

Some businesses see rebound as restrictions lift

■ Some things might start getting back to normal

By **Sabrina Thompson**
EO Media Group

UNION COUNTY — Some local businesses are feeling an upswing as Union and Wallowa counties near the end of the 21-day Phase 1 of reopening.

For many restaurants, Phase 1 meant reopening their dining room with modifications to allow for proper social distancing. Candace Vaughn, supervisor of Sub

Shop 21 in La Grande, said the ability to do dine-in has increased the amount of people eating from the establishment. Prior to Phase 1, the sandwich shop remained open for takeout and delivery.

“We were affected financially,” Vaughn said. “But, now that everything is calming down, getting back to dine-in has helped us with financial stability.”

The Steakhouse at Cove also

opened its doors to dine-in. While the restaurant did takeout under Gov. Kate Brown’s executive order in March that prohibited dining in restaurants and bars, owner Robert Hasse said he had to lay off some employees. The ability to seat people has helped, he said, and restaurant is at 75% of what it was before having to close.

Not all businesses, however, reopened during Phase 1, including Main Street Grill in Wallowa.

Owner Katrina Frei said the

establishments limited space prevented spreading out more than four tables. Frei said she will wait until the diner can use a majority of the tables to reopen completely, and in the meantime will continue to do offer takeout as an option.

Peak Lifestyle Studio in downtown La Grande is utilizing the reopening and the digital options from quarantine to bring their businesses back.

Owner Colleen McIntosh said people are excited to come back to classes in person, but having the

option to do online classes as well is something people are taking advantage of. Being able to hold classes in the studio has helped bring back customers who had put their accounts on hold, McIntosh said, a few new people have signed up for classes.

“Now that we have started an online option, it’ll never go away completely,” McIntosh said. “Some members that signed up specifically for a virtual option

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Hawkins Sisters Ranch keeps ag tradition alive

By **Bill Bradshaw**
EO Media Group

WALLOWA — The Hawkins Sisters Ranch continues a family tradition stretching back to the 1870s.

Sisters Jenny, Mary and Nora are the fourth generation to raise food on the ranch outside Wallowa along Bear Creek, and they produce chicken and rabbit meat. The Oregon Department of Agriculture lists 14 licensed poultry-processing facilities, but the Hawkins ranch is the lone facility in Eastern Oregon.

The chickens and rabbits on the family operation eat no genetically modified organisms but only crops grown in Wallowa County fields, such as wheat and field peas, Mary Hawkins said. The animals also get protein and mineral supplements but no corn or soy. She said you can taste the difference compared to commercial chickens.

“They taste better,” she said. “They have better flavor, better texture and have more moisture. Also, the nutritional content is better.”

The Hawkins chickens are “beyond free range,” Mary Hawkins said. “They’re fed outside each morning on pasture and allowed to roam.”

She also said the operation mixes the chicken manure with wood chip litter from Integrated Biomass Resources in Wallowa to create a useful compost.

“It’s piled with straw and other waste to generate a fertility amendment ready for adjacent fields and local gardens,” she said. “It’s a way of adding value to an abundant wood product.”

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Photo by Bill Bradshaw/EO Media Group

The Hawkins sisters, who own and operate Hawkins Sisters Ranch just outside of Wallowa, sit on the deck of their processing facility Friday, May 22, with their children. From left are Mary, Anna, James, Myrna and Nora.



Photo by Bill Bradshaw/EO Media Group

Cornish cross chickens wander out to graze at the Hawkins Sisters’ Ranch just outside of Wallowa. When the chickens are 10 weeks old, they’ll be processed for the freezer or dinner table.

WHERE TO GET HAWKINS SISTERS RANCH MEATS

Hawkins Sisters Ranch, 70249 N. Bear Creek Road, Wallowa. Phone: 541-398-0004, email: mary@hawkinssistersranch.com, online at www.hawkinssistersranch.com

Genuine Wallowa County Provisions, phone: 541-406-0831, online at <https://genuinewallowacounty.com> or gwcpvisions.com

Ruby Peak Naturals, 604½ S. River St., Enterprise, phone: 541-426-4042, email: rubbypeaknaturals@hotmail.com, online: <https://www.facebook.com/rpn4042/>

Forest Service may end ban on logging larger trees

■ Removing the 21-inch rule could benefit harvesters, forests

By **Michael Kohn**
EO Media Group

BEND — A rule change under review by the U.S. Forest Service could end a long-standing provision that prevents the harvest of trees greater than 21 inches in diameter on six national forests in Eastern Oregon and Washington.

