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EAST OREGONIAN

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2015

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PENDLETON

No F-15 flyover for Round-Up

Representatives making case rodeo is national event, patriotic holiday

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

After two years of putting the tradition on hold, the U.S. Air Force is resuming flyovers by F-15 fighter jets at sporting events.

But the Round-Up will not be one of them.

The Air Force recently denied the Round-Up's request for a flyover, citing a new policy that restricts flyovers to

national sporting events and patriotic holiday events.

In a letter to Air Force Secretary Deborah James, U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, argued the Round-Up met both requirements.

"The Pendleton Round-Up attracts visitors from across the United States, boasting ticket sales to individuals in 44 states and Washington, D.C. last year alone," they wrote. "The event is also

live streamed by the Wrangler Network and had the most viewers of any rodeo broadcasted on the website nationwide last year. Given these impressive statistics, it's hard to understand how the Air Force does not consider Pendleton Round-Up a national sporting event. And since the requested flyover is just one day after National POW/MIA Recognition Day, it should more than

See **FLYOVER/8A**



A pair of Oregon Air National Guard F-15 fighter jets fly over the Pendleton Round-Up Arena before the start of the rodeo in 2007. EO file photo

As fuel efficiency rises, state looks to replace gas tax



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The Oregon Department of Transportation is asking for volunteers for its new gas tax program. The program, called OReGo, would tax participants 1.5 cents per mile and is a test study for a potential replacement for the state's current fuel tax system.

PAY AS YOU GO

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

Hybrid and pickup owners drive the same highways and bi-ways, but they don't pay equally for repair and maintenance of Oregon's roads.

When you compare a 2014 Toyota Prius and a 2014 Ford F-150 over 12,962 miles — the average driven by an Oregon driver each year — the F-150 pays \$216.03 in Oregon fuel tax to the Prius' \$77.77.

Rising fuel efficiency means fewer dollars for road work. Fourteen years ago, Oregon's Department of Transportation started looking for another way to fund road repairs.

"We have to modernize our funding model just as we've modernized our modes of transportation," said Oregon Department of Transportation spokeswoman Michelle Godfrey.

OReGO, a pay-per-mile program, is being road tested to

possibly replace the fuel tax. Up to 5,000 volunteers will transmit mileage and fuel data from their vehicles. Participants will pay 1.5 cents per mile and get refunds for the 30-cent-per-gallon tax they pay at the pumps.

"It's about fairness," Godfrey said. "You pay for what you use."

So far, 1,600 drivers have signed up at the OReGO website to participate in the experiment and Godfrey expects that number to double

shortly. The still-voluntary program kicks off July 1.

Many drivers won't like the math, at least initially. Twenty miles per gallon is the break-even point. A calculator on the website shows how much more or less you would pay. An average Prius owner would pay almost \$200 more a year, while the F-150 driver would save about \$20.

Oregon would be the first state

See **TAX/8A**

PENDLETON

FAA opens skies to more drone tests

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

After receiving only local support during its initial year, both the state and local government are increasing their support for the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range.

Months after the state granted Pendleton a lucrative financial package to build a hangar, the Federal Aviation Administration announced last week blanket authorization for certain unmanned aerial vehicles for all drone test sites.

Under the new rules, tests sites can operate any vehicle less than 55 pounds up to 200 feet in the air anywhere in the country except restricted airspace and areas close to airports or heliports.

"The new authorizations also let the test sites fly various types of UAS under a single (authorization certificate) making it easier for them to conduct research missions," an FAA press release states. "Previously, the FAA required authorization for each type of UAS the operators wanted

See **DRONES/8A**

Deal made to clean up Hanford

By **NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS**
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — An agreement has been reached to clean up a radioactive basin on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, the nation's most polluted nuclear weapons production site, two federal agencies said Tuesday.

The deal about the K West Basin was reached between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy, which owns Hanford.

The settlement stems from the Energy Department's failure to meet a September 2014 deadline to begin removing nuclear sludge from the basin, which is located along the Columbia River.

Under the deal, the new deadline for starting the removal of sludge is Sept. 30, 2018. The work must be completed by Dec. 31, 2019.

Hanford, which is near Richland, Washington, for decades made plutonium for

See **HANFORD/8A**

HERMISTON

Warming station gets cool for summer

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Hermiston's homeless will have a new option for beating the heat this summer when the Hermiston Warming Station turns into the Hermiston Cooling Station.

The air-conditioned space at 224 E. Main St. will be open from 1-7 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays starting on June 6.

Carol Johnson said the station will offer water, snacks, games and a place to wash up.

"Hopefully people will be able to do their laundry too," she said. "We're working on getting that set up."

In the past the warming station has operated during the winter in a rotating schedule of church basements and other borrowed spaces when the weather dipped below

freezing. This year the nonprofit signed a year-long lease on a Main Street storefront, and Johnson said organizers decided their improved situation was a good opportunity to expand their services.

"We know there's a need for a place for people to go when it's hot and we have the space," she said.

They decided to operate in

See **COOL/8A**

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