

Circle Speaker

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WHITE CLAY & NAKODA ENVIRONMENTAL NEWSLETTER

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FILE - In this June 22, 2018, file photo, construction crews are boring beneath U.S. 221 in Roanoke County, Va., to make a tunnel through which the Mountain Valley Pipeline will pass under the highway. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has suspended a nationwide program used to approve oil and gas pipelines, power lines and other utility work, spurred by a court ruling that industry representatives warn could slow or halt numerous projects over environmental concerns. (Heather Rousseau/The Roanoke Times via AP, File)

US delays oil pipeline approvals after environmental ruling

By Matthew Brown | April 23, 2020

<https://apnews.com/3fb59f0666144ddf4dce0d6d0514d407>

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has suspended a nationwide program used to approve oil and gas pipelines, power lines and other utility work, spurred by a court ruling that industry representatives warn could slow or halt numerous infrastructure projects over environmental concerns.

The directive from Army Corps headquarters, detailed in emails obtained by The Associated Press, comes after a federal court last week threw out a blanket permit that companies and public utilities

have used for decades to build projects across streams and wetlands.

The Trump administration is expected to challenge the ruling in coming days. For now, officials have put on hold about 360 pending notifications to entities approving their use of the permit, Army Corps spokesman Doug Garman said Thursday.

The agency did not provide further details on types of projects or their locations.

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Pipeline and electric utility industry representatives said the effects could be widespread if the suspension lasts, affecting both construction and maintenance on potentially thousands of projects. That includes major pipelines like TC Energy's Keystone XL crude oil line from Canada to the U.S. Midwest, the Mountain Valley natural gas pipeline in Virginia and power lines from wind turbines and generating stations in many parts of the U.S.

"The economic consequences to individual projects are hard to overstate," said Ben Cowan, a Houston-based attorney with Locke Lord LLP who represents pipeline and wind energy companies. "It could be fatal to a number of projects under construction if they are forced to stop work for an extended period in order to obtain individual permits."

The Army Corps has broad jurisdiction over U.S. waterways. It uses the blanket permit to approve qualifying pipelines and other utility projects after only minimal environmental review. That's a longstanding sore point for environmentalists who say it amounts to a loophole in water protection laws and ignores the cumulative harm caused by thousands of stream and wetlands crossings.

Industry supporters describe the program as crucial for timely decisions on projects that can stretch across multiple states and cross hundreds of water bodies. Analyzing each of those crossings would be costly and is unnecessary because most involve little disturbance of land or water, they said.

Since the blanket permit in question, known as Nationwide Permit 12, was last renewed in March 2017, it has been used more than 37,000 times, Army Corps spokesman Garman said. To qualify, projects must not cause the loss of more than a half-acre of water or wetlands.

Last week's court ruling in Montana was in a lawsuit before U.S. District Judge Brian Morris involving the disputed Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada. Work began earlier this month on the 1,200-mile (1,930-kilometer) line stretching from Alberta to Nebraska that has been championed by President Donald Trump.

Morris said using the blanket permit for water crossings was illegal because the Army Corps did not adequately consider potential harm to imperiled wildlife species when it re-authorized the permit in 2017. The judge pointed to concerns among scientists that construction could stir up sediment and bury the food source of an endangered, dinosaur-like fish — the pallid sturgeon.

The judge did not limit his findings to Keystone, so the ruling is being interpreted for now to apply to any project using Nationwide Permit 12. The Montana case was cited last week in a lawsuit over a 430-mile (692-kilometer) natural gas pipeline in central Texas. Plaintiffs including the city of Austin said last week's ruling invalidated the Army Corps' work on the Permian Highway Pipeline.

Because there are no streams or other water bodies near the northern Montana border crossing where Keystone XL is currently under construction, that work was not immediately halted. Yet it's an obstacle to future work given the many water crossings along the line's path.

Army Corps regulatory program Chief Jennifer Moyer said in an April 17 email obtained by AP that "out of an abundance of caution" she was ordering agency personnel across the nation to stop verifying companies as compliant with the blanket permit.

Questions about the directive were referred to U.S. Department of Justice spokesman Wyn Hornbuckle, who declined comment because the case is still in litigation.

An attorney for one of the environmental groups that brought the Keystone lawsuit said critics of the permit program pushed for changes when it was last renewed but were rebuffed. To prevent the problem it now faces, the Army Corps should have consulted more closely with wildlife agencies to craft a program that would better avoid impacts, said Jared Margolis with the Center for Biological Diversity.

"They knew what they had to do and they were avoiding it and they got caught," Margolis said.

Labor and industry groups led by the American Petroleum Institute and Interstate Natural Gas Association

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of America said in a statement that the nationwide permit was “critical to the responsible and efficient development and maintenance of energy and other vital infrastructure.” The groups said the permit had been successfully applied to pipelines, broadband cable, water mains and other utilities.

For electricity providers, the court ruling could jeopardize efforts to maintain the energy grid by calling into question the status of projects that use the permit, said Emily Sanford Fisher, general counsel for

the Edison Electric Institute, which represents investor-owned electric companies in the U.S..

Cowan, the industry attorney, said he anticipates government attorneys will move quickly to file an appeal or a request with Morris to clarify his ruling.

“The fact that this case involves the Keystone pipeline will almost certainly elevate its profile within the administration,” he said.

The best material for homemade face masks may be a combination of two fabrics

By the American Chemical Society

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/04/200424081648.htm>

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people wear masks in public. Because N95 and surgical masks are scarce and should be reserved for health care workers, many people are making their own coverings. Now, researchers report in ACS Nano that a combination of cotton with natural silk or chiffon can effectively filter out aerosol particles – if the fit is good.

SARS-CoV-2, the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19, is thought to spread mainly through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, speaks or breathes. These droplets form in a wide range of sizes, but the tiniest ones, called aerosols, can easily slip through the openings between certain cloth fibers, leading some people to question whether cloth masks can actually help prevent disease. Therefore, Supratik Guha at the University of Chicago and colleagues wanted to study the ability of common fabrics, alone or in combination, to filter out aerosols similar in size to respiratory droplets.

The researchers used an aerosol mixing chamber to produce particles ranging from 10 nm to 6 μm in diameter. A fan blew the aerosol across various cloth

samples at an airflow rate corresponding to a person's respiration at rest, and the team measured the number and size of particles in air before and after passing through the fabric. One layer of a tightly woven cotton sheet combined with

two layers of polyester-spandex chiffon – a sheer fabric often used in evening gowns – filtered out the most aerosol particles (80-99%, depending on particle size), with performance close to that of an N95 mask material. Substituting the chiffon with natural silk or flannel, or simply using a cotton quilt with cotton-polyester batting, produced similar results. The researchers point out that tightly woven fabrics, such as cotton, can act as a

mechanical barrier to particles, whereas fabrics that hold a static charge, like certain types of chiffon and natural silk, serve as an electrostatic barrier. However, a 1% gap reduced the filtering efficiency of all masks by half or more, emphasizing the importance of a properly fitted mask.

The authors acknowledge use of the U.S. Department of Energy's Center for Nanoscale Materials user facility at Argonne National Laboratory and funding from the U.S. Department of Defense's Vannevar Bush Fellowship.



A new study reports that the best homemade face masks can be made with a combination of cotton with natural silk or chiffon.

Bullock details school closures; stops short of additional restrictions for now

BY MARTIN KIDSTON | MARCH 16, 2020

<https://missoulacurrent.com/government/2020/03/bullock-school-restrictions/>

He also expressed concern over the supply of materials needed to test potential patients – tests needed to identify hot spots and rates of infection. The state can currently test 750 individuals, though it expects another 1,000 tests from the CDC on Wednesday, the governor said.

“I do have concerns about ensuring we’ll have enough in the near future,” Bullock said. “It’s not just the tests, it’s the adjacent supply. We’ll continue to push the federal government to supply what’s needed.”

Bullock was one of 47 governors from across the country on Monday morning to join President Donald Trump in a conference call.

Trump told the group of governors that they shouldn’t wait for the federal government to meet the current and future demand for respirators to treat those diagnosed with the virus. Trump suggested states get the equipment on their own.

“Right now we’re doing an overall assessment of what the supplies are across the state,” Bullock said. “It’s something I will count on the federal government being a partner in. We need that partnership so we have the supply necessary.”

While the number of presumably positive cases holds in Montana at six, Bullock on Sunday issued two executive orders restricting visitation to nursing homes and to close all K-12 public schools for a period of two weeks.

