

## MOTH: Musicians will play in galleries during art stroll

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Sisters visual artists — bringing the visual arts and Sisters' musicians together in collaborative partnership.

"I think it's a perfect melding that really mirrors the spirit of the Sisters community," said SFF Board Chair Jack McGowan. "The generosity that the artists show in donating their work through the festival for the kids should be acknowledged and celebrated."

Over the years, My Own Two Hands has grown into a major event, the logistics of which rival those required to stage the three-day Sisters Folk Festival in September.

What does it take to stage this major celebration?

"It takes more than my two hands," said SFF Managing Director Ann Richardson. "It takes a wonderful staff and a committed board and a generous community of volunteers."

Those volunteers stage art in businesses around Sisters, then collect it and transport it to Ponderosa Forge and set it up again for display in the auction. Meanwhile other cadres of volunteers are turning Jeff Wester's blacksmith shop into an art party space. During the event, other volunteers spot bidders, carry art and provide logistical support.

Many of those volunteers

are students who benefit from the dollars raised by the event.

"It's important that our kids contribute and understand what it takes to put on an event like this," said SFF Development Director Katy Yoder.

Things get underway on Friday, May 8, with a parade at 4 p.m. on Main Avenue, an art stroll at 22 local businesses from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. and a Community Arts Celebration at 6:30 p.m. at The Belfry.

The next day, the fundraising auction is held.

"The art auction and party on Saturday is not your typical fundraiser," said Yoder. "The venue, the music and the vibe draws guests from across Oregon."

Entertainment is provided by the bluegrass sensation Frank Solivan & Dirty Kitchen.

"Maintaining healthy arts-related programming in our schools and community benefits everyone," said Yoder. "The art we received this year represents some of the finest artists in the region. Sharing a community with such generous and talented people is a big reason why Sisters is such a great place to live and educate our young ones."

For those unable to attend the auction on the May 9, proxy bid sheets are available at stroll locations on Friday, or at the SFF office or website. For more information about My Own Two Hands and to check on ticket availability call the SFF office at 541-549-4979.

## DROUGHT: Declaration expedites processes for irrigators

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with groundwater. Depending on federal action, financial aid or loans may also become available to offset crop losses that are expected to be in the range of \$1.5 million.

Hay growers will almost certainly not see a second cutting this year.

Karan Swaner, who raises sheep east of town, notes that "we're on 40-percent water. It's a terrible year."

She told *The Nugget* that she will not try to avail herself of the opportunity to switch to ground water.

"It doesn't pencil for me to even think about that," she said.

So she is moving her sheep around her pastures to take advantage of the green grass that's available now, and planning to butcher lambs about a month early this year. She will be selling lamb at Sisters Farmers Market.

"It just seems to me like a good year to try to manage around it," she said.

Thalacker acknowledged that pumping groundwater is expensive. He said a 150-horsepower pump pulling 1,110 gallons a minute will run up a bill of about \$4,500 per month.

"That's going to take a bite out of their bottom line

— but at least they've got water," he said.

The conditions are unusual.

"I don't remember ever starting a season at 40 percent," said Jeremy Giffin of the Deschutes County Water Master's Office. "That's pretty low."

The conditions are not due to lack of precipitation — overall precipitation is at pretty much normal levels. The problem is the paucity of snowfall. The snow measuring station at Three Creek Meadow registers zero snow moisture content.

"That's at 5,700 feet and there's nothing," Giffin said.

He recalled that Whychus Creek ran up and over its banks during heavy rains this winter. That ran up the precipitation totals — but the moisture didn't stick around in the form that irrigators like: snow that melts off gradually and provides them water in the spring and summer.

"The problem is the water came off so fast and at a time of year when people couldn't utilize it," Giffin said.

Other irrigation districts are in better shape than TSID because they have reservoirs that contain that rain runoff. The flashy nature of Whychus Creek and the restrictions on uses in the wilderness it runs through make it unlikely that a reservoir will be built on the creek.

However, TSID is in far better shape than it might be — thanks to piping projects

that have enclosed ditches on the system and prevent water loss, putting some 20 cubic feet per second back instream.

Thalacker noted that conditions now resemble the most severe drought in recent times in 1977 — but the district is in better shape.

"We dried up the stream all summer (in '77) and only delivered 10 percent," he said. "It's a greatly improved situation."

If low-snow winters become the norm, the impacts of the drought could be ongoing — and they could spread to affect others besides surface-water users. Right now, the groundwater system is not as severely affected by the conditions as surface water. However, Giffin notes, observation wells in Sisters Country do indicate a long-term downward trend in the water table. If we see two or three years of such conditions, "it's going to take its toll," he says.

As Oregonians look south to the near-catastrophic drought confronting California, conservation on an individual level starts to look like a pretty good idea.

Giffin concurs.

"It's always a great idea to conserve water under these conditions."

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