



# THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896



Follow us on the web

TUESDAY • March 16, 2021 • \$1.50

Good day to our valued subscriber Paige Sully of Enterprise

## Holding a virtual FEAST

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Locals on Tuesday, March 16, have a chance to take part in the third Wallowa County FEAST community forum, a virtual event in 2021, that will discuss food systems and food resources, according to a press release.

The event provides an opportunity for discussion about the food system and will include keynote speakers who will discuss their varied perspectives and challenges they have faced, according to Sara Miller, deputy director for Northeast Oregon Economic Development District.

“A FEAST event gives people a chance to meet others interested in our food system and those connections sometimes lead to collaborative projects or volunteer opportunities,” Miller said.

The acronym stands for Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together. Funding to put on the event comes from the Oregon Food Bank. The discussions are centered around addressing challenges in the food system, and Miller said a prior event prompted conversations that resulted in some changes in the county.

“Discussions at the event led to volunteers organizing to host a Rural Resources for Rural Economies AmeriCorps volunteer, completion of a Community Food Assessment for Wallowa County, formation of the ad hoc Wallowa County Food System Council to continue the sharing of information and help people make connections and collaborate on projects to meet community needs,” Miller said.

Food security, and helping establish it, is a key point of the FEAST forum.

“(The event) brings people together who are either interested or involved as a profession in the food system locally,” event co-organizer Katy Nesbitt said. “It’s to evoke conversations and help people dream about what else we can do in our community to have a more secure food system.”

Nesbitt referred to the terms “food security” and “food desert,” which are used in food communities. She said in Wallowa County, for example, small isolated towns such as Troy and Imnaha each could be considered a food desert in that they are farther away from a distribution point. People who live in outlying areas may have more assets such as chickens or

See, FEAST/Page 5A



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Vehicles line Adams Avenue in downtown La Grande the evening of Friday, March 5, 2021. The city resumes parking enforcement in downtown on Monday, March 22.

## Parking fines to return to downtown La Grande



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

A parking enforcement vehicle sits in the parking lot of the La Grande Police Department on Monday, March 15, 2021.

Resuming enforcement receives mix reviews from businesses

By DICK MASON  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The city of La Grande soon will be issuing parking tickets again in the downtown area.

The city has not enforced downtown parking regulations since late March 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The city resumes enforcing downtown parking rules beginning Monday, March 22.

The change comes after the state downgraded Union County’s COVID-19 risk category from extreme to moderate, allowing more businesses to serve more customers, particularly restaurants and bars, which now can operate at 50% capacity for dine-in service. That means more people are visiting downtown, where finding a parking spot can be difficult.

“With most of our retail and restaurants

See, Parking/Page 5A

## Oregon’s 2020 political redistricting: Fuzzy math and absent maps

Eastern Oregon leaders, residents weigh-in on changing the state, federal district lines

By GARY A. WARNER  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The fuzzy future of Oregon politics east of the Cascades was unveiled to the public last week: No diagrams, charts, data — really nothing tangible at all to show how new legislative and congressional districts should be drawn.

“We don’t have any maps,”

said Rep. Andrea Salinas, D-Lake Oswego, chair of the House Redistricting Committee. “We don’t have any numbers from the census.”

Salinas and her Senate counterpart, Sen. Kathleen Taylor, D-Milwaukie, said they were making a good faith effort to hold the legally required 10 public hearings on new political maps, which do not exist yet.

The hearings are collateral damage from the constitutional car crash headed to the Oregon Supreme Court. The once-a-decade process of rebalancing populations in legislative and congressional districts is a smolderingly

hot political wreck. Any fix isn’t expected earlier than autumn.

Like so many things over the past year, COVID-19 is the problem.

In normal times, the U.S. Census counts people every 10 years, in years that end in zero.

The Legislature would get detailed Oregon data by April 1. Legislators would have until the end of their current session on July 1 to get maps of 30 Senate, 60 House and either five or six congressional districts to the governor.

If they couldn’t agree on a redistricting plan, the secretary of state would take a shot at mapmaking and turn in the

maps by Aug. 15.

But these are not normal times. COVID-19 crippled the census count. The Legislature received no data. No maps are being drawn for the governor. There’s no dispute for the secretary of state to resolve.

The census folks in Washington, D.C. have been saying sorry for months. But given all the upheaval in their work, the numbers needed to draw districts won’t get to Oregon until Sept. 30, six months late and well beyond constitutional and statutory deadlines.

To employ an overused term during the current pandemic, the

See, Redistricting/Page 5A

### INDEX

Home & Living .....	1B	Lottery .....	2A
Classifieds .....	4B	Obituaries .....	3A
Comics .....	7B	Opinion .....	4A
Crosswords .....	4B	Sudoku .....	7B
Horoscope .....	4B	Weather .....	6B

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



Tonight  
27 Low  
Cold



Wednesday  
60/40 Low  
Cloudy

### CONTACT US

541-963-3161

Issue 32  
2 sections, 14 pages  
La Grande, Oregon

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



8 51153 00100 6

THURSDAY SHERIFF'S RESERVES

Online at [lagrandeobserver.com](http://lagrandeobserver.com)