During Monday’s press briefing, Bullock stopped short of saying he would implement other statewide restrictions, such as closing bars and restaurants. Health officials in Missoula and Butte on Monday implemented the measure on their own.

Bullock strongly urged organizers to forgo public gatherings that involve more than 50 people. Many bars and restaurants have already shifted to take-out options only, and others are expected to follow, Bullock said.



Gov. Steve Bullock detailed his decision Monday to close all public schools for two weeks to slow the spread of COVID-19, and said he couldn’t guarantee they would reopen once the period ends.

“You’ll see some shutdowns tomorrow to take out only,” he said. “While have not put that mandate out, I know a lot of health departments in our communities are. We have to practice social distancing to keep people safe and to do everything we can to mitigate the further spread of COVID-19.”

As part of those measures, announced on Sunday, public schools across the state will remain closed through March 27. Bullock said closing the schools was a difficult decision and would impact both students and families.

Closing the schools now will give them time to arrange for essential activities, such as providing meals for students, and to prepare for a potential long-term closure.

“These decisions were not made lightly, and I know it will disrupt Montanans and their families and school districts over the coming weeks,” Bullock said “But by taking the difficult steps now in the short run, we can stop the disease more quickly, reduce the strain on our front-line healthcare providers, and prevent even more long-term challenges.”

Bullock said he couldn’t assure that schools would reopen by the end of the month. That will depend on whether early measures to slow the spread of the virus show results.

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Bullock details school closures; stops short of additional restrictions for now

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“We haven’t yet decided whether schools will need to make up instructional time,” he said. “That decision will depend in part on how effective our early measures are at reducing the impact of new COVID-19 infection in Montana.”

The University of Montana campus was eerily quiet on Sunday as students head to spring break and the school prepares to move to online-only classes. (William Munoz/Missoula Current)



Gov. Bullock announces first phase of reopening Montana

By AMY BETH HANSON | April 22, 2020

<https://apnews.com/7d58b820e494c9adfa6da11b36b831aa>

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Montana’s churches can hold services Sunday and some businesses will be able to reopen Monday as long as they practice social distancing, Gov. Steve Bullock said Wednesday in easing coronavirus restrictions while asking residents to continue many of the precautions they have been taking.

Because Montana took the coronavirus pandemic seriously, acted quickly and residents made sacrifices to follow directives to stay at home and use social distancing, the state had the lowest numbers of hospitalizations per capita, Bullock said. The health department reports 59 people were hospitalized and 14 people have died from COVID-19. Two deaths were reported Wednesday.

“There are very few states in the country that can say they have seen the number of positive cases decline over these past weeks,” said Bullock, who issued an emergency declaration on March 12, closed schools beginning March 16, closed bars and restaurants to on-premises service on March 20, and issued a stay-at-home directive on March 26.

Reilly Neill, a former Democratic state representative and publisher from Livingston, said she thinks Bullock is acting too quickly without enough consideration for the amount asymptomatic spread of the virus or plans for methodical statewide testing and tracing.

“Why did he choose the dates that he has chosen?”

Neill asked. “None of that is really explained by science or medical data.”

Modeling by the University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation found Montana is one of a few states that could lift restrictions as early as the week of May 4.

A new survey finds Americans remain overwhelmingly in favor of stay-at-home orders and other efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus. A majority say it won’t be safe to lift such restrictions anytime soon.

The survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research comes as protests have broken out and some governors have announced plans to ease the public health efforts that have up-ended daily life. Only 12% of Americans say measures to fight the outbreak where they live go too far. About twice as many believe the limits don’t go far enough. The majority of Americans — 61% — feel the steps taken to prevent infections in their area are about right.

“Facts, not politics, guide my directives,” Bullock said.

“While there is reason for optimism, this is not a time for celebration,” Bullock said, adding that it’s likely coronavirus will take more people’s lives in Montana. The decision to begin reopening the state’s economy

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Gov. Bullock announces first phase of reopening Montana

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was made based on case numbers, hospital capacity and the economic effects of the virus, he said.

“I know Montanans are hurting. I do know that we need to figure out ways to get to what a new normal might look like, and these are those measured steps to do so,” he said.

Hair and nail salons, body art and massage businesses are among those that can open Monday, with recommendations for fewer customers, screening them for symptoms, that employees and customers use non-medical face masks and that “stations” be 6 feet (2 meters) apart.

Restaurants, bars and casinos can reopen on May 4 with reduced capacity and an 11:30 p.m. closure time.

Schools have the option to return to in-classroom instruction on May 7, but districts can choose to continue distance learning, as well, Bullock said.

“COVID-19 will be with us, not just for the next several months, but we may be well facing these same issues next fall when school starts,” Bullock said.

Noting, however, that only a dozen of the state’s 439 confirmed cases were among people age 19 and under, he said: “We need to figure out how to best serve our children at a time when the virus is still present in our communities.”

Whitney Williams, who is seeking the Democratic nomination for governor, opposes the possible reopening of schools.

“Reopening our schools should be a statewide decision — backed by science, not expediency. Shifting this decision to local school boards creates a patchwork approach across the state that’s not good for parents, for teachers or for anyone in our state,” Williams said in a statement. “I believe it’s in the best interests of our children and the safety of our communities to keep schools closed in Montana through the end of this academic year and plan for a fall opening.”

The Montana High School Association announced the cancellation of spring extracurricular activities.

During the first reopening phase, which has no set timeline:

- ⇒ People over age 65 and those with underlying health conditions are asked to continue to stay at home.
- ⇒ Senior and assisted living facilities must prohibit visitors.
- ⇒ People are asked to avoid gathering in groups of more than 10 if the situation does not allow for social distancing.
- ⇒ Gyms, pools, movie theaters and bowling alleys will remain closed.
- ⇒ Residents are asked to minimize non-essential travel and to self-quarantine for 14 days after returning to the state.

“I recognize our tourism industry is hurting,” Bullock said. “But as Montanans worked so hard to stop the spread of this virus, the first phase of reopening isn’t yet the time to allow others to come into our state.”

The Montana Hospital Association is lifting its March 26 recommendation that hospitals cancel elective procedures as long as they have adequate protective equipment for staff and patients and have the flexibility to react if there is an increase in cases.

Employers are asked to encourage telework, offer staggered scheduling to improve social distancing, to monitor workers for symptoms and to close common areas, such as break rooms.

Child care facilities can remain open while following state and local guidelines for operational levels and occupancy.

Residents are encouraged to continue good hygiene and to disinfect frequently used items and surfaces. The governor strongly urged people to consider using non-medical face coverings while in public, especially in retail stores or on public transportation. People who are sick should stay home and follow the advice of their medical providers.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough and trouble breathing. Most develop only mild symptoms. But some people, usually those with other medical complications, develop more severe symptoms, including pneumonia, which can be fatal.



Recycle!

By Morris Belgard, Brownfields Environmental Technician

During the CONVID-19 pandemic I been working at home, my computer is located next to the east window of my home with a beautiful view of the Fur Caps, aka, Little Rocky Mountains and just northeast of my home is four 3-yard canisters that are also in my view.

A majority of the time they are full to capacity within two to three days. Furthermore, about one-third of the disposables thrown are larger items; small bikes, large cardboard boxes, Flatscreen TVs, vacuum-cleaners, dining room chairs. Also, medical waste and toiletry waste are thrown in this manner. After the canisters are full, residents continue to toss their waste on top of the canisters which makes a great feast for domestic animals and wildlife. I sit and wonder if these pets play with their owners after rummaging through the garbage and what types of bacteria/disease they might be transmitting.

A community with a population of 850 in greater Hays generates its share of disposals to the landfills. I talked to a few people and asked about their feeling of solid waste problems we have. One person said, “We need to go to city style trash collection, take your trash to the street and they pick it up. (Rollout) We need to start sorting out plastic and aluminum cans.” As this individual said, “It starts at home.”

Another resident said, “They just don’t care. I mean look at the canisters, you’d think if they seen they were full, they would go to the dumps, aka transfer sites. Someone put a chair in a canister, now there’s no room for kitchen trash.”

And a comment I read from a frustrated resident

about burning the 40-yard and 3-yard canisters if they’re full of trash, either of which cost to replace. And by burning the litter, plastics, and chemicals are released into the atmosphere, not good to breath!! Not to mention destroying the canisters that are burned.