The limitation on harvesting trees of that size was put in place 25 years ago under a land-management plan amendment known as the Eastside Screens. At the time the Eastside Screens were established as a suite of temporary land management provisions designed to protect water resources and wildlife habitats.

Land managers needed to take into account, or screen, the provisions before moving forward with management activities such as timber harvests.

What’s under consideration is revising just one provision of the Eastside Screens — the limit on cutting trees larger than 21 inches in diameter, also known as the 21-inch rule.

The 21-inch rule has come under scrutiny by the Forest Service because of overcrowded stands of trees that are now deemed a wildfire hazard. The proposal to remove the rule would give managers more flexibility when designing projects, especially landscape forest restoration treatments, said Stephen Baker, regional media officer for Forest Service in the Pacific Northwest region.

“Each of these projects is unique but in a place like Central Oregon, the goal would be to protect and help more fire-resistant species like ponderosa pine by removing some younger, faster-growing but less fire-resistant species that may be encroaching on or outcompeting species like ponderosa pine,” Baker said.

Grand fir and white fir are examples of shade-tolerant species that are less resistant to fire. By contrast, ponderosa pines develop thick bark that helps them withstand wildfires. Grand and white firs are more prevalent now compared to centuries past due to wildfire suppression by humans.

In many areas large, young conifers, especially shade-tolerant firs, have grown larger than 21 inches in diameter and are “out-competing” more fire-adapted species such as ponderosa pines. They grow faster than ponderosas and such growth can lead to an unhealthy forest that is more prone to wildfire.

“What land managers are trying to do is encourage a healthy mix of tree composition and density that can help forests better withstand and recover from disturbances like wildfire and drought,” Baker said. “Removal of some trees larger than 21 inches, especially large, young, shade-tolerant species, may at times be desirable as part of a larger forest restoration process.”

Wildfire suppression and past

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Grande Ronde Hospital building new clinic



Photo by Ronald Bond/EO Media Group

Construction is underway for a new Grande Ronde Hospital Urgent Care Clinic, which will go into the former Rue 21 building in Island City at 10303 S. Walton Road. Grande Ronde Hospital provides a few details on its website about the clinic, saying it should be open by early fall. But the update doesn’t say whether the hospital’s walk-in clinic on Fourth Street in La Grande will move to the Island City location. The update also states the new clinic also will provide services such as radiology.

Wallowa County Farmers Market off to solid start

By **Bill Bradshaw**
EO Media Group

JOSEPH — Things are looking up for the Wallowa County Farmers Market.

The market will continue Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. through Oct. 10. Kimi Starnar, who returned as manager this year after a hiatus since 2014, said 217 people stopped in the market Saturday, as opposed to 313 the week before.

“That’s pretty good for it not being a holiday weekend,” she said. “I had a couple of vendors who said that between the two weekends, they’d had

their best sales ever.”

Six vendors set up shop the first weekend, May 23, and seven the next, Starnar said. Among them was Alder Slope Nursery with a variety of vegetable garden plants, including tomatoes, cucumbers and herbs. Beth Gibans brought an even larger variety of produce from her Backyard Gardens as well as robust vegetables ready to plant and produce.

“We had spring salad mix, spinach, baby mustard greens, scallions, radishes, bok choy, chives, vegetable and herb plant starts (lots of varieties of tomatoes, pep-

pers, eggplants), and rhubarb, herbs and garlic scapes from Little Hill Farm and asparagus from Milton-Freewater,” she said, adding she also prepared foods to high-light Backyard Gardens’ catering.

Other vendors included Sally B Farm with goat milk soap, Annie’s Southfork Jewelry and Well Bread with homemade breads and pastries.

While the main sign at the county’s largest farmers market welcomes all, another sign inside placed coronavirus-related limits on attendance. No children or pets were allowed and only

one person per household was allowed. Those who did come were urged to maintain social distancing of 6 feet from one another and from vendors.

“Everybody was nervous because of the COVID-19,” Starnar said.

But that didn’t stop vendors or visitors. She said mornings were largely filled with Wallowa County residents shopping, while afternoon visitors included more people from La Grande, Pendleton, Portland and other places.

“I know next week we’ll see more vegetable garden plant starts as we get further from the frost

season,” she said.

The market had the usual produce, crafts and jewelry, and Starnar is expecting other types of items as well. She said there may be a booth selling metal work come Saturday, June 6.

Vendors pay \$20 a week or can pay for the entire season at \$15 a week. The market accepts registrations.

For more about the market, go to www.wallowacountyfarmers-market.com or the market’s Facebook page, call Starnar at 541-838-0795 or email her at wallowacountyfarmers-market@gmail.com.