

# A constant force



FRIDAY-SUNDAY • September 20-22, 2019 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Dean Arbogast of La Grande

Keep it stored securely away from those underage.

**LOCK IT UP** [ucsafecommunities.org](http://ucsafecommunities.org)

LA GRANDE

## New code officer in place

Officer Cody Kirby steps into new role

By Sabrina Thompson  
The Observer

The City of La Grande has a new code enforcement officer. Officer Cody Kirby, 23, of La Grande, stepped into the position Sept. 4 and has been in training for the last two weeks for his new job enforcing city ordinances.

“The City of La Grande has ordinances they developed over the years on how they want the city to be presented and how we conduct business,” Kirby said.



Kirby

Kirby will deal with everything from lawn care and land use rules to parking violations. In his position he will respond to complaints and also address violations he notes during patrols around town, according to Kirby.

“There is freedom when it comes to that,” Kirby said. “I do have the ability to make improvements within the city that I see. It doesn’t have to be brought (to me).”

Kirby views his role as code enforcement officer as something that will help keep the city safe and running efficiently.

“There are a lot of situations every day that can address concerns that do deal with public safety,” Kirby said. “Even something as simple as the way somebody is parked in front of a stop sign — it might prevent an accident if I address it.”

The code enforcement officer is not a police officer but does work out of the police department. This is ideal for Kirby, as he said he ultimately wants to be a police officer.

“That has been my goal”  
See Kirby / Page 5A

EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY



Dick Mason/The Observer

Classified staff employees at Eastern Oregon University and those at the state’s six other public universities may strike Sept. 30. Above is Inlow Hall, Eastern’s administration building.

## Student services workers, university

# SET FOR STRIKE

Likelihood of walkout at state’s seven universities continues to grow

By Dick Mason, The Observer

*The specter of a strike by the classified staff at Oregon’s seven public universities, including Eastern Oregon University, is looming larger.*

The employees voted late Tuesday to authorize a strike if their union, SEIU 503, and the state’s public universities can’t reach an agreement on a new contract Sept. 30, SEIU 503 told The Observer.

Classified staff are student services employees, such as custodians, carpenters, plumbers, office specialists, information technology specialists and heating, air conditioning and ventilation system specialists.

These employees of the state’s

seven public universities would officially start the strike Sept. 30, according to an announcement from SEIU 503, which represents 4,500 public university employees, among them about 130 who work at EOU.

Jo Hickerson, president of EOU’s SEIU 503 chapter, was optimistic earlier this summer that a strike could be averted and remains so now.

“I’m still hopeful that a settlement can be reached before there is a strike,” Hickerson said Wednesday.

She said university workers would prefer not to strike.

“It is not something we want to do. It is something we have to do (if an offer we feel is not fair is put on the table),” Hickerson said. “We feel we have no choice.”

Hickerson said the biggest issue in the bargaining concerns cost-of-living wage increases. She said what the state is offering would be less than the expected inflation rate.

See Strike / Page 5A

## WOTUS ruling removes possibility of fines

Oregon farmers can use water without fear

By Sabrina Thompson  
The Observer

The Trump administration has repealed the 2015 Obama-era administration rule regarding the “Waters of the United States.” For Oregon farmers, this

is good news. However, it will not bring about much change.

The original rule expanded the Environmental Protection Agency’s control over waterways, including stock ponds and irrigation runways. The EPA’s job in protecting the water under the 2015 rule would have left farmers open to civil litigation and fines

for violating regulations, Union County Oregon Farm Bureau President Jed Hassinger said.

“Under the 2015 rule, a lot of the use became redefined,” Hassinger said. “Because farm fields were redesignated under federal regulations, for individual practices it made it hard to know how water can be used.”

Oregon is one of the 28 states that had not adopted the 2015 WOTUS rule at the time of the repeal because it was stalled in courts, according to the EPA’s website. This means little will be different for the state’s farmers, except not having to worry much about possible fines and litigation.

“It’s a welcome change,”  
See Ruling / Page 5A

## Local business faces fines

B&K Auto Salvage cited by the state’s DEQ

By Sabrina Thompson  
The Observer

B&K Auto Salvage in La Grande was fined \$9,258 by the Department of Environmental Quality on July 29 for an oil spill and mislabeling of used oil. The company is planning to appeal the decision.

According to the DEQ enforcement action letter that was sent to the business located at 10714 S. McAlister Road, the salvage yard was in violation of two codes. The first, for which it received the penalty, was “failing to immediately clean up spills or releases of used oil.” The second, which was without penalty, was failing to label containers of used oil with the words “Used Oil.”

According to the president of B&K Auto Salvage, Jake Hanson, there was not an oil spill, but the business was in violation of the second code. Hanson said B&K uses a DEQ certified furnace to heat the shop during the winter and the oil for it was incorrectly labeled as waste oil.

“It needed to be labeled as used oil instead,” he said.

Hanson said B&K will be appealing the decision because there was not an oil spill. The appeal hearing is set for Sept. 25.

The DEQ said in an email that the department maintains the position that there was a spill. DEQ said it conducted an investigation March 20 based on a complaint filed by a former employee that he was told by the site manager to take used fuel from scrap vehicles and dump it behind the south fence of the facility. When the DEQ investigated, the inspector noticed a strong smell of petroleum and an oily sheen to puddles near the south fence. The inspector took soil samples from the area and they tested positive for elevated levels of oil, indicating petroleum-based contamination. According to the DEQ letter, the cited spill had not been cleaned up as of July 29.

The amount of the penalty was determined by a formula set by the DEQ, according to the letter sent. The base penalty for a Class I violation, which the oil spill was, is \$4,000. The  
See DEQ / Page 5A

INDEX

Classified.....3B	Horoscope.....5B	Outdoors.....1B
Comics.....2B	Lottery.....2A	Spiritual Life..6A
Crossword.....5B	Obituaries.....3A	Sports.....7A
Dear Abby.....8B	Opinion.....4A	

WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Friday 44 Low Mainly clear	Saturday 71/48 Partly sunny	Sunday 68/42 A little rain
----------------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------------------------------

CONTACT US  
541-963-3161  
Issue 112  
2 sections, 16 pages  
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).  
More contact info on Page 4A.