Reading about other tribal governments finding solutions to solid waste in their communities, the Santo Domingo Tribe of New Mexico demonstrated a curbside pickup and it showed a decrease in litter, trash burning and illegal dumping. Large appliances, tires, some electrics could be dropped off at a transfer site for a fee. The tribe also bought two waste oil heaters that will use motor oil collected from residents to generate heat for the workshop during the winter months.

Since 2015, Snoqualmie Indian Tribe and the City of North Bend in Washington have partnered to hold an annual recycling event where county residents can properly dispose of tires, appliances, electronics, and other household items for free.

At the April 2019 recycling event, over 36 tons of materials from 530 vehicles were collected to be recycled. This included 188 tires and over 6,000 pounds of electronics. To ensure proper handling of all of the collected items, the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe and the City of North Bend carefully select vendors that specialize in disposing of each material.

Persistent education, awareness and enforcement are the key to a clean community. Remember there’s no tipi creeping during the pandemic. Be safe and practice social distancing.



Long strands of the sweet-smelling grass are usually braided, dried, and burned. Braids like these are used as gifts.

Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department Wins Grant Award

By Donna Miller | April 1, 2020

<https://www.blainecountyjournal.com/story/2020/04/01/news/fort-belknap-environmental-protection-department-wins-grant-award/5338.html>

Last month, Colette Werk, who works in the Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department, received notification from the Montana Native Plant Society (MNPS) that the Fort Belknap Indian Community (FBIC) will be the benefactors of a \$1500 grant as a result of the Environmental Protection Department's successful grant proposal: Revitalizing Sweetgrass for the Fort Belknap Indian Community.

The FBIC proposal was selected for funding by the MNPS Board of Directors after receiving recommendations from the Small Grants Committee. The Chair of that committee, Betty Kuropat reported that MNPS received and reviewed sixteen proposals. Among those were proposals that presented unique ideas for native plant scientific research, education, gardens, and habitat restoration.

"As always, selecting which proposals to fund was a tough decision for our review committee of six people," Kuropat explained. "Based on the committee's recommendations, our Board of Directors approved funding for only four grants. One, as you know, is Revitalizing Sweetgrass for the Fort Belknap Indian Community. We have criteria against which each proposal is rated on a point system. Then, the committee members' individual ratings are combined and the projects ranked."

According to Kuropat, several aspects of the FBIC Revitalizing Sweetgrass project stood out for the MNPS. "First, the project features both a native plant and a native people's restoration plan. We like the aspect of using plants and the traditions with plants to restore culture and community and we like that it will involve the community, especially children. As one committee member said, 'This is not just another native garden.' To my knowledge, this is the first grant proposal we have received from a Montana Indian tribe. That alone set it apart from most of the garden and restoration projects we've considered. It seems well planned, has a monitoring and follow-up plan, and demonstrates partnerships and collaboration. These are all important criteria. As with every garden, restoration, and native planting we have funded, we have concerns about weed management, long-term maintenance, and commitment. Once planted, native plantings need care and commitment, just like any other landscape," Kuropat concluded.

In a letter dated March 12, Werk received congratulations from Kuropat on the FBIC's successful proposal. "We look forward to your report after the first year and hope your project is successful enough for you to continue into the future. We'll be interested in the viability and sustainability of the plantings as well as the methods and success of the education component," Kuropat wrote.

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Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department Wins Grant Award

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Although Werk was the primary author of the grant proposal, she humbly credited others who assisted in this endeavor. She extended extra gratitude to Hillary Maxwell, MSU-Extension agent for the Fort Belknap Reservation, who read the draft proposal and provided revision feedback.

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) will purchase their sweetgrass for the revitalization project from Prairie Moon Nursery, a nursery located in Winona, Minnesota, and dedicated to providing native plants for gardening and restoration.

The EPD chose Prairie Moon because their plants are typically well-rooted and transit-ready in early May.

Although sweetgrass prefers rich, moist soils, it will grow in almost any soil that receives a minimum of a half day of sun. The EPD has selected two different planting locations. One will be the Hays community garden, which will provide a source that can be used year after year. The second spot, according to Werk, will be near the beaver dams in Mission Canyon.

Because some small movements of sweetgrass revitalization already exist on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, these two locations will join others. Werk reports that the idea is to someday have a self-sustainable source; in other words, enough sweetgrass for all of the community members who want to harvest it for themselves.

The Aaniiih and Nakoda people consider sweetgrass a sacred plant, using it in prayer, smudging, and purifying ceremonies or presenting the braids as gifts. Strands of the three-foot long, sweet-smelling grass are usually braided, dried, and burned. These braids smolder when burned, producing an incense-like smoke and a pleasant aro-

ma, which is used not only to cleanse the self and to prepare a ceremonial setting but to attract good spirits and positive energies.

Once nursery stock is purchased so that a sustainable plot of sweetgrass can get established, any remaining grant monies will be applied to other expenses. "In the grant budget, we also factored in travel to the planting sites and supplies like fencing materials," Werk said.

In fulfilling another purpose of the grant, to educate the public about the values of sweetgrass, Werk said the EPD plans to erect informational signs and announcements so the areas where the plants will be growing are protected from heavy foot traffic. Once the plants are mature enough, the EPD also plans to hold a community sweetgrass braiding session.

"We have a lot of partners-such as MSU-Extension, Fort Belknap Tribal Historical Preservation Office, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Western Agricultural Research, Indian Nations Conservation Alliance, Nakoda Aaniiih Economic Development Corporation, and Fort Belknap Fish and Wildlife Department-all of

whom will benefit from this grant. I know they all would like to see this project become successful as a way for us at Fort Belknap to be self-sufficient, self-sustainable, and proving our self-determination, while getting back to our traditional roots, literally," Werk stated.

Each year, the Montana Native Plant Society (MNPS), which is headquartered in Missoula, awards small grants to stimulate research, conservation, and educational activities that foster an appreciation for Montana's native plants and plant communities. These grants are intended to promote native plant conservation through better un-



The Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department will be purchasing their plants from Prairie Moon Nursery. Sweetgrass is an aromatic, cool-season perennial growing 10-24 inches in height and spreading about two feet per year by underground rhizomes.

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Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department Wins Grant Award

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derstanding of Montana's native flora and the factors affecting their survival. Applications for the Small Grants Program are due every year on January 31.

Although project or study proposals must pertain to native plants of Montana, preference is given to proposals that generate research data or public support that advances the conservation of native plants in the wild and that demonstrate initiative and cooperation with other organizations or agencies.

Grant monies are made available in two equal in-

stallments, with the first going out upon acceptance of the grant award. Within one year, successful applicants are also required to submit a final report in the form of an article for the MNPS newsletter Kelsey. This article serves to document the study or project accomplishments for both MNPS and its newsletter readers.

Anyone with questions about the Revitalizing Sweetgrass for the Fort Belknap Indian Community project is encouraged to call the Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department at 406-353-8416.

Ways To Reduce Our Contribution Of Solid Waste At Our Homes

By Mitchell Healy, Water Quality Coordinator

Many may not realize how much solid waste we generate and throw away from our homes, and especially during the COVID19 pandemic, it has been evident of how much solid waste was going into the transfer stations in all of our communities since we or a majority of us stayed home. None of us can live or do live a waste-free life; we contribute on a daily basis, and if we realize the solid waste issues occurring within our own communities, this should be a motivation for each individual person to make an effort to reduce our contribution, this would make a difference, I believe it would. There are many simple changes we can implement in our daily lives.

