

Inside

LGSD to begin work on strategic plan 2A

SPORTS

Mountie volleyball opens season



THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

Weekend

FRIDAY-SUNDAY • August 17-19, 2018 • \$1

Good day to our valued subscriber Skip Shanafelt of La Grande

EOU rejects Pearson partnership, postpones OPM

By Max Denning
The Observer

Eastern Oregon University will not be partnering with Pearson Online Learning Services for its resources as an online program management company, university president Tom Insko announced Thursday.

In August 2017, EOU requested proposals from

online program management companies. OPMs are third-party for-profit companies that assist universities in developing online curriculum and marketing strategies.

Three OPM companies submitted proposals to EOU, and two were invited to campus in October 2017 — The Learning House and

Pearson Online Learning Services.

In December 2017, Insko and David Vande Pol, executive director of regional outreach and innovation at EOU, decided the university should explore the possibility of partnering with Pearson, and they presented this plan to the board of trustees at the

February trustees meeting. The original timeline was to have a partnership decided on by May; however, Insko decided to postpone the decision to November to allow for faculty and staff to be back on campus before any decisions were made.

But now, with the rejection of Pearson, Insko has announced he will not be

making a recommendation to the board in November on an OPM to partner with, according to a press release from EOU.

In the announcement, Insko said one factor that led to the mutual decision not to move forward was cost.

“One element where we did not find alignment was

around resident online tuition levels. It is central to (Eastern’s) mission to provide an affordable education and what we felt was best for our students did not work for Pearson’s business model,” Insko said Thursday.

Tim Seydel, vice president for university ad-
See EOU / Page 5A

WALDEN TOURS BLUE MOUNTAIN SEEDS, SPEAKS ON FARM BILL

■ Oregon Representative spoke about the differences between the Senate and House versions of the Farm Bill



Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River) stands with Bill Merrigan, general manager of Blue Mountain Seeds, at the company’s new seed cleaning facility.

By Max Denning
The Observer

Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River) visited Blue Mountain Seeds’ new seed cleaning facility on Wednesday. He met with members of the local agricultural community including the owners and employees of the Imbler-based company.

The next day, leaders from both parties in the House and the Senate had a conference call to begin discussions about the 2018 Farm Bill — also known as the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 — the legislation that reforms and continues the programs of the Department of Agricul-

ture. Walden spoke with agricultural leaders, such as Bill Merrigan, general manager of Blue Mountain Seeds, about the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill, and what Walden hopes will be included in its final version.

The Farm Bill, which reauthorizes all programs of the Department of Agriculture, acts as a safety net for farmers. A version of the bill is passed approximately every five years, with the last one signed into law February 2014.

One of the more important pieces included in the House version of the bill are the forestry provisions, according to Walden.

“It would require the Forest Service to burn dead trees after a fire, where appropriate, and then replant at least 75 percent of the burned areas,” Walden said Wednesday in an interview with The Observer.

In a letter addressed to the members of congress who will conference on the Farm Bill from both the House and Senate, Walden’s message was forceful.

“The West is burning. Lives have been tragically lost,” Walden said in the July 31 letter.

“Homes and other property have been destroyed.

Smoke is choking our skies, leaving residents of Southern Oregon and elsewhere with the worst air quality in the nation. It does not have to be this way. As you finalize the Farm Bill in 2018, I urge you to include the important forest management tools included in the House bill to make needed steps toward preventing these fires into the future.”

The congressman said the forestry service doesn’t currently have funding to burn dead trees or plant new ones, but the House’s version of the Farm Bill provides funding for the process.

“You get a new healthy forest for the new generation,” Walden said.

One of the most contentious differences between the House and Senate versions is the House bill’s widening of the demographic required to work in order to qualify for Supplemental Nutrition
See Walden / Page 5A

County, cities enact full burn ban

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

On the Union County Fire Defense Board’s recommendation, the Union County Commissioners voted Wednesday to place the county under a full burn ban.

At the Union County Commissioners meeting on Wednesday, JB Brock, emergency services manager, recommended the commissioners enact a full ban, which prohibits any kind of fire except for regulated agriculture field burning and gas or pellet barbecues.

In a Union County Emergency Services press release, Fire Defense Board Chief Larry Wooldridge said the possibility of a wildfire is at a dangerous level due to the prolonged period of hot and dry conditions.

Brock told the commissioners the drought monitor puts Union County at an abnormally dry level.
See Ban / Page 5A

Two new businesses to move into Baum Industrial Park

■ Commissioners also discuss MERA land exchange

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

The Union County Commissioners approved two land sales for the Baum Industrial Park at Wednesday’s meeting.

The total for the two sales is more than \$170,000 and likely the first two of several on the horizon, according to commissioners.

The first sale was to BAR Trucking, Inc., owned by Tim and Kristy Nelson, originally out of John Day. The business purchased five acres at the industrial park for \$99,500, according to Union County Administrative Officer Shelley Burgess. At the meeting, Burgess said the business will have one full-time position available by the time the business is operational.

