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County responding to surge in COVID-19 cases



Eagle file photo
Kimberly Lindsay, the county's public health administrator, during a session of county court.

After only four cases in February, 29 new infections have been reported so far in March

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

One year into the pandemic, Grant County health officials are getting in front of a surge of 29 positive COVID-19 cases this month, with infections turning up at a school and nursing home in Prairie City.

Seven new cases were announced Monday from the Prairie City, John Day and Seneca ZIP codes.

In a Monday press release, the Blue

Mountain Care Center announced that six residents and seven employees have tested positive for COVID-19 since March 8.

Prairie City School District had two people test positive for COVID-19 as well, according to a March 9 letter to parents from Prairie City Superintendent Casey Hallgarth.

Lindsay said the recent uptick in cases, particularly among residents of the care center, concerns her.

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Eagle file photo
Grant County Health Department Clinic Manager Jessica Winegar gets a COVID-19 test in November.



A large herd of elk on the Zumwalt Prairie in Wallowa County.

Contributed photo/The Nature Conservancy

ODFW proposing major changes in 2022 for archery elk hunters

Controlled hunts proposed for 13 units and parts of three others

By Jayson Jacoby
EO Media Group

A major change to archery elk hunting seasons in most of Northeast Oregon could start in 2022.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is proposing to shift the archery season in 13 units and parts of three others

from the current general hunt — meaning there's no limit on the number of tags sold — to a controlled hunt, with a limited number of tags.

In a controlled hunt, archers would have to apply for a tag through the state's computer lottery system.

In June 2020, ODFW announced the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission would consider changing the archery season in all units east of the Cascades from general to controlled hunts, and for elk as well as buck deer hunting.

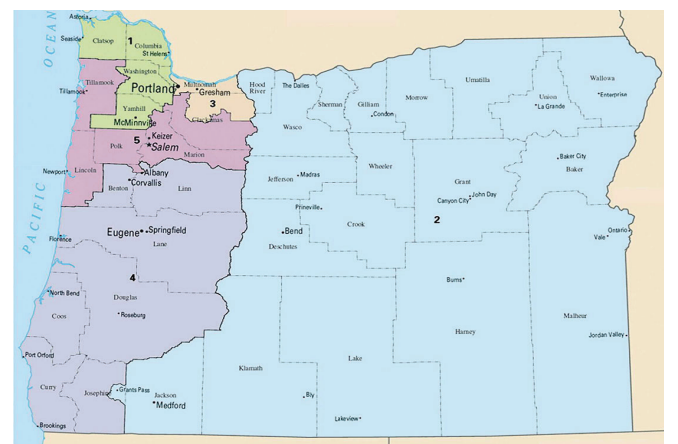
But in August 2020 the agency said the commission would decide on changes

to buck deer archery seasons, but it would delay any decision on elk seasons.

In September 2020 the commission approved the proposal to change buck deer archery hunting from a general season to a controlled season starting in 2021.

Oregon has had general archery hunts in Eastern Oregon, for buck deer and for elk, since 1979. Since 1983 the archery season for both species has lasted for one month, starting in late August.

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Contributed image/U.S. Department of the Interior

Oregon has five congressional districts, whose current borders are shown below. Voters in each of these districts send one representative to Congress for a two-year term. In Oregon, congressional and state legislative district lines are primarily determined by the Legislature.

2020 political redistricting: Fuzzy math and absent maps

By Gary A. Warner
Oregon Capital Bureau

The fuzzy future of Oregon politics east of the Cascades went public last week: No diagrams, charts, data — really nothing tangible at all to show how new legislative and congressional districts will be drawn.

"We don't have any maps," said Rep. Andrea Salinas, D-Lake Oswego, chair of the House Redistricting Committee. "We don't have any numbers from the census."

Salinas and her Senate counterpart, Sen. Kathleen Taylor, D-Milwaukie, said they were making a good faith effort to hold the legally required 10 public hearings on new political maps.

Maps that don't exist — at least, not yet.

The hearings are collateral damage from the constitutional car crash headed to the Oregon Supreme Court.

The once-a-decade process of rebalancing populations in legislative and congressional districts is a smolderingly hot political wreck. Any fix isn't expected earlier than autumn.

Like so many things over the past year, COVID-19 is the main problem.

In normal times, the U.S. Census counts people every decade, in years that end in zero.

The Legislature gets detailed Oregon data by April 1 of the following year. Lawmakers have until the end of their session on July 1 to get maps of 30 Senate, 60 House and either five or six congressional districts to the governor.

If they can't agree on a redistricting plan, the secretary of state takes over the mapmaking with an Aug. 15 deadline.

But these are not normal times.

COVID-19 crippled the census count. The Legislature received no data. No maps are

being drawn for the governor. There's no dispute for the secretary of state to resolve.

The census officials in Washington, D.C., have been saying sorry for months. But given all the upheaval in their work, they now say data to draw districts won't get to Oregon until Sept. 30. That is six months late and well beyond constitutional and statutory deadlines.

To employ an over-used term during the current pandemic, the situation is "unprecedented." Translation: Nobody knows what to do because its never been done before.

Adding to the drama: The official population numbers are expected to earn Oregon a sixth congressional seat, its first in 40 years. The new district will have to be shoehorned into the existing congressional map.

The Legislature has a "back to the future" solution. It's asking the Oregon Supreme Court to set the deadlines aside, reset the clock and give lawmakers another shot at redistricting when the data arrives in the fall. A special session of the Legislature would meet to approve the work.

Secretary of State Shemia Fagan supports the idea.

The Legislature wants up to 90 days after the data arrives to create the maps.

Fagan does not support that timeline.

Pushing redistricting into December would be cutting things close, Fagan has said. Any hitch and there could be no maps when candidates are supposed to start filing for the offices in January. As the state's official election referee, she might have to step in.

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, and Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, filed a petition with the Oregon Supreme Court this

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State to settle Grant County-based lawsuit halting relief funds for Black Oregonians

John Day logging company set to receive \$45,000, establish class action for other non-Black business owners who were denied funding

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

The state has agreed to settle a Grant County-based lawsuit halting coronavirus relief money for Black Oregonians.

Should the court approve, the fund could resume paying out aid to Black-owned businesses and their families, and as part of the settlement, the state would pay an undetermined sum to non-Black applicants who had applied for help from the fund last year, according to a proposed settlement agreement filed March 12 in U.S. District Court in Pendleton.

Great Northern Resources, a John Day logging company that lists Tad Houpt and Grant County Commissioner Sam Palmer



EOMG file photo
Tad Houpt, part owner of Great Northern Resources, addresses a crowd in John Day in 2016.

as agents, filed a lawsuit alleging race-based discrimination after being denied funding from the coronavirus relief fund

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