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FRIDAY-SUNDAY • July 27-July 29 • \$1

Good day to our valued subscriber Heidi Halsey of La Grande

THE OBSERVER

Weekend

WASTE-PRO MANAGEMENT



RECYCLING program seeks SOLUTION

By Max Denning, The Observer

The recycling program of Waste-Pro, Union County's waste management company, has been operating at a loss over the last several months due to the withdrawal of China from the recyclables market.

As of Jan. 1, China, once the world's largest importer of recycled paper and plastics, banned the import of various types of plastics and unsorted paper. The majority of recycled materials from Oregon went to China. The ban caused recycling processors to struggle to find places that will pay for their mixed paper and plastic.

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Waste-Pro employee Kilton Joanie clears a path between the cardboard and the shredded documents in the recycling portion of the facility on Thursday.

Cherise Kaechele/The Observer



Jake Hoofnagle, a truck driver, finishes up a load of recycling he picked up for a commercial business. Recycling processors are struggling to find places that will pay for their mixed paper and plastic.

Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

250-acre rock quarry proposed in Perry

■ Application submitted to planning department

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — A request to create a new rock quarry located near Interstate 84 east of Perry may go in front of the Union County Planning Commission next month.

James Smejkal, of Brookings, has applied for what is being termed as a new 250-acre rock quarry site. So far, the application submitted to the planning department is not complete, and the first meeting to discuss the proposal won't be until Aug. 27, according to Union County Planning Director Scott Hartell.

He said the entire application must be submitted by Aug. 13 in order for the commission to consider it next month. There is no staff report yet because the ap-

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Bid awarded for new airport rappel base

By Dick Mason
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — A new U.S. Forest Service rappel base in Union County is a step closer to becoming a reality.

The Union County Board of Commissioners voted Wednesday to award a bid for the building of a new rappel base at the La Grande/Union County Airport to Wellens Farwell Construction of Enterprise.

Wellens Farwell bid \$4.093 million for the project. This was less than a bid by Michael A. Becker General Contractor of La Grande, the other firm submitting a bid.

Union County Commissioner Steve McClure was pleased with the winning bid. "It will help us stay inside our budget," he said.

Union County Public Works Director Doug Wright said he was encouraged by the commissioners' action.

"It was important that we awarded the bid now to stay on schedule," he said.

According to McClure, "We would like to get started next month but we are not making any guarantees."

March 1, 2019, is the goal for the completion of the

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Boise Cascade fire posed challenges to firefighters

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

ISLAND CITY — A fire that caused damage to the Boise Cascade particleboard plant in Island City on Wednesday could have been much worse.

La Grande Fire Department Chief Les Thomas said a report came in early Wednesday morning of a fire in a Boise Cascade storage facility. The La Grande Rural Fire Department had originally been the only department called to the scene.

Thomas said the LGFD had been out on a medical call when it was requested for assistance. According to scanner traffic, there was not a rush to get to the scene.

Conditions with the fire escalated, though.

The storage facility is

about three to four stories tall, Thomas said. The fire was located within the wall at one end of the warehouse behind a large sawdust pile.

"The fire was in the wall but was spreading into the product," he said. "It eventually moved into the warehouse."

Thomas said once the LGFD responded to the scene, there were seven people total fighting the blaze. The smoke conditions got worse and the firefighters started to see flames within the warehouse.

The LGFD had responded with its ladder truck and began to pump water onto the fire, but the smoke continued to intensify.

Thomas said he called for more firefighters to respond to the scene, but at the time personnel was limited in the county. As was equipment.



Max Denning/The Observer

Firefighters from Union County, Baker City and Pendleton responded to a fire smoldering at the Boise Cascade particleboard plant in Island City.

He said he had to make a special call for an additional ladder truck from Baker County since LGFD has the only ladder truck in Union County.

The Baker City fire chief

said their ladder truck was having general maintenance done on the truck at the time of the call and the pump that Thomas needed was on the floor.

"At that point, the smok-

ing conditions were still getting worse and we needed an additional ladder. So we reached out to Pendleton," Thomas said.

Pendleton responded with

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Friday 55 LOW Clear and moonlit

Saturday 94/55 Sunny and warm

Sunday 95/55 Sunny, very warm

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Issue 87
2 sections, 18 pages
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.



MONDAY

ORDINANCE OFFICER NO STRANGER TO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Online at lagrandeobserver.com