1. Purchase some recyclable cloth bags for grocery shopping. This would eliminate the need for plastic bags that otherwise just go into the trash cans, and some stores may offer a small incentive like 10 cents off per bag, but the only incentive that matters is you contributing less by not throwing away plastic bags.
2. If you're a gardener and growing vegetables and plants, try making your own compost. Here's a great link to see what material is used for composting. <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/home/gardening/advice/a23945/start-composting/>
3. If you're into recycling, you can recycle all types of types of things that you can take to a facility that

takes recyclables. Closely within our area, Havre has Pacific Recycling and there also is an organization called Recycle Hi-line that has several areas where they have recycle bins. Here is a link to their brochure, please check it out! <https://recyclehiline.org/where-to-recycle-2/>

4. Consider your choices of purchasing furniture and white goods such as fridges, freezers, washers, dryers, stoves, etc. Consider the longevity of these items. Just something to consider also, but some things are actually made better than some things, so if you're going to make an investment in a washer and dryer set, I would take some time to research reviews and see what options are available because you don't want to be throwing away your set after 2 years because they don't work. Same concept goes for anything you plan on purchasing because the idea is to have things that last a long time.
5. If you tend to buy used items such as washers and dryers, you should expect issues sooner or later, sooner than if it were brand new. So, I'd recommend going to YouTube and look up the problem you're having. I can almost guarantee there will be a video of somebody else having the same problem and showing you how to repair it. You would just need to purchase the repair parts and follow the instructions on the video and you will

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Ways To Reduce Our Contribution Of Solid Waste At Our Homes

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- have extended the life of the washer or dryer. This definitely beats going through the trouble to load it up in the truck to throw away and having to find another used one or having to buy a new one.
6. Food waste is also an issue. Our diets play a role in this, so when we go shopping, we should only buy foods that we know will be not go to waste. To add to this, we should consider how much to cook and if there will be leftovers, we can either freeze them in freezer bags and save them for a rainy day or simply eat them up the next day.
 7. We can also get into canning and long-term storage. Did you know that in some places of the United States and European Countries, there is a new wave happening that consists of people bringing in their own storage containers, be it glass jars or plastic containers, and purchasing dry foods by simply filling up their containers. I can see my cupboards and storage closet looking something like this.



8. How many of us receive mail in our boxes that is junk and we throw it away? All of us do. If it's possible, cancel subscriptions or even call the organization that is mailing you junk and tell them to stop. Maybe we can't totally eliminate our junk mail, but at least reduce it somewhat.
9. This is a very common occurrence, but using paper plates and plastic utensils contributes a lot to the waste system. It is understandable of what the purpose is of using them, which is so we don't have lots of dishes to wash and they do come in handy for picnics and parties. Occasional uses of these items are perfectly fine, but if you are using them daily and have no dishes, the waste generated from this is substantial.
10. Lastly, we can minimize our contribution by having our own water bottles and coffee thermos that we can use every day, so we don't need to be throwing away plastic water bottles and paper coffee cups all the time. Whenever you go somewhere, just fill up your water bottles or if you need to swing in the store to get coffee, just fill up your coffee thermos.

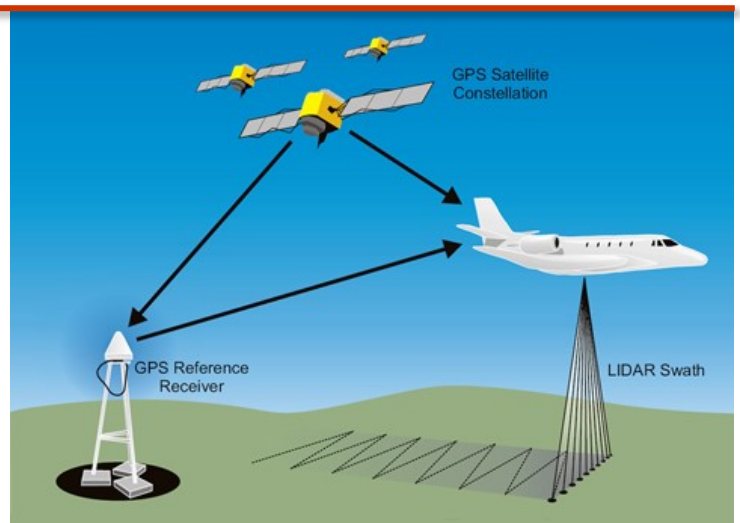
There are so many things that can make a difference in our solid waste contribution as individuals. It's just a matter of making an effort and caring about our environment that we live in now and that our children will live in, in the future. Wish everybody good health and stay safe.

LiDAR Technology

By Cody Shambo, GIS Environmental Technician

Have you ever looked at a map and seen a bunch of thin lines that get close to each other or look like a series of rings? More than likely you are looking at a topographic map. These types of maps were first created in the late 19th century. They display the shape and elevation of mountains mainly. Although topographic maps have their uses and purposes it is nothing compared to the accuracy of LiDAR mapping.

LiDAR is basically the same as a topographic map in that it is used to display the shape and elevation of objects but with the precision of modern day technology. This data can be collected in a few ways but it is mostly done by airplane. In the simplest form it is a laser that is shot to the ground. Using the measure-



ments of the distance from plane to the ground highly accurate data is collected portraying the contours of the land.

(Continued on page 12)

LiDAR Technology

(Continued from page 11)

I attended a meeting in January about Fort Belknap's acquisition of this technology. In this meeting it was discussed that Fort Belknap had received funding to have the reservation and the surrounding area scanned from an airplane. The plan was to have the scan completed in the spring/summer of 2020 but with the recent Covid-19 situation it could possibly be pushed back.

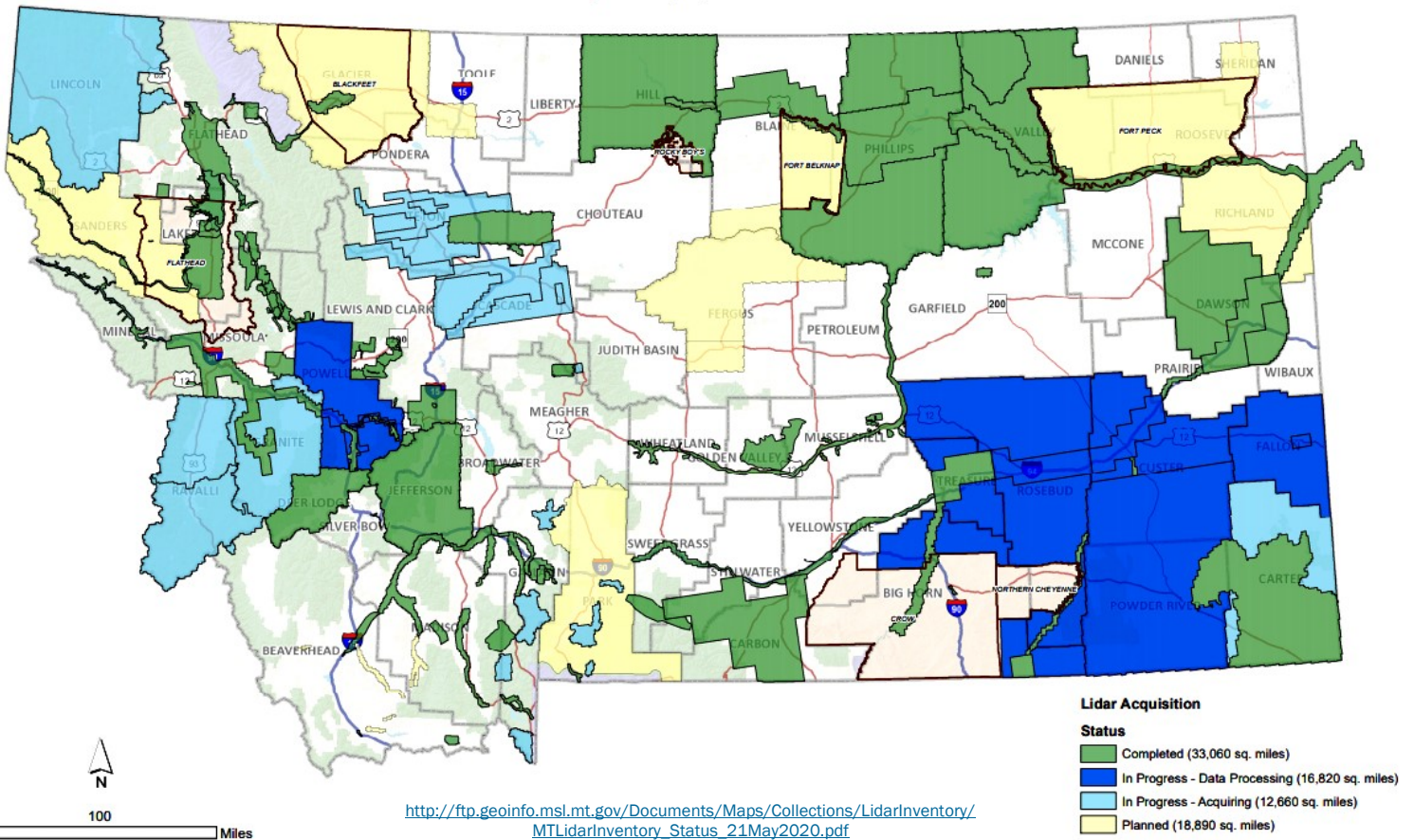
LiDAR data will provide Fort Belknap with cost-effective and highly accurate topographic mapping for the entire reservation. When paired with high resolution aerial photogrammetry, LiDAR will streamline land use planning, design, and management in a cost

-effective manner. LiDAR and photogrammetry can be used for a wide range of actions including water and sewer planning and design, flood risk mapping, forest planning, and project implementation, agricultural planning, rangeland management, archeological survey, vegetation structural analysis, wetland delineation, and high hazard dam assessment.

