



Region 3 – COVID-19 – County Response Meeting Minutes Clark – Cowlitz – Lewis – Pacific – Wahkiakum Counties

Friday, April 24, 2020
9:30 am – 11:00 am

FACILITATORS: Jaime Bodden, WSALPHO and Mellani McAleenan, WSAC

ELECTED COUNTY OFFICIALS & STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

Clark:

Temple Lentz, Councilor; Gary Medvigy, Councilor; Alan Melnick, Public Health Director & Clark County Health Officer; Eileen Quiring, Council Chair

Cowlitz:

Tim Davidson, Coroner; Carolyn Fundingsland, Auditor; Joe Gardner, Commissioner; Carole Harrison, Deputy Director; Gena James, Human Services Manager; Arne Mortensen, Commissioner; Tiffany Ostreim, Clerk of the Board

Lewis:

Becky Butler, Budget Manager; Diane Dorey, Assessor; Edna Fund, Commissioner; Erik Martin, County Manager

Pacific:

Lisa Olson, Commissioner

Wahkiakum:

Mike Backman, Commissioner; Chris Bischoff, Director Health & Human Services; Gene Strong, Commissioner

Legislators:

Rep. Vicki Kraft, Rep. Gerry Pollet, Sen. Dean Takko, Sen. Linda Wilson,

Legislative Staff:

Elizabeth Allison, Joshua Apata, Mary Clogston, Noha Mahgoub, Brandon Popovac, Kellen Wright

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

Alan Melnick – Public Health Director & Clark County Health Officer

Implemented working plan very early and quickly – in early March, Clark County had their first case
Monitored travelers for 14 days upon their return to the county
Communication and messaging outreach were vital at the beginning of the outbreak

CHALLENGES AND LOOKING AHEAD

- Increased testing will need to be performed
- Funding will be a challenge for PPE and testing supplies, as well as funding for staff to conduct the testing
- Long term care facilities and the homeless population will be a priority
- Local jurisdictions will need additional resources to meet the needs for the state, which will most likely happen in most of the communities
- How do counties pay for such expenses?

IMPACT ON COUNTY FUNCTIONS

Clark:

Meetings are held by WEBEX

Projecting \$5 million shortfall, could possibly be more like \$20 million

Lack of construction will also cause revenue shortfall

One tenth of one percent for mental health – with the pandemic, they are seeing increased mental health cases

Lack of sales tax will have serious impact on revenues – (large purchases are mostly done in Oregon)

Cowlitz:

Human resource policy on “employee leave” has been challenging

Challenges have been felt in setting up staff to work from home

All election offices are receiving CARE funding, but with several restrictions for the fall elections

County drop box is currently being used for voter registrations, as well as appointments

Hunting and fishing are a “hot button” for the community, as recreation activities has been prohibited

Lewis:

Broadband services have been a problem and struggle for students and doctor’s helping with telemedicine

Great outreach to the vulnerable population for the county

Increased mental health issues are at the forefront

“Lewis County Together” has been a great success in helping to guide the community in resources that are available

A financial impact team has been organized for guidance on what the impact will be for Lewis County

With construction stoppage, a significant financial impact will be felt throughout the county

Pacific:

The county’s tourist industry has taken a direct hit

Loss of revenues and sales tax funding will have a long-term effect on the county

Wahkiakum:

Lack of broadband services has been stressful for department heads and employees working remotely

Ferry operations has been significantly reduced

All inspections are currently on hold

Lack of space in the courthouse for upcoming cases for social distancing will be challenging

Meat processing at the packaging plants is a serious issue for the farmers, as there are no buyers

ANTICIPATED NEEDS MOVING FORWARD

Clark:

Will need direction on how does the county get going and running business operations?
What cuts and reductions will need to be made in departments to meet the revenue shortfall?
What will the financial impact be?
How does Clark County replenish testing supplies? Does the county contact suppliers directly?
Will there be funding for contract tracing?
With the courts to set to reopen – what does the backlog look like? How does the court prepare for social distancing? What will the infrastructure costs be?
Will need funding for homeless isolation, as the current funding will be running out.
The “employee leave policy” seems to be a complex situation for employers.

Cowlitz:

Logistics for the public – what will the new guidelines be? What safety precautions will need to enacted?
How does the county prepare for the backlog of court cases?
What is the long-term effect on the county’s economy?

Lewis:

With the tax funding loss, the county will be looking at what programs will need to be cut.
Improved broadband standards are needed.
Funding will be needed for the large impact on behavioral health throughout the community.
Shortage of sales tax revenue could possibly affect 200-600 staff members – a reduction in staff.
What is the projection of small businesses, what is the outcome? How many will stay afloat or will the businesses close their doors?

Pacific:

How does the county get funding for future testing?
When does the hospitality industry open to the public?
How will court cases be held? Possibly by “Zoom”?
With state agencies, the counties would like to request a “relaxing” of deadlines that the counties now face.
The county has an \$11 million dollar budget, revenue shortfall could possibly be up to \$2 million dollars

Wahkiakum

Lack of revenues will be felt from the timber counties
Increased loss of revenue from road and gas taxes
What will the backlog of court cases look like?
How does the county help with social distancing in working with the meat packing companies?