the county does not see a drop in positive COVID-19 cases, she will receive notice of the county moving to the moderate risk category on Jan. 25 that would take effect Jan. 29.

### Data discrepancies

Lindsay said the state reported 31 cases Friday because staff had to manually enter the health department's

positive cases that the state had just gotten around to reporting.

She said positive COVID-19 cases usually get uploaded to OHA's system automatically. However, Lindsay said, that had not been happening, so staff had to override them manually to report the health department's positive cases.

As of Monday, the county has seen 211 positive COVID-19 cases since the beginning of the pandemic.

OHA reported 666 new confirmed and presumptive cases of COVID-19 Monday. Oregon's total number of cases is 133,851. The total number of COVID-19-related deaths since the start of the pandemic is 1,803.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the total number of cases nationwide is just over 23 million.

## Store

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in 1993, the DGLF has awarded more than \$186 million in grants to nonprofit organizations, helping more than 12 million individuals take their first steps toward literacy or continued education."

Petkovic added that DGLF supports individuals learning how to read, speak English or prepare for the high school equivalency test.

The Type III site design review application states that the project plans to include one freestanding sign, parking and landscape improvements with 36 parking spaces, including two ADA spaces, and a 36-foot-wide driveway with a new access approach to U.S. Highway 26.



**Dollar General has broken ground on its planned store in John Day, slated for grand opening in the summer of 2021.**

The Eagle/  
Rudy Diaz

## Guidelines

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ager to limit the cutting of old and late-growth timber, the summary states, "the guideline need not be followed precisely" in situations where there is a better way to fulfill the guideline's intentions when conducting a site-specific analysis on projects.

Billie Jo George, secretary of Grant County's Natural Resource Advisory Committee, said the new guidelines would open more forest restoration opportunities and "help clean up the forest."

Tim Rude of Rude Logging in Grant County said removing restrictions to allow him to cut healthy trees over 21 inches is a benefit because a stable pine tree over 21 inches is worth a lot more than a 7-inch pine tree.

"From my point of view, I feel it would go a long way towards turning these timber sales into a positive for the public versus a deficit," Rude said.

The executive summary states, in the spirit of building trust, teamwork and learning, the Forest Service created an "adaptive management" concept into the decision.

Shane Jeffries, the Ochoco National Forest supervisor, said the agency will require managers to monitor the amount of old and large trees.

Adaptive management consists of monitoring large trees with a measurable

threshold for action and a provision to return to a standard if the landscape is not moving in the right direction.

"We're going to be looking at whether or not that, in fact, is actually happening as a result of this work," Jeffries said, "and if it's not, when it's not, we make adjustments."

He said having a "hard standard" did not allow the Forest Service to adapt to on-the-ground circumstances.

Now, Jeffries said, the new direction will allow the Forest Service managers to look at a group of trees in a project area in a national forest and assess whether it is appropriate to remove larger, younger trees.

"In the past, if we thought that was the right thing, we would have to do a site-specific amendment to our forest plans every single time," he said. "It takes time and takes taxpayer money to do that."

Projects will still go through the public process they have always gone through.

Platt said a regional adaptive management group would also meet once a year, open to the public, to review monitoring data that the Forest Service will collect.

She said there would not be a limit on the number of people that can be a part of it, and there would be no application process. Platt said she does not know who would be assigned to coordinate the process, but she said the Forest Service would set up a system for people who want

to be more engaged.

### Frayed public trust

Environmental groups argue the Forest Service acted on politics, kept the public out of the decision-making process and had the decision signed by a "political appointee in Washington, D.C." in the Trump administration's waning days.

Rob Klavins, Northeast Oregon field coordinator for Oregon Wild, said they are concerned about the ecological impact of replacing the 21-inch standard on the national forests. However, from a "good governance" standpoint, he said the way the Forest Service went about pushing the decision through was "really disappointing."

Klavins said there were other ways to fix the Eastside Screens. The route the Forest Service took was not one of them. He said this way creates winners and losers, rather than working together to see if they can find a solution.