Once again this is a great technology for our people to obtain. So if you see a plane flying back and forth do not worry, more than likely they are scanning the contours of our lands. Check out the planned areas they will be scanning next in the map below.

Montana Lidar Inventory

Updated May 21, 2020



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Gas stoves making indoor air up to five times dirtier than outdoor air, report finds

Gas cookers making people sick and exposing tens of millions to air pollution levels that would be illegal if they were outside

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/05/gas-stoves-air-pollution-environment>

Gas stoves are making people sick, contributing pollution that makes indoor air up to two to five times dirtier than outdoor air, according to a new report.

Despite the risks, regulators have failed to set standards for indoor air quality – a problem that is now likely to be exacerbated by large numbers of people spending time inside and cooking at home during the coronavirus pandemic.

Fossil-fuel-burning stoves are likely exposing tens of millions of Americans to air pollution levels that would be illegal if they were outside, concludes the review of decades of science by the Rocky Mountain Institute and multiple environmental advocacy groups.

Lead report author Brady Seals said little attention has been paid despite longstanding knowledge of the problem. “Somehow we’ve gotten accustomed to having a combustion device, often unvented, inside of the home,” Seals said.

About a third of US households cook primarily with gas – which emits nitrogen dioxide and carbon dioxide, in addition to the particle pollution that all types of stoves produce. Older, poorly maintained stoves pollute even more including risks from carbon monoxide.

Even small increases in short-term exposure to nitrogen dioxide can increase asthma risks for children. One analysis found that children in homes with gas stoves have a 42% higher chance of having asthma symptoms. Another in Australia attributed 12.3% of all childhood asthma burden to gas stoves.

Nitrogen dioxide also makes chronic obstructive pulmonary disease worse and may be linked to heart problems, diabetes and cancer.

Carbon monoxide poisoning can cause a headache, nausea, a rapid heartbeat, cardiac arrest and death.

The best solution, according to the report, is to change to electric stoves. But individuals with gas stoves can also open windows, cook on their back burners, use an exhaust hood, run an air purifier with a HEPA filter and install a carbon monoxide detector.

Indoor air pollution hits poor Americans and people of color worse because they are often also exposed to lead, mercury, highways and industrial plants, said Dr Robert Gould, a California pathologist and board member for Physicians for Social Responsibility who peer-reviewed the report.

“We just need to make these investments,” Gould said. “This fits into an overall plan we would have to protect, particularly, our vulnerable populations.”



About a third of US households cook primarily with gas.



EPA, CDC Release Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Spaces Where Americans Live, Work, and Play

Guidance helps facilities and families implement Opening Up American Again guidelines

Contact Information: press@epa.gov

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-cdc-release-guidance-cleaning-and-disinfecting-spaces-where-americans-live-work-and>

WASHINGTON (April 29, 2020) — Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released updated guidance to help facility operators and families properly clean and disinfect spaces. Developed in concert with the White House, the guidance provides step-by-step instructions for public spaces, workplaces, businesses, schools, and homes, and falls in line with the Opening up America Again guidelines .

“These guidelines will provide all Americans with information they need to help the country reopen as safely as possible,” said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. “These cleaning and disinfecting protocols will help ensure the health and safety of everyone in our homes, schools, offices and businesses.”

“Proper and effective cleaning and disinfecting are important to help prevent the spread of COVID-19,” said CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield. “As our nation re-opens, this guidance is critical to help Americans return as safely as possible to work, school, and other daily activities within their communities.”

EPA’s expertise on the safe and effective use of disinfectants against the virus that causes COVID-19 informed the development of this comprehensive plan. The guidance offers a practical, three-step process for preparing spaces for reopening:

- Develop a plan,
- Implement the plan, and
- Maintain and revise the plan.

Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces is an important, two-step process central to any effort to reduce the

risk of exposure to COVID-19.

- **Clean:** Use soap and water to remove germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. It lowers the risk of spreading infection.
- **Disinfect:** Use disinfectant products to kill germs on surfaces. By killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

EPA has compiled a list of disinfectant products, including ready-to-use sprays, concentrates, and wipes that can be used against COVID-19. Always follow the product label instructions and safety information including leaving the product on the surface long enough to kill germs, rinsing off the product to avoid ingesting it, and putting the product out of reach of children right away.

Also, avoid over-using or stockpiling disinfectants or personal protective equipment (such as gloves). This can result in shortages of critical products needed for emergencies. In the event that disinfectant products on the EPA list are not available, the guidance provides other techniques for disinfecting surfaces that are as effective in reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

This guidance does not replace other measures that still need to be taken to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. It is important to continue to practice social distancing, wear cloth face coverings, and wash your hands frequently. As we move forward to reopen America, continue to follow federal, state, tribal, territorial and local guidance.

COVID-19 Update:

Cleaning Practices May Trigger Asthma

By Mansel Adelbert Nelson (Mansel.Nelson@nau.edu) | April 29, 2020 5:19 PM

With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been increasing interest in cleaning, especially with disinfectants (regulated by the EPA as pesticides). However, increased use of disinfectants may pose a problem for many tribal members with asthma. Many disinfectants can trigger asthma episodes.

A recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that tribal communities are disproportionately impacted by asthma. (See URL #1 below.) Asthma affects almost 12% of tribal members, nearly double the national average of 7%. One of the key approaches to reducing the impact of asthma is to reduce exposure to asthma triggers. (See URL #2 below.) Many chemicals used as disinfectants are known asthmagens (substances that cause or exacerbate asthma symptoms). Increased use of disinfectant products may result in higher rates of asthma episodes, which result in increased use of asthma medications and even visits to medical providers.

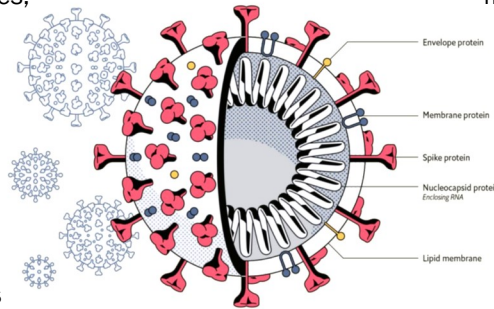
According to the CDC, SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes the disease COVID-19, is believed to spread primarily person to person through airborne respiratory droplets. However, they suspect that the virus may spread via surfaces as well. Once the virus is transferred from surfaces via your hands to your face, you may become infected. The primary defense against surface contamination recommended by CDC is washing your hands regularly with soap and water. Another way to address the risk of SARS-CoV-2 on surfaces is cleaning. The EPA recently released a list of antimicrobial products for use against SARS-CoV-2. (See URL #4 below.) This list has been created under an EPA emerging viral pathogens program. The list is not based on actual specific scientific investigations, but is based on the ability of the cleaning product to kill similar viruses. A key limitation of the list is that it does not consider which products are asthmagens.

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) has identified 16 products from the EPA antimicrobial list that are safer for use in your home and safer for use around people with asthma. (See URL #6 below.) Several of the safer cleaning products recommended by EWG include hydrogen peroxide as the active ingredient. The advantage of using hydrogen peroxide is that there are fewer residual chemicals, since hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) breaks down into water (H₂O) and oxygen (O₂). In addition to using safer products, you need to ventilate the area that you are cleaning. Even with products that are identified as safer, you should always read and follow label instructions.

As mentioned previously, soap and water are also effective against the SARS-CoV-2. Enveloped viruses like SARS-CoV-2 are the easiest type to deactivate because of their flimsy shell. In contrast with many gastrointestinal viruses like norovirus which have a tough protein shell called a capsid, viruses like SARS-CoV-2, with their fatty wrapping, are relatively vulnerable. There are a few ways to burst this flimsy shell. Soap and water are one of the effective ways to not only wash away the virus, but to kill it. Combining soap and water with microfiber cloths to target surfaces and high-touch points (door knobs, light switches, appliance handles), has been shown to be an effective approach

to healthy cleaning. The California work-related asthma prevention program provides fact sheets on using microfiber for cleaning. (See URL #5 below.)

