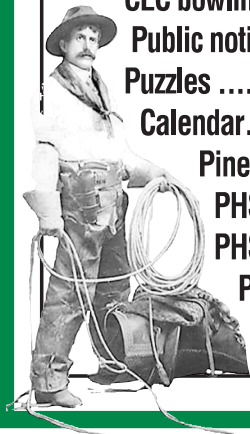


THE ROUNDUP, ROUNDED UP

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Weekly Weather Forecast

Pinedale, Wyoming • April 1 - 6

Today

Sunrise: 7:07 a.m. **Sunset:** 7:42 p.m.

High: **47°** Low: **24°**

RealFeel® 43° 22°

Day: Cooler, cloudy, rain and snow.

Night: Partly cloudy.

Saturday

High: **51°**

A couple of showers.

Low: **23°**

Sunday

High: **54°**

Some sun, a couple of showers.

Low: **35°**

Monday

High: **47°**

Mostly cloudy.

Low: **28°**

Tuesday

High: **51°**

Mostly cloudy, a few showers.

Low: **27°**

Wednesday

High: **45°**

Partly sunny, a few showers.

Low: **22°**

Loan app at new levels

SCHD issues litany of updates at meeting

By Robert Galbreath

rgalbreath@pinedaleroundup.com

PINEDALE – The Sublette County Hospital District's \$32-million loan application to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to build a critical access hospital and long-term care/skilled nursing center is currently at the agency's regional office, reported Mike Hunsaker, chief operating officer for the SCHD and Star Valley Health, at the March 23 SCHD Board of Trustees meeting.

Once the regional officer signs off on the loan application, it will go before a federal loan committee in Washington, D.C., for final approval, Hunsaker told the trustees.

This is farther than any loan application submitted to build a hospital in Sublette County has advanced, said Hunsaker.

In October 2018, Lorraine Werner, the USDA community programs director for rural development in Wyoming, previously denied an application submitted by Sublette County Rural Health Care District to build a critical access hospital in the Bloomfield Subdivision, preventing that project from advancing to the USDA's regional office.

The USDA's state architect and engineer conducted a full review of the SCHD's current plans for a critical access hospital and long-term care/skilled nursing facility before signing off on the project on March 8, Hunsaker said.

"Current inflationary pressures may require the district to go through additional rounds of value engineering to keep the project within the budget," Hunsaker told the Roundup.

Following the architect and engineer's approval, Werner submitted the SCHD's complete loan application package to the USDA's regional office with her recommendation and support on Wednesday, March 16, Hunsaker reported.

"Lorraine Werner has worked hard on our behalf," Hunsaker said.

Trustee Dave Bell asked Hunsaker whether the SCHD's application will spend additional months at the regional office before moving on to the national committee.

Hunsaker expressed optimism the loan application will move quickly through the regional office. The USDA's regional loan officer has been involved with the SCHD's loan application since October 2021, he replied.

The regional officer's familiarity with SCHD's loan package and Werner's stamp of approval carried considerable weight in advancing the application to the national level, Hunsaker said.

Wyoming's national congressional delegation placed frequent calls to the USDA on behalf of the SCHD's project, Hunsaker added. Gov. Mark Gordon and Eric Boley, president of the Wyoming Hospital Association, also put their weight behind the plan.

Hunsaker reminded the board the USDA is a substantial federal agency and the second-largest lender in the U.S. The USDA provides loans through multiple programs, from single-family housing direct loans to rural business development grants.

The USDA's national committee will notify Werner of its decision "immediately," Hunsaker told the Roundup. An approval would get the ball rolling with the SCHD's construction manager, Layton, and the mortgage agency, Stroudwater, he explained. At that point, Layton could put the project out to bid.

Staffing update

Dr. David Burnett, SCHD medical director, announced Dr. Buck Wallace, a board-certified ER physician, is returning to Sublette County as the district's new emergency services medical director.

Dr. Wallace will head the district's trauma committee and serve on the medical executive committee, Burnett said.

Wallace brings a "tremendous wealth of knowledge and experience" in emergency medicine to the district, Burnett said, expertise the district will use to "improve trauma capabilities" and provide education and training to ER and EMS staff and providers.

Sharon Rutsch, clinical services coordinator and laboratory director, said the district filled a lab testing position. Vicky Marshall, director of nursing, also hired a new RN and a paramedic to assist with on-call weekend shifts.

The nursing department and laboratory were now "fully staffed," Rutsch told trustees.

Coursework for three clinical staff members to become certified medical technicians through a partnership with Casper College was progressing well, Rutsch said. The students completed their first laboratory training the previous week, she added.

COVID-19 down to 1 active case in county

By Brady Oltmans

boltmans@pinedaleroundup.com

PINEDALE – COVID-19 cases within Sublette County remained low in the first Sublette County Public Health briefing in two weeks.

The Wyoming Department of Health reported six new cases of the virus while Public Health reported just one active case as of the March 25 update. The county remains in the low transmission range, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

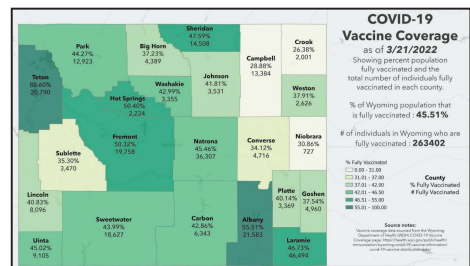
Because the state is moving into an endemic phase of the COVID-19 outbreak, Public Health updates are now being issued less than weekly. Updates will now be issued irregularly or as needed, per a March 4 update.

As of March 21, Public Health reports 3,473 people within the county – 35.30 percent of the population – has been fully vaccinated. The county has the fifth-lowest vaccinated population rate in Wyoming.

Public Health continues to offer weekly vaccines for the novel coronavirus to children as young as 5. Those are conducted Tuesdays at the Public Health Office in the Marbleton Senior Center from 1 to 3:30 p.m. and Thursdays at the Public Health Office in Pinedale from 1 to 4 p.m. Appointments are recommended by calling 307-367-2157.

The latest Public Health briefing confirmed the Federal Drug Administration is holding a meeting on April 6 to discuss future COVID-19 vaccine booster doses, as well as the process for selecting specific strains of the virus to address going forward. There are currently no recommendations for a fourth booster dose for the general population.

Public Health is also hosting the Spring Health Fair Blood Draw in Marbleton on Tuesday, April 12, and Wednesday, April 13, from 6 to 10 a.m. Appointments are appreciated by calling 307-367-2157.



COURTESY GRAPHIC

Vaccination rates in Wyoming have plateaued as the state moves into the endemic phase of the COVID-19 outbreak. Sublette County has the fifth-lowest fully vaccinated population rate in Wyoming.