The trucking business has been contracted with Boise Cascade for more than 10 years, providing wood waste materials. A description of the business provided by the commissioners’ office said despite Boise

See Union / Page 5A

OHA says tobacco sales to underage smokers widespread

By Audrey Love
The Observer

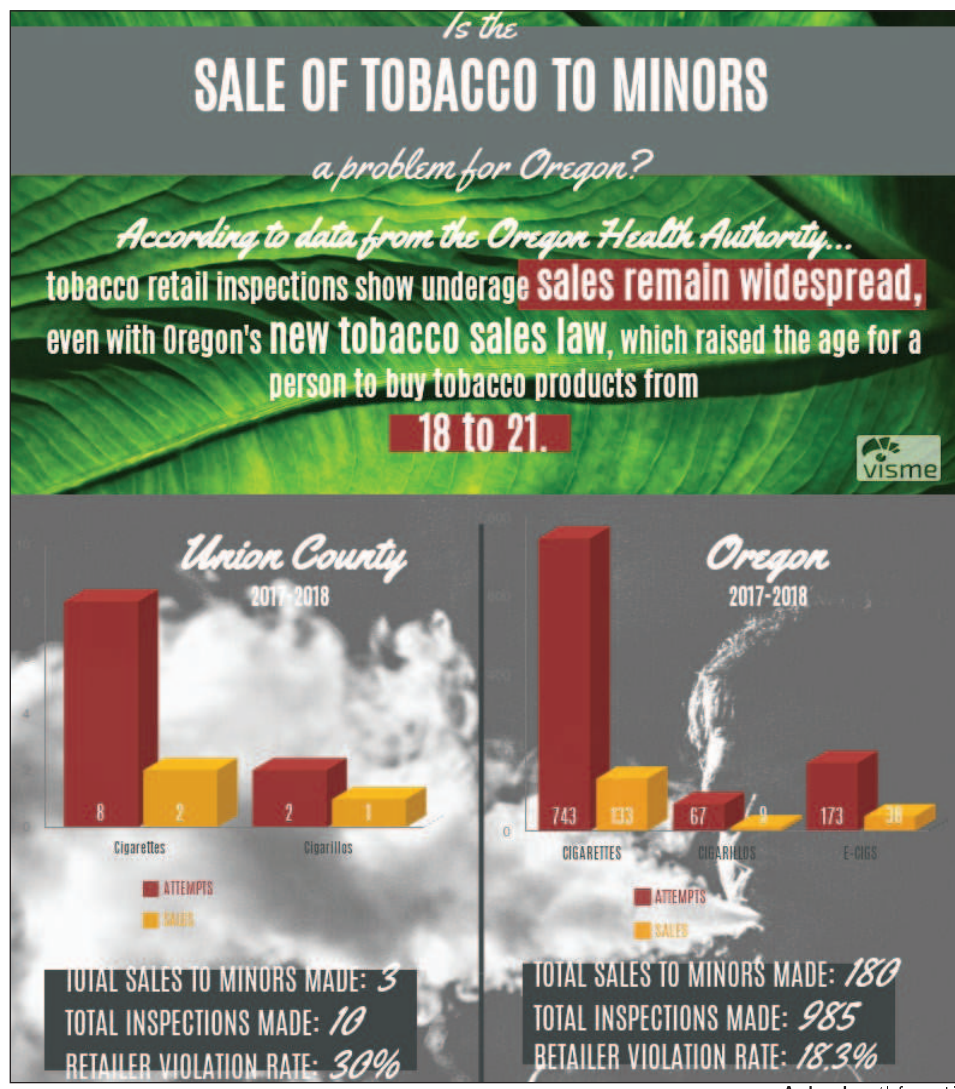
It’s a problem organizations, initiatives and parents have been trying to tackle for decades — keeping kids off drugs and tobacco. Truth Initiative commercials urge, “We can be the generation to end smoking,” and many schools support the D.A.R.E. program. Anti-drug and tobacco messages have arguably saturated the market more than the “smoking is cool” narrative brought to you by the Marlboro Man or Joe Camel in years past.

Yet Oregon state public health officials say the rate of tobacco sales to underage consumers has slightly increased since the state raised the age to buy tobacco from 18 to 21 years old.

The new minimum age law, known as Tobacco 21, went into effect Jan. 1, making Oregon the fifth state in the nation to do so, following Hawaii, California, New Jersey and Maine. This year Massachusetts also followed suit. At least 340 other “localities,” such as New York City, San Antonio and Chicago also enforce this rule, according to Tobacco21.org.

“Selling tobacco to people under 21 years old is illegal, but the data show that nearly one out of every five

See Tobacco / Page 5A



INDEX

Classified.....4B Letters.....4A Record3A
Comics.....3B Lottery.....2A Sports7A
Crossword.....7B Obituaries.....3A Sudoku3B
Dear Abby...10B Opinion.....4A
Horoscope.....5B Outdoors.....1B

WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section
Friday 48 LOW Mainly clear
Saturday 89/49 Partly sunny
Sunday 92/53 Mostly sunny

CONTACT US

541-963-3161
Issue 96
2 sections, 18 pages
La Grande, Oregon

HAVE A STORY IDEA?

Call The Observer newsroom at 541-963-3161 or send an email to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.



MONDAY

THE SHOE THAT GROWS

Online at lagrandeobserver.com