



UPDATES

Burn bans in effect due to drought

HERMISTON HERALD

Eastern Oregon counties are enacting burn bans in response to drought conditions.

Umatilla County announced its annual nonagricultural burn ban went into effect at noon Tuesday, June 8, and an open burn ban to include agriculture goes into effect Wednesday, June 16.

According to a press release, the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners adopted the bans in a June 8 meeting “in response to serious drought related conditions in Umatilla County.”

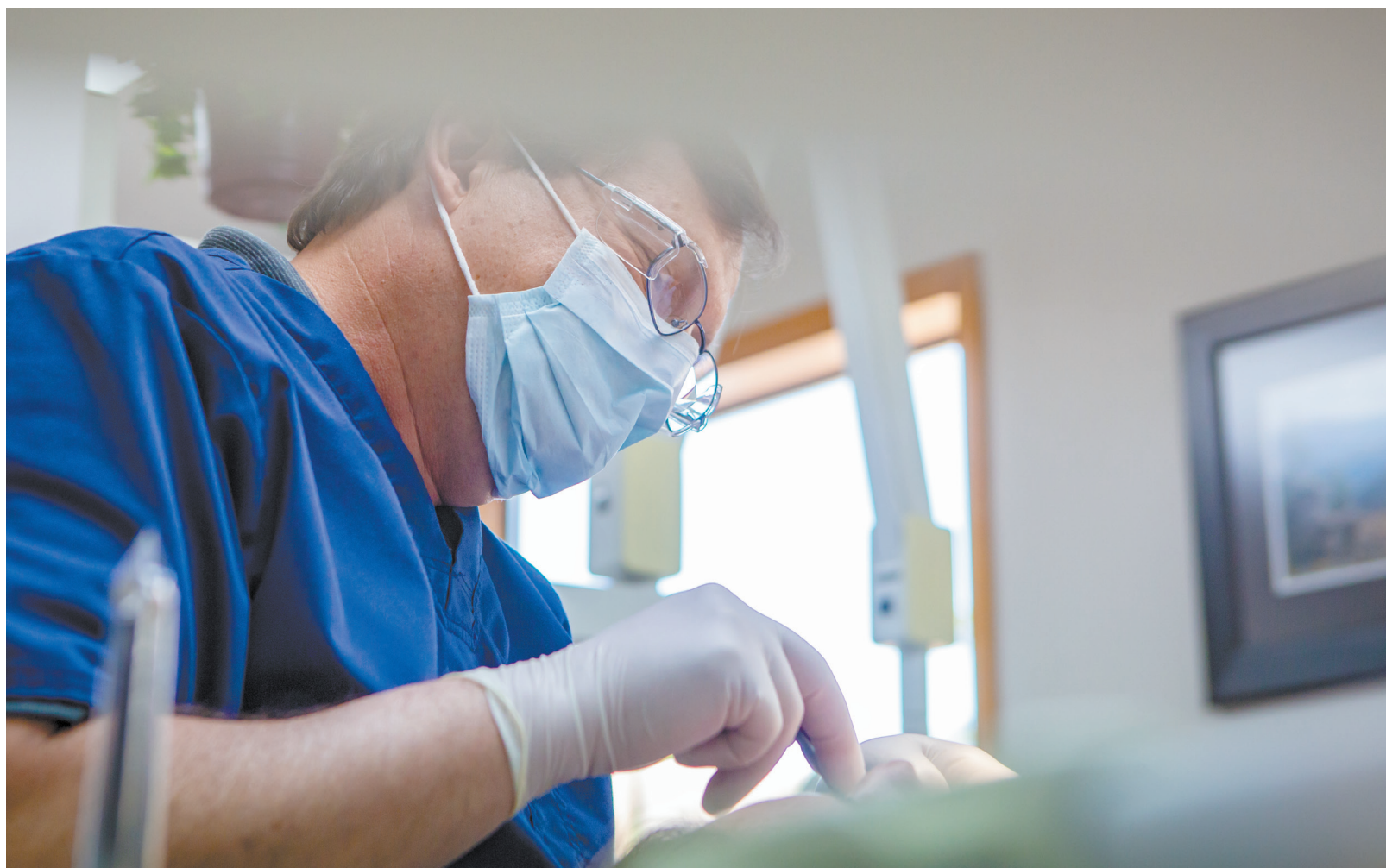
The bans include all unincorporated areas of the county but excludes lands belonging to the state of Oregon, the federal government, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and areas that are in rural fire districts, the press release said. Some of those agencies have their own bans in effect.

