

Small Business & Ag Happenings

Important crop insurance deadline nears

SPOKANE — USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds Oregon, Alaska, Idaho and Washington nursery growers the final date to apply for crop insurance coverage is May 1. Current policyholders who wish to make changes to their existing coverage also have until the May 1 sales closing date to do so. Growers applying for the first time may purchase coverage at any time.

Crop insurance is critical to the farm safety net. It provides producers and owners various methods to mitigate production and revenue risks and helps to maintain a healthy rural economy. Growers are encouraged to visit their crop insurance agents soon to learn specific details for the 2018 crop year. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers. Growers can use the RMA cost estimator to get a premium amount estimate of their insurance needs and learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at www.rma.usda.gov.

Bank of Eastern Oregon adds veteran bankers to Island City staff

HEPPNER — BEO Bancorp and its subsidiary, Bank of Eastern Oregon, has added staff to its Island City Loan Production Office. David Stirewalt, Craig Nightingale, Carly Davis and Jack Wright join Kristy Nelson at the Island City branch, 10201 N. McAlister Road. The bank also recently opened a loan production office in Hermiston and hire additional bankers for its Pendleton branch.

"These bankers are well respected in the industry and bring many years of banking experience with them to Bank of Eastern Oregon. Their knowledge of the local markets and a loyal customer following will serve our bank well," according to President and Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bailey.

BEO Bancorp is the holding company for Bank of Eastern Oregon, which operates 18 branches and seven loan production offices in 12 Eastern Oregon and give Eastern Washington counties.

For further information on the company or to access internet banking, visit www.beobank.com.

2018 Farm Bill causes changes in farm loan programs

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The 2018 Farm Bill increased the amount producers can borrow through direct and guaranteed loans available through USDA's Farm Service Agency and made changes to other loans, such as microloans and emergency loans. Increasing the limits for USDA's farm loans helps agricultural producers purchase farms or cover operating expenses. Loan programs affected are Direct

Operating Loans, Guaranteed Operating Loans, Direct Farm Ownership Loans, Guaranteed Farm Ownership Loans, Farm Ownership Microloans and Operating Microloans. In addition, producers who previously received debt forgiveness as part of an approved FSA restructuring plan are now eligible to apply for emergency loans. For more information on FSA farm loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov or contact your local USDA service center.

Blue Mountain Outfitters Outdoors School offers 'Packs 101'

LA GRANDE — Blue Mountain Outfitters, 1124 Adams Ave., La Grande, is hosting "Packs 101" April 25 as part of its Outdoors School series. From 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., participants will learn what to pack, how to pack it, and what pack to use for the most comfortable experience. They are also welcome to bring in their packs for fitting tips. The event will also include snacks, a raffle and sales.

Idaho and Oregon reach agreement on hydroelectric project on Snake River

Keith Ridler
The Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho and Oregon have reached an agreement on a hydroelectric project on the Snake River that requires an Idaho utility to spend about \$312 million on water quality and habitat improvements.

Idaho Republican Gov. Brad Little and Oregon Democratic Gov. Kate Brown in separate news releases announced the agreement Monday.

"This long-awaited agreement supplies clean, affordable energy for Idahoans, improves water quality, and provides additional fish for recreational and tribal ceremonial purposes," Little said.

"This agreement benefits the communities of Eastern Oregon, since we know what's good for water, habitat, and fish is good for people," Brown said.

Idaho Power has been trying to obtain a new 50-year license for its Hells Canyon Complex from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission after the old one expired in 2005, and it's been operating on annual licenses.

But the utility has been caught in



S. John Collins/WesCom News Service

The Brownlee Reservoir from the Snake River Road south of Richland.

the middle of a fight between the two states. Oregon insisted on returning federally protected salmon and steelhead above the dams. Idaho officials didn't want the fish above the dams

because that could force expensive restoration work in environmentally degraded agricultural areas.

Idaho won, but Oregon appeared to

See **Hydro** / Page 2B

New website promotes Wallowa County artisans

Trish Yerges
ForWesCom News Service

A new e-commerce website, Genuine Wallowa County, has been launched. Founded by Kristy Athens of Enterprise and designed by Kristin Summers of Red Bat Design in La Grande, the shopping website showcases gifts handmade by Wallowa artisans.

"Our gift boxes feature fine, one-of-a-kind handcrafts and a few commemorative items from iconic local businesses," Athens said. "Each box includes an insert to tell you more about the people whose work you are enjoying."

