

# Mounties claim CCC title



## Baker Co. discusses carbon cap-and-trade bill, 2A

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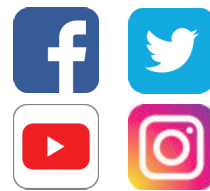
# A Night Under the Stars

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# THE OBSERVER

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## Be prepared: Your tax return could be different this year

### Impact of Tax Cuts and Jobs Act may be an unpleasant surprise

By Francisca Benitez  
The Observer

Due to changes in federal tax law, taxpayers may be receiving smaller or larger tax returns than they planned on receiving, and could even owe money this year, which came as a shock to many.

La Grande resident and owner of Painted Panda day care, Trisha Ingram and her husband are one such family that has received a shock this tax season. Despite trying to offset the blow by having more of their paychecks withheld throughout the year, Ingram reported that between federal and state taxes the couple owes \$28,000.

"We'll be okay, but it's a bad time of year to find out," Ingram said, noting they have a child graduating high school in a few months.

Ingram said the thing that affected

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Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

The City of La Grande has been working overtime because of the snowfall the region has received over the past several weeks. Snowplows work to get the main roads completed first, then work on the residential areas.

### Clear the fire hydrants of snow

La Grande Fire Department wants the community to know with the additional snow on the ground, homeowners who have fire hydrants on their property are responsible for clearing it from snow and debris. The La Grande Public Works Department is responsible for general maintenance of the hydrants, but the hydrants always need to be cleared so the firefighters are able to utilize them quickly and easily if there is a fire. ■

## Snow flurries, tow trucks hurry

### LGPD reports rise in hit and runs

By Cherise Kaechele  
The Observer

The snow will continue to fall this week, and local tow companies are gearing up for more busy days ahead.

Justin Rock, owner of Rock

and Sons Tire and Auto Repair, and Brian Nelson, service manager at Goss Motors, which is an AAA affiliate, report different experiences with business over the last few weeks with all of the snowfall, but they both agree — the weather has an obvious impact on their business.

"We've been extremely busy,"

Rock told The Observer on Tuesday. "Wait times are unfortunately a lot longer than we'd like them to be — up to two hours."

Rock said his business is unique in that it provides towing as well as tires, and both services are being utilized more because of the snow.

"We're responding along-

side the road," he said. "Over the weekend, we responded to 15 trucks for tires. It's just bad conditions."

Captain Hook's towing was called for an interview but no one was available to speak because they were all busy with jobs.

The increased workload is no  
See **Snow** / Page 5A



WesCom Archive

This photo shows what cultivated industrial hemp looks like.

## Hemp seed farm submits CUP

By Cherise Kaechele  
The Observer

A hemp seed and processing farm has been requested via a conditional use permit from the Union County Planning Department.

Hemp is a legal plant, closely related to marijuana. Hemp fiber is extracted from the stem and used to make oil, clothing, food and other products. Hemp

and marijuana are members of the cannabis family, and both plants contain tetrahydrocannabinol, a crystalline compound that in high doses has a psychoactive effect. Hemp has less than 0.3 percent THC, whereas marijuana has a THC content of 5 percent to 35 percent. The products created with hemp are completely legal.

In the Feb. 6 Union County Commissioner meeting, Planning Director Scott Hartell said hemp production is regulated through the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which requires growers to register for growing and harvesting, according to the meeting minutes.

Randy and Rona Lindsey submitted an application to establish a 10- to 16-acre hemp farm in Union County. The Lindseys own Hwy. 30 Cannabis, a medical marijuana facility in La Grande.

In the commissioners' meeting, Hartell told the board the

See **Hemp** / Page 5A

## Students unplug for Alternative Spring Break

### EOU students clean up Hells Canyon trails

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

A number of Eastern Oregon University students will put down their smartphones and pick up shovels and crosscut saws when spring break begins in late March.

The students will do so while participating in EOU's new Hells Canyon Alternative Spring Break, which is set to run March 24-30 in the Copper Creek area of Hells Canyon. Participants will restore trails there as part of a service-based project Eastern's Outdoor Adventure Program will conduct.

"It is a way to give back," said Eli Holeman, outreach engagement coordinator for the Outdoor Adventure Program.

Eastern students will pay \$45 for the chance to work on 2-5 miles of trails a day. The fee will cover the cost of transportation, equipment and meals.

Students will be clearing trails of fallen trees, rocks



and brush, repairing flood damage and more.

Michael Hatch, director of Eastern's Outdoor Adventure Program, said the work is needed because the U.S. Forest Service has fewer funds today for restoring trails.

"It will fill a void," said Hatch, who hopes to have between eight and 10 students sign up.

Students will be working in an area in which there is no cellphone service or access to stores or other modern conveniences.

"It will be a true wilderness experience," Holeman said.

Hatch said the isolation sparks something within people.

"It calls on your self-reliant spirit," he said.

The trail work is being organized in conjunction with the Wallowa Mountains Hells Canyon Trails Association.

Hatch said the EOU students will be working



EOU Outdoor Adventure Program photos

Top: Waters of the Snake River, pictured here, began shaping Hells Canyon about 6 million years ago, according to the U.S. Forest Service website. Bottom: EOU students will be working on restoring the trails of Hells Canyon during their spring break.

in a locale marked by unpolished yet breathtaking splendor.

"It is one of those places that has really raw, rugged beauty," he said. It also has an enormi-

ty that is humbling. "You realize the smallness of your being when you are part of such a big landscape," Hatch said. He hopes this is the

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### WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

**Tonight** 24 LOW  
Snow/sleet, 1-2"

**Thursday** 35/19  
Snow, up to 1"

### CONTACT US

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### 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.



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