If you decide that you still must use something “stronger” to clean surfaces that may be contaminated with SARS-CoV-2, then it is important to read and follow label instructions. Additionally, if anyone in the home has asthma, vigorous ventilation is particularly important while using the cleaning products. Vigorous ventilation should continue until there are no residual odors from the cleaning product. The Texas A&M Extension Service and the University of Arizona Extension Service have provided extensive guidance on the proper and safe use of disinfectants. (See URL #8 below.) Improper use of disinfectants can be harmful to everyone, but people with asthma will be impacted even more.



We recommend that everyone continue to watch for updates on all aspects of COVID-19, since the science regarding COVID-19 is still evolving. Scientists will need a lot more data in order to provide more guidance on the risks and to make specific recommendations on all aspects of COVID-19.

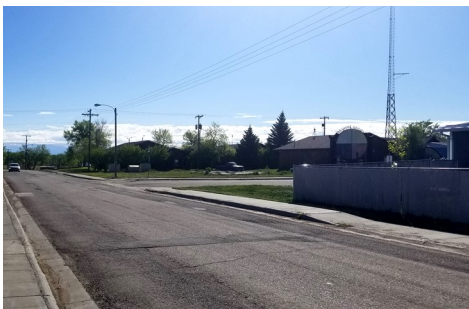
If you have questions about the information in this article, contact mansel.nelson@nau.edu.

For more information:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/> This website provides information to help Americans with asthma achieve better health and improved quality of life.
2. <https://www.epa.gov/asthma> Information on managing asthma triggers. Asthma publications and other resources are also available.
3. <https://bit.ly/www-cdph-ca-gov> This guide helps school districts transition to asthma-safer products and practices. The guide outlines products and methods that help prevent asthma or asthma symptoms.
4. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2> List N includes products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes the disease COVID-19.
5. <https://bit.ly/CA-microfiber> The fact sheet explains how microfiber is a highly effective cleaning tool that is also safer for asthma as well as how to use and take care of the microfiber cloths.
6. <https://bit.ly/EWG-COVID-19> The EWG screened hundreds of disinfectants and sanitizers approved and recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and checked them against their “Guide to Healthy Cleaning”. They identified 16 safer products.
7. <https://bit.ly/TAMU-disinfectants-are-pesticides-so-use-safely> Texas A&M Extension Service emphasizes that disinfectants are pesticides, so use them safely.
8. <https://bit.ly/UofA-Extension-COVID-19> The University of Arizona Extension staff provide a useful summary of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 as well as appropriate cleaning guidance.

Cornteen (COVID-19) Blues 2020

By Kermit Snow, Brownfields Compliance Officer



Alone again, naturally, lol. Ahhhhh, what times we live in now. New phrase of the year, “Social Distancing”. What am I getting at you ask? A word that will instill panic, maybe fear in every American, once they learn what is coming. **COVID-19!** We are told this virus originated in China and eventually hit the USA in January and first known death in February. I don’t remember hearing anything about this back then or how bad it was, but in March, it had hit all 50 States, the District of Columbia and all U.S. Territories except American Samoa. That I believe, is when everyone started

to realize how bad this really is. In Montana it began to hit everyone in March, during the basketball tournaments going on statewide, on how this would begin to affect our lives. I was in Butte, MT to broadcast the State Class B Boys & Girls combined tournament, where our girls (#3 Harlem LadyCats, 22-2) almost upset the #1 Missoula Loyola Heart Breakers (23-0). We would play one more game, where we would demolish the #6 Colstrip Fillies to finish at 23-3. I arrived at my hotel room that night after a long day at the Butte Civic Center, when I received a phone call from my broadcasting partner Marlin, that they had cancelled the rest of the tournament per instructions from the MHSAA (the governing body of Montana High School athletics). The effects of the Corona Virus spreading, had hit Montana, thus for the safety of fans and players, the tournaments were all cancelled. I wanted so bad for our girls to play the two more games necessary to get their most deserved 3rd place trophy. I had watched these young ladies hone their skills playing year round to go after what, should have been a glorious ending to their high school careers. This class of Senior ladies, I believe, were the best class of athletes, the Harlem LadyCats have produced in many years. Ok, now what was I talking about?

The pandemic hit us around, either Mar. 13 or 16, depending on how you look at it. They told us that all who attended State Basketball Tournaments were to be quarantined, thus began my 14-day quarantine and the Tribal lockdown. 2020

The Trump administration declared a public emergency on Jan. 31 and on Feb. 2 began to prevent the entry of most foreign nationals who had traveled to China. They did not ban U.S. residents who had been there, nor had any testing of those individuals seeking re-entry, a BIG mistake when looking back. On Mar. 13, 2020, Trump finally declares a national emergency. There is so much that starts to go in effect, the FDA gets involved, CDC is involved, the State Department advises all U.S. citizens to avoid all international travel, and that’s just the beginning of what begins to look like chaos at its highest level. There is so much that goes on after the reality of what COVID-19 has started. There is so much to look at, preparations after the outbreak, medical responses, government re-

(Continued on page 17)

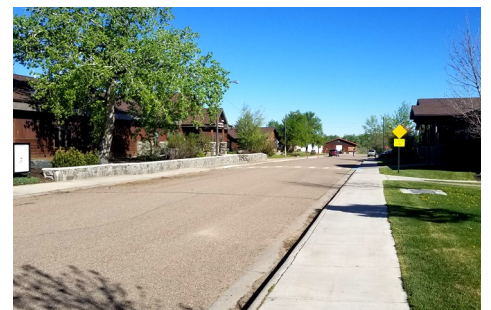
Cornteen (COVID-19) Blues 2020

(Continued from page 16)

sponses, economic impact, social impact, elections, public response, and most of all, statistics. We finally hit double digits in cases on Mar. 2, with a high so far of 43,438 on Mar.6. As of May 26, 2020, we have 1,662,414 cases (24,958 new) and 98,261 deaths (592 new). I don't believe anyone really knows when it will end, especially with some states opening up and some people not adhering to protocols in place to stop the spread of this disease/virus. Trump has asked for states to open up and some are, but is it too early? Only time will tell. There is another issue that really bothers me right now and that is what is going on in South Dakota. The South Dakota Governor, Kristi Noem, is threatening to sue three Tribes on their right to set up checkpoints on roads entering their lands, she has backed away from this and has gone straight to Trump to try and settle this issue. I stand by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, the Oglala Sioux Tribe, and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in their effort to keep their people safe from this outbreak. This brings back historical trauma of when Tribes were given blankets with smallpox, the governments way of trying to kill the Native Americans. Tribes, like ours here, have protocols in place since this outbreak began. I myself, sit on the DES/TERC, where we have daily calls every morning to discuss and update what is going on with COVID-19 here, surrounding areas and the State. On May 15 & 16, we conducted free screening at the Agency and in Hays, where we gave out 1,015 tests those two days and they all came back negative. We are in the planning stages to do two more sites in Lodge Pole and Dodson areas. We came together with PHN's, IHS, and the Montana National Guard in this collaborative effort to provide tests for our people. The fight is still ongoing and Tribes are doing their part, our hearts and prayers go out to the Navajo Nation, we're with you, stay strong. I have been rambling on, but this is just the tip of the iceberg, as they say. There is something new everyday on the news or the internet, stay informed, it looks like it will be here for a while. There has been so many events cancelled, for the Tribes, it is the start of the powwow season, we missed the college powwows. One way to stay involved, can be by participating in the Social Distance Powwow on Facebook, started by my Facebook friend, Whitney Recountre from South Dakota. I also love the Meme's that have come out since this began, some humor while you're locked down, lol. There is a lot more to report about, but I think you get the picture and I believe most of you are keeping updated in one form or another. With that, I hope you are all staying safe and I miss seeing you all at conferences or meetings. May the Creator watch over and bless you all and everyone keep the Navajo Nation in your prayers and thoughts. Aho



To view an updated Montana Covid-19 case map, go to <https://montana.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?>



173 years, \$170: Why Irish people are donating to help Native Americans hit by coronavirus

"Sending the actual amount of \$170 personally after 170 or so years felt like the right tribute across the ages."

By Alyssa Newcomb | May 6, 2020

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/173-years-170-why-irish-people-are-donating-help-native-n1200811>

It was a gesture born of suffering and kindness carried over generations.

