

RECORD SET

GP's Chris Lessenich breaks 16-year-old record in butterfly

SPORTS, 1B



VA CENTER APPROVAL

Veterans support Roseburg VA Medical Center, protest negative media coverage

LOCAL, 5A



\$1.00
GRANTS PASS, ORE.

Daily Courier

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY 24, 2018

Oregon voters back health care taxes

Measure 101's assessments on health insurers and hospitals will help fund state Medicaid shortfall

From staff and wire reports

Oregonians on Tuesday voted to shore up expanded funding for Medicaid that now covers hundreds of thousands of low-income residents, including more than a third of Josephine County's population.

Measure 101 was passing handily as of 8 a.m. today, 61.7 percent in favor vs. 38.3 percent

against. The measure affirms the Legislature's plan to tax hospitals, health insurers and managed care companies to pay for expanded coverage under President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act.

Oregon now has one of the lowest rates of uninsured residents in the nation at 5 percent. About 1 million Oregonians — 25 percent — now receive health care coverage from Medicaid.

Voters in Josephine County opposed Measure 101 by a margin of 52 percent to 48 percent.

The measure's proponents said roughly 1 in 8 local residents were in jeopardy of losing their health care coverage if Measure 101 failed. No other county in Oregon has a higher percentage of its population enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan, the state's version of Medicaid.

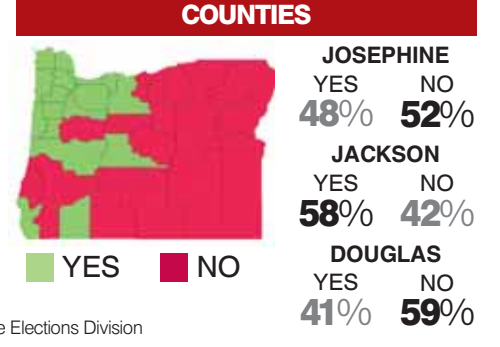
The mood this morning was one

of relief at PrimaryHealth, a coordinated care organization in Grants Pass that provides health plans for nearly 10,000 Medicaid patients in the county and nearby areas.

"We're thrilled with the outcome," said Jennifer Johnstun, health strategy officer for the organization. "We're very happy with the support organizations have shown for access for health care."

Turn to MEASURE, Page 9A

ELECTION RESULTS: MEASURE 101



Source: Oregon Secretary of State Elections Division

ORDER RESTORED

One year later, a project to fix and rehabilitate section of Sand Creek along GPID canal devastated by flooding is nearly complete

By Jeff Duewel
of the Daily Courier

JEROMIE PRAIRIE — Last winter an 800-foot section of Sand Creek west of Grants Pass turned into a gash in the earth when a 70-year-old concrete irrigation structure collapsed in a large rainstorm.

That triggered massive erosion — trees toppled, chunks of property spilled into the canyon, and an elderly woman was temporarily cut off from her property on Sand Creek Road.

A year and \$2.2 million later, order mostly has been restored.

Now the Grants Pass Irrigation District's Highline Canal runs through a pipe for nearly 900 feet, allowing Sand Creek to run directly above it through a bed of boulders.

The canal and the creek shared the same path for over 70 years until the concrete spill structure crumbled, creating a new gradient the stream cut through like a knife through butter.

And now, in theory, steelhead can move upstream through the revamped section. Fish biologists have documented them in the lower reaches of Sand Creek in recent years.

"It certainly provides a lot better passage than that old Highline structure that blocked fish," said David Haight, a fisheries biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife who consulted on the project. "Overall, I think it looks good. It definitely opened up some new habitat."

The price tag isn't so pretty, but GPID did not increase the rates this year, despite an estimated out-of-pocket cost to the district of over \$200,000, according to Debbie Tarr, assistant district manager.

"We're not punishing the patrons," said GPID Manager Don Miller. "They just got a raise in their bills (last year). We're trying to make it as feasible as possible for people in the district."

Annual bills recently mailed are \$205 per year for an acre or less of land. Rates have steadily risen over the years, including an 8 percent increase in 2017. In 1997 the base rate was \$82.

The district once got its water from the Rogue River diverted at Savage Rapids Dam but now pumps from the site of the former dam, which was taken out in 2009 to improve fish passage. Electricity to power the pumps costs well over \$300,000 a year.

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Photos by JEFF DUEWEL/Daily Courier

A section of Sand Creek and the South Highline Canal of the Grants Pass Irrigation District was devastated by flooding in the winter of 2016-2017, as seen in the above photo from March 2017. An 875-foot section of pipe is now underneath Sand Creek so that the canal and creek are separate. The \$2.2 million project to fix and rehabilitate the area, seen below this week, is nearly complete.



RCC's plan to move nursing program draws mixed reviews

Vote on possible move to White City will be made at end of next month

By Madeline Shannon
of the Daily Courier

WHITE CITY — The Rogue Community College board on Tuesday heard mixed feelings from staff about moving the school's nursing program from Grants Pass to the Table Rock Campus.

The nursing program is considered by many to be the flagship of the school's Redwood Campus in Grants Pass. The Table Rock Campus in White City is closer to RCC's shifting population base in Jackson County.

"In nursing, our motto is you have to be flexible to be a nurse, and we have made do and we were happy with our situation at the Redwood Campus," said nursing program chair Linda Wagner. "Our basic needs are being met."

However, Wagner can also see the cons.

"A negative side would be a move from the campus where it has always been housed," Wagner said, adding, "There will be some disruption no matter what happens."

Turn to RCC, Page 9A

Tsunami alert for Oregon Coast was wake-up call

By Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM — When a tsunami watch went out overnight Tuesday via text messages, phone calls and on the radio to residents of the Oregon Coast, most were asleep and oblivious of the potential danger.

That worries emergency managers, who said the 7.9 magnitude earthquake off the coast of Alaska that triggered the alert is a wake-up call. Any tsunami generated by the temblor that struck at 12:32 a.m. would have hit the Oregon Coast hours later, authorities said. No tidal wave materialized because the quake moved more horizontally instead of up and down, pushing up less water.

Turn to ALERT, Page 6A

City Council to discuss River Road Reserve — publicly

Lovelace: Any vote to sell the land will take place in open session; next workshop scheduled for March 12

By Shaun Hall
of the Daily Courier

The next time the Grants Pass City Council discusses the future of the River Road Reserve, it's expected to be in open session.

Council President Valerie Lovelace said Tuesday there's no plans until a March 12 council workshop to further discuss the property, which has been the subject of several closed-door council sessions.

The city has been approached by an unnamed potential buyer for some of the 248-acre reserve,

located on farmland about three miles west of downtown. The city bought the land in 2006 for \$2.75 million and has been sitting on it ever since.

"We have no plans (to discuss the subject) at this time," Lovelace said. "The next plan is the March 12 open session. Our legal counsel will give a presentation."

Lovelace said any vote to sell the land would take place in open session.

"It was never our intention to make any decision behind the scenes," she said.

Turn to RESERVE, Page 9A



An irrigation pipe supported by wheels that allow the pipe to be rolled into place rests along the southern border of the 248-acre River Road Reserve, land owned by the City of Grants Pass. The view is east. At left is the reserve, now leased for farming, with Lower River Road and the Rogue River to the right.

SHAUN HALL/Daily Courier



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