As "kumbaya" as that sounds, Klavins said, there was once a time when the two sides could come together.

In 2008, he said the timber industry and conservation community were close to agreeing on a bill from Sen. Ron Wyden that allowed cutting large trees in some areas where it "made sense, but also ensured they were not cut down where it did not."

Klavins said there is a "real" difference between a legally enforceable standard to a non-enforceable guideline.

"We've seen those (guide-

lines) be abused," he said.

Klavins, a Wallowa County resident, said removing the 21-inch standard will make it nearly impossible for the forest collaborative groups — which bring industry and environmental stakeholders to the table to foster agreement — to agree on future projects.

Klavins said one of the crucial components of successful collaboratives is they have agreed-upon rules and sideboards. The 21-inch rule, he said, was one of the most important.

Klavins said, with the rule potentially gone or weakened, there is now a real possibility that they will be fighting over things they stopped fighting over 25 years ago.

He said the Northern Blues Forest Collaborative's support of amending the 21-inch rule "drove a wedge" and put pressure in an area where they disagreed, instead of focusing on areas where they did.

In June, both Oregon Wild and the Greater Hells Canyon Council left the Northern Blues Forest Collaborative.

Klavins said Oregon Wild aspired for the success the Blue Mountains Forest Partners collaborative has had in Grant County over the years.

"In addition to that trust in government and our agencies," he said, "this has the potential to do a lot of damage to the admittedly fragile trust that we've been trying to build with one another, and with the agency for the last 20 or so years."

In August, King Williams,

a consultant with Iron Triangle Logging, said forest managers should use the best available science when working toward maintaining old and large trees with visual characteristics that suggest an age of 150 years. He told the Eagle that the Malheur National Forest has been doing so through project-specific forest plan amendments.

Williams said he supported moving from a standard to a guideline, but said the proposal in his opinion appeared to be "ambiguous" and could be contentious.

Williams said getting the environmentalists, timber industry and counties to agree on applying the guidelines could lead to the same "conundrum" they have been in for the last 25 years.

"I'm not real confident that we're going to get there," he said. "I think this is going to be litigated."

### Objection period

Klavins said the Forest Service cut out an entire part of the public process. He said there should have been an objection period in which the public would get an opportunity to weigh in and try to work with the Forest Service. He said that would have included not just environmental groups but the timber industry, county commissioners and residents.

Stephen Baker, a Forest Service spokesman, said the agency held a 30-day public comment period that began Aug. 11. He said they extended the period an additional 30 days, and the Forest Service announced the final decision on Jan. 15.

Baker said the agency's planning regulations allow for decisions at different levels. He said James Hubbard, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, decided to sign the amendment.

"When the Under Secretary signs a decision, it is the final agency action, so no objection period applies to such a deci-

sion. Finalizing and implementing this decision will help us restore forests and better prepare for wildfires," Baker said.

He said years of scientific learning and on-the-ground experience informed the environmental analysis.

He said public and stakeholder engagement has been and will continue to be a priority. Baker said, in addition to the public comment period, they conducted formal and informal meetings and conversations with stakeholders and local groups. He said they would continue to collaborate with everyone who has engaged with them on this issue.

"This decision amends forest plans for six national forests but does not authorize any work on the ground," he said. "Individual projects will still be subject to established planning processes and opportunities for public engagement."

David Mildrexler, an ecologist from Eastern Oregon Legacy Lands, who analyzed tree inventory from the six national forests, found that an average of 3% of the trees are over 21 inches but contain roughly 42% of the carbon stored in the forests.

He said, despite the analysis, not much changed in the last stage of the process and that it was "tragic" that the Forest Service shut the public out of the objection period.

"This was a contradiction of what was promised," he said. "People should not be shut out like that."

Irene Jerome, Grant County Firewise coordinator and a member of the American Forest Resource Council, said she's not sure much will be gained from the new guidelines because forest plan amendments were working "fairly well."

"The Forest Service agency analysis indicated that the adaptive management alternative would have provided the best outcomes for the forest to maintain the late and old structure," she said. "In reality, that still requires a lot of analysis and a lot of work."

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