The burn ban prohibits burn barrels, yard and garden debris piles and small-scale residential burning, and agricultural burning.

Residents wanting to learn more about the burn ban or to report illegal burning can call the Umatilla County Planning Department at 541-278-6252 or Umatilla County Dispatch 541-966-3651 after 5 p.m. and on weekends.

Morrow County has implemented a burn ban that took effect on June 1 in the south part of the county, June 15 within Boardman Fire District and will start July 1 in Irrigon Fire District.

Anyone with questions about whether they can burn in their area should contact Morrow County Sheriff's Office at 541-676-5317.



Dr. Greg Jones, dentist for Fourth Street Dental, inspects a patient's teeth during an exam Thursday, June 10, 2021, at the office's Hermiston location.

Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Putting it off

Patients delay getting preventive care during the pandemic

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

As newly vaccinated patients are resuming their normal preventative health care, some are finding those appointments they skipped during the pandemic have consequences.

Dr. Greg Jones, dentist for Fourth Street Dental in Hermiston, said he is seeing some patients for the first time in a long time.

“You could tell people had put stuff off,” he said. “Cavities were a little bigger, cleanings had been skipped, some broken teeth could have been fixed sooner.”

He also saw signs that people had been under additional stress, including an increase in cracked teeth, jaw pain and other side effects of people grinding or clenching their teeth.

Jones said dentists in big cities where people are more cautious about COVID-19 still are seeing lower patient volumes, but in rural areas, appointments mostly have rebounded after dropping off in 2020. He said it wasn't uncommon last year for people to cancel an appointment at the last minute because they had been asked



Dr. Greg Jones, dentist for Fourth Street Dental in Hermiston, speaks with a patient prior to an exam Thursday, June 10, 2021. Jones said he has seen appointments rebound after dropping off in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

18% said they were closed completely on March 23, 2020. Those numbers slowly shrunk over the year, and by December, 39% described their practice as operating normally and 60% said they were open but seeing fewer patients than usual.

Jones said dentists already practiced many of the guidelines for preventing COVID-19 transmission even before the pandemic, including instrument sterilization and wearing gloves and masks while working on patients. But they have also added new precautions, including more frequent sanitization of the waiting room area and temperature checks when patients arrive.

Cancer screenings

One of the times delaying preventative care can have the most serious consequences is when cancer is involved.

Dr. Nattamol Hosiriluck, a hematologist with Tri-Cities Cancer Center, which has offices in Hermiston, said she has seen a few cases of people whose cancer is more advanced after delaying a

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by the health department to quarantine, while other people decided they weren't comfortable with the risk of going in to the office.

“It was a little like a snow day, where some people don't leave their homes and other people drive around like it's no big deal,” he said.

In Oregon, health care provid-

ers were directed to only provide emergency services during the spring of 2020, to help preserve personal protective equipment that was in extremely short supply.

In a weekly survey of 13,000 dentists nationwide by the American Dental Association, 76% of dentists said their office was only open for emergency patients and



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Lifeways, with its office at 331 S.E. Second St., Pendleton, has been Umatilla County's mental health services provider for 16 years. But the county earlier this month decided to not continue working with Lifeways and instead selected Community Counseling Solutions to provide mental health and addiction treatment. Lifeways is protesting that decision while claiming it can pivot to find new ways to serve local clients.

Lifeways criticizes county's decision

Officials with the mental health care provider decry Umatilla County's decision to choose CCS as 'arbitrary and capricious'

By BRYCE DOLE
STAFF WRITER

Lifeways is not going down without a fight.

Officials with the community mental health services provider are criticizing Umatilla County's decision to go with Community Counseling Solutions as its central provider for mental health and addiction services and are urging the county to change its mind.

Lifeways, which has served

the county for more than 16 years, claims CCS “is underqualified and underprepared to take on the significantly more complex, higher volume work in Umatilla County,” Chief Executive Officer Tim Hoekstra said in a press release. The company argues Community Counseling won't be able to get up and running in time to provide adequate care for the county's more than 4,000 patients.

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