

NORPAC reaches deal to sell most assets

Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

NORPAC Foods Inc, one of the largest food processors in Oregon, has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection and plans to sell most of its assets to Oregon Potato Company, the co-op said in a press release Thursday.

NORPAC anticipates the transaction will be completed in 60 to 90 days, the company said, but during that time current management will stay in place. Financing will be provided by CoBank.

"Our 2,700 employees will continue to receive their wages and benefits, our vendors and suppliers will be paid in the ordinary course of business going forward, and our customers can continue to rely on us for unparalleled produce and products thanks to our family of farmers," NORPAC CEO Shawn Campbell said.

Oregon Potato Company is a private grower and processor of potatoes, vegetables and fruits with loca-

tions in Washington, Oregon and Idaho with corporate offices in Pasco, Wash.

Gervais farmer Molly McCargar said NORPAC held a meeting with farmers Tuesday during which members of the co-op were told of the impending bankruptcy and the company's plans.

"It's not exactly what anybody wants to hear, but that's part of the deal," McCargar said. "There is a plan in place. The doors are going to stay open. We'll have a place to grow vegetables next year."

"It's not Agripac where it shut its doors and nobody got paid," she said, referring to a processor that closed in 1999.

According to the bankruptcy filing, NORPAC's biggest creditors are Henningsen Cold Storage (\$1.2 million), Fessler Farms of Woodburn (\$1.09 million), Ampac Flexibles (\$1.08 million) and AG Reserves (\$916,000). The filing says it owes at least 20 creditors in excess of \$250,000.

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Corn goes from ear to frozen product at the NORPAC Foods facility. NORPAC has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection and plans to sell most of its assets to Oregon Potato Company. TIMOTHY J. GONZALEZ / STATESMAN JOURNAL



Members of Boy Scout Troop 50 for Stayton/Sublimity put out a smoldering campfire near Moolack Lake. The fire was burning in the root system, into some brush, a stump and under a log. The scouts used 150-200 gallons of water from the lake to douse the fire. COURTESY OF OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

Boy Scouts douse potential wildfire

Stayton Troop 50 acts quick on backpacking trip

Zach Urness
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

A group of Boy Scouts from Stayton and Sublimity are getting kudos from across Oregon for acting quickly to put out a potential wildfire last weekend.

Boy Scout Troop 50 was in the middle of a 25-mile backpacking trip in the Waldo Lake Wildeness when one of the leaders, Stuart Gamble, came across an escaped campfire creeping along the ground toward the forest near Moolack Lake.

The group of six scouts and three adults grabbed water bottles, a bear box, and small hand shovels and attacked what was estimated as a 200 square foot smoldering fire burning in brush and under a log and plants.

"It was smoldering and smoky and definitely crawling toward the drier areas in the trees," said 13-year-old Luke West of Sublimity. "If any strong wind would have picked up, it would have caught the forest on fire easily."

The troop formed a "bucket brigade," passing water down the line, and shuttled water from the lake to the fire, dumping around 150 to 200 gallons on it while stirring and cooling the fire and digging a line around



Members of Boy Scout Troop 50 for Stayton/Sublimity put out a smoldering campfire near Moolack Lake. The fire was burning in the root system, into some brush, a stump and under a log. COURTESY OF OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

it.

"We're taught when we get into scouts how to start a fire and how to put it out correctly," West said. "We just brought those skills into this situation and did our

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Health officials warn of illness tied to vaping

Natalie Pate
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon Health Authority officials and local public health departments are urging clinicians to be on alert for signs of severe respiratory illness among individuals who report vaping or e-cigarette use, the Oregon Health Authority reported Thursday.

Authority officials are aware of a cluster of respiratory illnesses reported, primarily among teenagers and young adults in 16 states. No deaths have been reported and there are no known cases in Oregon at this time.

These people have been hospitalized after experiencing worsening symptoms, including shortness of breath, cough, and chest pain, according to the release.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the affected states, have not identified a cause, but all cases have reported e-cigarette use or vaping.

"These serious new illnesses are another reason to encourage people to avoid vaping or to quit if they're ready," said Tom Jeanne, deputy health officer with Oregon's Public Health Division.

The state agency was already concerned about the

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Jail grapples with inmate addiction

In wake of inmate escapes, Marion County focuses on rehabilitation

Samantha Hawkins
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Tristen Devore only had two days left to serve when she walked away from the Marion County Transition Center in late March. By May, the 31-year-old Salem transient with a history of theft and drug abuse was back in custody.

Leighanna Vanderhoof, 25, escaped May 9 — her second in less than a year — while serving time at the minimum security facility for violating parole. Both times, she said she used smuggled drugs and then fled.

Celina Langley walked away just a week before her July 18 release. Six hours later, Salem police caught the 22-year-old with a fresh stash of heroin.

Langley's mom, Tammy Taylor, questions why officials continue to move addicts like her daughter from the Marion County Jail, where they're kept sober, to the release center without adequate treatment.

The draw of drugs is too great, Taylor says — seven transition center inmates have walked away this year.

"To continually just slap them on the wrist and put them back out there when they are a harm to themselves and a harm to society ... it's this perpetual revolving door," she said.

Some walkaways are unavoidable for a transition center — the place county jail inmates nearing release are transferred to while they receive reentry services, counseling and job assistance. Inmates who already have jobs, for example, can leave for work during the day and return to custody in the evening.

Taylor's daughter is one of thousands of people dealing with addiction who come in and out of county jail systems in Oregon every year.

Marion County officials, along with others across the state, are looking into medication-assisted treatments, rehabilitation services and other community programs to support inmates during and after their sentences.

But they're fighting an uphill battle against inadequate state and federal funding, a limited number of in-patient beds, inmates' loss of medical insurance while in jail, a lack of preventative programs and no statewide action plan.

"We need to keep trying and realize that, in the long run, our hope is people can change with continued urging and support ... that eventually they'll get the help that they need," said Marion County Undersheriff Jeff Wood, who oversees the jail system.

Wood wants to get medication-assisted treatment for Marion County inmates.

He's also seeking waivers for Medicaid and Medicare so an individual's insurance coverage continues while they're in jail — an issue that has forced Marion

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The lobby area Marion County Transition Center in Salem on July 29. The minimum-security facility requires residents to work, either through their own employment or by performing community services. ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

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