Athens purchases the gifts, arranges the boxes, posts them on the website and ships them to her customers either as a single purchase or as a subscription order, deliverable monthly.

The contents of the subscription boxes change monthly,

providing a nice surprise for recipients. Athens has a good selection of gift boxes available, and she plans to launch more gift boxes over Memorial Day weekend. The price points vary on the gift boxes, and orders more than \$100 ship free.

"I know so many amazing local craftspeople and artists," Athens said, "and I saw a need for an additional sales channel to augment their efforts."

She currently has more than 40 vendors and more than 100 items that she chooses from when creating the gift boxes.

"I didn't launch with everything I have off the bat since I didn't know what to expect," she said.

However, even at this early stage of business, she is very pleased with the feedback. "The response is good," she said. "Most orders are from people I know. I have people stopping me on the street and telling



Contributed photo

Genuine Wallowa County founder Kristy Athens with the "Lovely Lower Valley" gift box (left) and "Welcome" subscription box.

me how much they like the gift boxes."

People are buying gift boxes for themselves and as gifts for

other people. The subscription box is always the same, \$39, and if a person buys a couple

See **Web** / Page 2B

ODOT welcomes students for Construction and Utilities Career Day

WesCom News Service staff

BAKER CITY — The Oregon Department of Transportation will host its bi-annual Construction and Utilities Career Day for local high school students on May 2 in Baker City. This Career Day event is the only one of its kind in all of Eastern Oregon, serving high schools in Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Baker, Malheur, Grant and Harney counties. In 2017, nearly 350 students learned about the utilities and construction trades by participating in hands-on activities. This Career Day experience is invaluable in

helping students plan for their future education and careers. According to a press release, ODOT's goal is to share living wage career opportunities and impact lives.

Local utilities and construction companies are sought to participate in the event, which will run from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the ODOT Baker City Maintenance Station. There are four areas of participation planned:

- Booth exhibits provide valuable information for the students and educators. Contractors, utilities, state agencies, two- and four-year

colleges and trade apprenticeship programs will be among the booth exhibitors.

- Hands-on activities give opportunities for students to perform job-related skills and functions in a controlled environment, such as climbing power poles, using surveying equipment, hydraulic jack hammering, underground utilities inspection, etc.

- Heavy equipment will include static equipment with operators available to explain the nature of their job and related industries. Students will also be given the oppor-

tunity to operate some heavy equipment in a controlled, safe environment under skilled direction.

- Utilities area will cover a variety of equipment necessary to perform daily maintenance, new construction or emergency response that most utility companies experience. Students will climb utility poles, experience utility truck bucket use and learn the day-to-day operation of a utility company's equipment.

For more information contact Sandy Lowe 541-963-1901 or Sandy.lowe@odot.state.or.us.

Businesses encouraged to sign up for Safety Break by May 3

WesCom News Service staff

SALEM — On May 8, employers across the state are invited to participate in Safety Break for Oregon, an event focused on raising awareness and promoting the value of keeping people safe and healthy while on the job.

Now in its 16th year, Safety Break encourages employers to bolster workplace safety and health with training, award recognition gatherings or other creative activities. Oregon OSHA coordinates Safety Break, which is voluntary for employers. Businesses and other employers can decide

what activities are most beneficial to their workforce.

"This stand-down provides an opportunity for employers and their workers to take the time to remember the high value they should place on preventing injury and illness in the workplace," said Michael Wood, Oregon OSHA administrator. "It's an important time to review past successes — and the reasons for those successes — while planning ahead with a renewed dedication to analyzing and eliminating hazards."

Safety Break encourages employees and managers to

work together to identify safety and health concerns. The result of this cooperation can lead to fewer injuries and reduced workers' compensation costs for employers.

Companies that participate will be entered to win one of three \$100 checks, to be used for a luncheon of their choice, if they sign up by May 3 online at <http://osha.oregon.gov/safetybreak/Pages/signup.aspx>. The prizes will be given to participating companies as part of a random drawing. The Oregon SHARP Alliance is sponsoring the contest. The nonprofit group promotes

safety and health management by encouraging teamwork among people, employers and organizations to improve workplace health and safety for Oregon workers.

During the Safety Break event, the companies are encouraged to share their activities on social media by tagging @OregonOSHA on Facebook and using #SafetyBreakDay on Twitter.

For more information, ideas on how to host an event, or to download graphics, visit the Safety Break for Oregon website at <http://osha.oregon.gov/safetybreak/Pages/index.aspx>.