In 1847, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma sent \$170 to Ireland during the Great Famine — a time of mass starvation on the island. More than 170 years later, Ireland has returned the favor, helping to raise more than \$2 million for the Navajo and Hopi nations, which have been hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Donors said they felt like it was a chance to pay the good deed forward.

"I saw that Irish people were starting to donate and share the story of Choctaw Nation and the historical symmetry really affected me," said Paul Hayes, a native of Tipperary, Ireland, who runs Beachhut, a technology public relations firm said in an email. "Sending the actual amount of \$170 personally after 170 or so years felt like the right tribute across the ages."

The Navajo Nation reported more than 2,700 coronavirus cases and 70 deaths as of Monday, a rate of infection that makes it one of the worst outbreaks in the United States. During a visit to Arizona on Tuesday President Trump said the Navajo Nation would receive \$600 million in federal funding.

The sentiment runs deep in Ireland where the memory of the Great Potato Famine — which claimed more than one million lives by the time it ended in 1852 — endures to this day. And that's why strangers were inspired to make a symbolic gesture of goodwill toward people living across an ocean, 5,000 miles away. The donations sent on GoFundMe include messages of hope and gratitude from people in Ireland.

"The care shown generations ago was not and will not be forgotten," said Jonathan Legge, CEO of &Open, a bespoke gift-giving company based in Dublin.

"An overdue debt repaid on behalf of our ancestors to your ancestors. Stay strong," read a note attached



Vehicles line up for COVID-19 testing outside of the Monument Valley Health Center in Oljato-Monument Valley, San Juan County, on April 17, 2020. Kristin Murphy / The Deseret News via AP file

to one \$30 donation.

"I am currently unemployed so I'm sorry that my donation is not more, but I hope that this little contribution will make some positive difference in the same way those donations 173 years ago were sent with the same hope for ancestors of mine," another donor who gave \$10 said on the website. "I stand in solidarity with my Native American brothers and sisters during this time of crisis and send this message with love, respect and hope for the future."

When the Choctaw Nation paid it forward all those years ago, it was empathizing with Ireland's plight based on its own experience. During the 1830s, 60,000 Native Americans had been forced by the federal government to relocate from their ancestral lands and move west on what is now known as the Trail of Tears. Thousands of people died during the devastating trek.

In 2017, Ireland honored the Choctaw Nation with a sculpture of nine stainless steel eagle feathers stretching 23 feet high. The next year, Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar visited the Choctaw Nation in Oklahoma.

(Continued on page 19)

173 years, \$170: Why Irish people are donating to help Native Americans hit by coronavirus

(Continued from page 18)

Chief Gary Batton of the Choctaw Nation said adversity can “bring out the best in people” and said he’s happy to see his ancestors’ generosity inspiring donations to other Native American tribes.

“We are gratified, and perhaps not at all surprised, to learn of the assistance our special friends, the Irish, are giving to the Navajo and Hopi nations. Our word for their selfless act is ‘iyyikowa’ — it means serving those in need,” Batton said in an email. “We have become kindred spirits with the Irish in the years since the Irish Potato Famine. We hope the Irish, Navajo and Hopi peoples develop lasting friendships, as we have. Sharing our cultures makes the world grow smaller.”

The donations are being used to buy critical supplies, including food and personal protective equipment.

There are 13 grocery stores in the Navajo Nation serving 180,000 people, while there are just three small stores in the Hopi Nation serving 3,000 people. The entire area spans more than 26,000 square

miles in northeastern Arizona, southeastern Utah and northwestern New Mexico, making it an “extreme food desert,” according to organizers of the fundraiser.

The communities also include many elderly people and those with underlying medical conditions who could be especially hard hit by the coronavirus. One-third of Navajo Nation residents also do not have running water and other essentials to help them stay safe during the pandemic.

The surge of donations from Ireland was acknowledged Sunday by Vanessa Tulley, one of the organizers.

“In moments like these, we are so grateful for the love and support we have received from all around the world. Acts of kindness from indigenous ancestors passed being reciprocated nearly 200 years later through blood memory and interconnectedness,” she wrote. “Thank you, IRELAND, for showing solidarity and being here for us.”

EPA Proposes First Ever Rule to Improve Transparency of Guidance

Contact Information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-proposes-first-ever-rule-improve-transparency-guidance>

WASHINGTON (May 19, 2020) — Today, as directed by President Trump’s Executive Order to promote transparency through improved agency guidance, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing its first-ever proposed rule to establish consistent requirements and procedures for the issuance of guidance documents.

“For the first time ever, EPA is proposing a rule that codifies procedures to ensure the public can engage in the development and review of agency guidance,” said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. “Historically, EPA has issued many more guidance documents than most federal agencies. Today’s action is a major step toward increasing transparency in EPA processes and ensuring that EPA is not creating new regulatory obligations through guidance.”

This new rule will significantly increase the transpar-

ency of EPA’s practices around guidance and will improve the agency’s process for managing guidance documents. When final, the rule will:

- Establish the first formal petition process for the public to request that EPA modify or withdraw a guidance document; and
- Ensure that the agency’s guidance documents are developed with appropriate review and are accessible and transparent to the public; and
- Provide for public participation in the development of significant guidance documents.

On October 9, 2019, President Trump issued Executive Order 13891, Promoting the Rule of Law Through Improved Agency Guidance Documents, to promote transparency by ensuring that all active guidance documents are made available to the public. A cen-

(Continued on page 20)

EPA Proposes First Ever Rule to Improve Transparency of Guidance

(Continued from page 19)

tral principle of EO 13891 is that guidance documents should only clarify existing obligations and that they should not be a vehicle for implementing new, binding requirements on the public. Guidance documents can significantly impact the public and EO 13891 recognizes that these documents warrant a thorough review prior to issuance. In addition to today's action, on February 28, 2020, EPA launched a new guidance portal that provides public access to agency guidance documents.

The proposed rule will be open for public comment 30 days after it publishes in the Federal Register.

For additional information on the proposed rule: <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/proposed-rulemaking-epa-guidance-administrative-procedures-issuance-and-public>

To access the guidance portal: <https://www.epa.gov/guidance>

Judge cancels hundreds of oil, gas leases in Montana

By MATT VOLZ | May 1, 2020

<https://apnews.com/667fdc75dd6a90d9e9a323915c90c728>

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — A federal judge on Friday canceled nearly 300 oil and gas leases in Montana because government officials failed to properly study the risks of all that drilling to the environment and water supply.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management sold 287 leases covering approximately 227 square miles (587.93 square kilometers) of public land in central and eastern Montana in 2017 and in 2018. The agency's environmental reviews concluded that drilling would carry minimal risk to the areas' natural resources.

Three residents and two environmental groups sued in 2018, saying the agency didn't consider the risks of shallow hydraulic fracturing on groundwater or the cumulative effects of adding hundreds of drilling sites to the landscape. They also said the agency did not address the leases effects on the release of greenhouse gases and climate change.

U.S. District Judge Brian Morris sided with the plaintiffs, saying BLM officials didn't study what they were supposed to under U.S. environmental laws before going ahead with the lease sales.

"The Court does not fault BLM for providing a faulty analysis of cumulative impacts or impacts to groundwater, it largely faults BLM for failing to provide any analysis," Morris wrote.

The judge chided the BLM's attorneys for citing irrelevant findings from their environmental reviews to answer the plaintiffs' allegations, the judge said.

"A weatherman proves unhelpful if he says "it's going to be windy tomorrow" when asked if it will rain," Morris wrote in his ruling. "BLM proves just as unresponsive here."

The judge canceled the leases and ordered BLM officials to conduct additional environmental reviews.

The lease sales challenged in the lawsuit includes land adjacent to the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. Other leased land include parcels near the Beartooth Mountains and the town of Livingston in the south and the along the Tongue River Valley in the southeast near the Wyoming state line.

The plaintiffs include Bonnie and Jack Martinell, who are farmers north of the Elk Basin oil field near the Montana-Wyoming line, and David Katz, who owns land along the Beartooth Front on the Stillwater River. They were joined in the lawsuit by the environmental groups WildEarth Guardians and Montana Environmental Information Center.

"The Bureau of Land Management was well aware that current oil and gas drilling practices would not protect sources of drinking water in these Montana

(Continued on page 21)

Judge cancels hundreds of oil, gas leases in Montana

(Continued from page 20)

communities, but rushed the sale anyway,” said Elizabeth Forsyth, an attorney for Earthjustice, which represented the plaintiffs.

BLM spokesman Jeff Krauss said in a statement that his agency, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, disagrees with the court’s ruling and stands by its environmental analysis.

“Regardless of the ultimate outcome of this dispute and despite the attempts of radical, special interest groups, the Department and the BLM will continue to work towards ensuring America’s energy independence while preserving a healthy environment,” the statement said.

Asthma and your Child

By Jeremy Walker, Water Quality/Environmental Specialist

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease that affects your airways. Your airways are tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. If you have asthma these airways are inflamed. The inflammation makes the airway very sensitive, and the tubes often react to allergens or irritations. When there allergens or irritants bother your airway they can trigger an asthma attack or episode. An asthma attack or episode is a sudden worsening of asthma symptoms caused by the tightening of muscles around your airways (bronchospasm). During the asthma attack, the lining of the airways become more swollen and inflamed.

Symptoms of asthma include

- Wheezing
- Coughing, especially early in the morning or at night
- Chest tightness
- Shortness of breath

(Remembering during an attack or episode Asthma symptoms are intensified)

Not all people who have asthma have these symptoms. Having these symptoms doesn't always mean that you have asthma. Your doctor will diagnose asthma based on lung function tests, your medical history, and a physical exam. You may also have allergy tests.

Prevention and long term control are main goals in treating asthma. Treatment usually involves learning to recognize your triggers, taking steps to avoid them and tracking your breathing to make sure your daily

asthma medications are keeping symptoms under control. There are multiple medications that are used to treat asthma. The two most common groups of meds used are long- term and fast acting (rescue) medications. Long term meds are used daily and used to keep asthma under control on a day to day basis. Fast acting (rescue) meds are used as needed for rapid, short- term symptom relief during an asthma attack or episode. It’s important to note that there is no cure for Asthma, but its symptoms can be controlled.

The reason I am writing this article is because May is Asthma Awareness Month. Asthma hits close to home for me as a father. My son was diagnosed with pediatric asthma at the young age of 7 months and it’s something I’ll never forget. Not long after he was born his mother and I noticed that he always sounded congested in his chest. He also had a cough that was worse at bedtime and through the night. He went to daycare during the day and always seemed to catch every cold or virus that was going around. Multiple times his little colds he would pick up at daycare would turn into pneumonia. He was hospitalized multiple times before the age of 1. After multiple visits to different doctors we were finally sent to a pediatric pulmonologist and diagnosed with pediatric asthma. He was placed on long acting medications that he would have to take daily. After a few weeks of starting these long acting medications we had seen a huge improvement in our son. He no longer sounded congested in his chest and his night time cough was gone. His asthma was controlled with the long acting medications which we faithfully gave him every day. Fast forward to current day his asthma is under control and he is a healthy young boy.

THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

EPA Orders Amazon And EBay To Stop Selling Bogus Coronavirus-Fighting Products

By Hannah Hagemann | June 11, 2020 10:18 PM ET

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/06/11/875404367/epa-orders-amazon-and-ebay-to-stop-selling-bogus-coronavirus-fighting-products>

On Thursday, the Environmental Protection Agency ordered Amazon and eBay to stop selling certain pesticide-containing products, many of which claimed to fight off and disinfect from the coronavirus.

The orders also bar the e-commerce giants from selling products that contain toxic chemicals like chlorine dioxide and methylene chloride, which is federally regulated as a toxic substance.

Exposure to methylene chloride can cause death, but in one instance, eBay marketed and sold 55-gallon drums of methylene chloride as a coronavirus disinfectant and paint stripper, according to the EPA press release.

Amazon was ordered by the EPA to stop selling over 30 products and eBay, more than 40, some of which falsely claimed to provide "Epidemic Prevention," "2020 Coronavirus Protection" and "complete sterilization including the current pandemic virus," according to an agency press release.

As of Thursday, both eBay and Amazon still had methylene chloride listed on their websites, which is "unapproved for use against the novel coronavirus," the agency stated.

Companies that manufacture and distribute pesticide-containing products are required by law to register the product with the EPA.

Both Amazon and eBay sold unregistered products that were not evaluated by the agency.

According to the EPA's orders, the companies also sold products that were mislabeled or lacked application directions, ingredients, and safety information on chemicals in the products.

The agency said Administrator Andrew Wheeler held discussions with the retailers in April on the illegal



A cafe employee in Washington, D.C., cleans in preparation for reopening. J. Scott Applewhite/AP

products.

"Despite those discussions, Amazon and eBay have thus far failed to consistently keep unregistered, misbranded, or restricted-use pesticides, and pesticide devices off their websites," the EPA said.

"Amid the coronavirus pandemic, we have taken significant measures to block or quickly remove items from our marketplace that are unsafe, make false health claims or violate our zero-tolerance price gouging policy," eBay said in a statement.

In one case, the EPA said Amazon sold multiple versions of a disinfectant that claimed to sanitize hospitals, offices and homes, that contained chlorine dioxide, a hazardous gas that is linked to respiratory and lung issues. The products didn't contain English-language directions for use, according to the agency.

An Amazon spokesperson told NPR that "Amazon requires that sellers provide accurate information on product detail pages and put processes in place to

(Continued on page 23)

proactively block inaccurate claims about COVID-19 before they are published to our store."

"We removed the products in question and are taking action against the bad actors who listed them," according to the company, which said it has also devel-

oped tools that scan for inaccurate claims.

This is not the first time Amazon has come under fire for such sales; in 2018 the company paid a \$1.2 million dollar penalty for selling mislabeled and banned pesticides.

Ozone layer:

Largest ever tear over the Arctic has closed

The largest ever hole in the ozone layer – its size dubbed “unprecedented” by scientists – has closed over the northern hemisphere.

<https://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/ozone-layer-largest-ever-tear-over-the-arctic-has-closed/news-story/f3dd10f8121cc7dca1b50d73a3d84fa7>

An ozone hole that formed over the Arctic only weeks ago and grew to be the largest ever recorded in the northern hemisphere has closed.

Scientists at the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) who were tracking the tear, which was roughly the size of Greenland, made the announcement at the end of last week, calling its size “unprecedented”.

The gap in the vital layer, which protects the Earth against harmful radiation from the sun, set a new record for ozone depletion in the northern hemisphere when it formed earlier this month.

And while many would assume its recovery could be chalked up to a reduction in pollution as a result of the coronavirus pandemic – which has caused countries around the world to go into lockdown – the scientists noted the “rather unusual” hole was caused by a particularly strong Arctic polar vortex and not by human activity.

“COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns probably had nothing to do with this,” CAMS wrote on Twitter.

“It’s been driven by an unusually strong and long-lived polar vortex, and isn’t related to air quality changes.”

The scientists added: “This ozone hole was basically a symptom of the larger problem of ozone depletion, and closed because of local annual cycles, not long-term healing. But, there’s hope: The ozone layer is

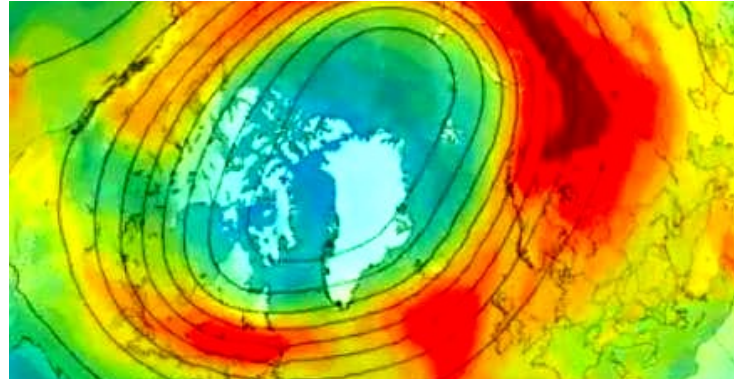
also healing, but slowly.”

A polar vortex is a large area of low pressure and cold air that surrounds both of the Earth’s poles – and while they always exist, they typically weaken during the summer and strengthen in the winter.

The Arctic vortex is typically weaker than its counterpart in the south, CAMS said, due to the presence of nearby land as well as mountain ranges that disturb the weather.

Regardless of how it came to be, the hole was massive – most of the ozone typically found around 11 miles (nearly 18km) into the stratosphere was depleted, the group said. The last time such a strong chemical ozone depletion was observed in the Arctic was nearly a decade ago.

CAMS does not predict the ozone numbers will return to the extremely low levels experienced in early April, offering some hope, at least: The ozone layer is slowly healing, one way or another.



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