

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Saturday, April 17, the 107th day of 2021. There are 258 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On April 17, 1970, Apollo 13 astronauts James A. Lovell, Fred W. Haise and Jack Swigert splashed down safely in the Pacific, four days after a ruptured oxygen tank crippled their spacecraft while en route to the moon.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1492, a contract was signed by Christopher Columbus and a representative of Spain's King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, giving Columbus a commission to seek a westward ocean passage to Asia.

In 1905, the U.S. Supreme Court, struck down, 5-4, a New York State law limiting the number of hours that bakers could be made to work.

In 1961, some 1,500 CIA-trained Cuban exiles launched the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in an attempt to topple Fidel Castro, whose forces crushed the incursion by the third day.

In 1969, a jury in Los Angeles convicted Sirhan Sirhan of assassinating Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

In 1972, the Boston Marathon allowed women to compete for the first time; Nina Kuscsik was the first officially recognized women's champion, with a time of 3:10:26.

In 1973, Federal Express (later FedEx) began operations as 14 planes carrying 186 packages took off from Memphis International Airport, bound for 25 U.S. cities.

In 1975, Cambodia's five-year war ended as the capital Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge, which instituted brutal, radical policies that claimed an estimated 1.7 million lives until the regime was overthrown in 1979.

In 1986, at London's Heathrow Airport, a bomb was discovered in the bag of Anne-Marie Murphy, a pregnant Irishwoman about to board an El Al jetliner to Israel; she'd been tricked into carrying the bomb by her Jordanian fiancé, Nezar Hindawi.

In 1991, the Dow Jones industrial average closed above 3,000 for the first time, ending the day at 3,004.46, up 17.58.

In 1993, a federal jury in Los Angeles convicted two former police officers of violating the civil rights of beaten motorist Rodney King; two other officers were acquitted. Turkish President Turgut Ozal died at age 66.

In 2013, sports returned to Boston two days after the deadly Marathon bombing as the Buffalo Sabres defeated the Bruins in a 3-2 shootout (players on both teams wore "Boston Strong" decals on their helmets).

Ladd Marsh Bird Festival to take wing again

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A popular bird-watching event, which the COVID-19 pandemic grounded in 2020, will take flight again this spring at the Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area.

The annual Ladd Marsh Bird Festival returns May 15-16. The event, which has drawn an average of 300 participants in recent years, will be a scaled-down version of those in the past to allow for COVID-19 social distancing rules to be followed.

"It will not be traditional," said the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Kyle Martin, manager of the Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area.

Past festivals included meals, field trips and presentations from experts. All of that will be missing this year, but there is still plenty to offer for birders. Much of Ladd Marsh will be open to the public during the two-day event, giving bird-watchers the opportunity to see some of the more than 200 species of birds that live at Ladd Marsh year-round, nest



East Oregonian, File

In this undated photo, Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area biologist Cathy Nowak helps visitors find and identify birds. The Ladd Marsh Bird Festival returns in 2021 after it was canceled the year before due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

there or make migration stops annually.

Everyone coming to the event on May 15 must check in at Ladd Marsh's Tule Lake Access Area along Peach Road between between 6 a.m. and noon. Volunteers at the access area will greet

bird-watchers and provide directions for reaching stations where experienced birders will be present to provide advice and help participants identify birds.

Trent Bray, owner of the Bobolink, a La Grande birding supply store, will be among those helping

birders at the event. Bray is delighted the bird-viewing festival is returning. He said it will fill an important need because he believes the number of people who have become interested in bird-watching has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic,

because it can be done alone and outside.

"So many people have gotten excited about doing this for a hobby," Bray said.

Bray, like Martin, said the festival could not be conducted in its traditional mode because that would make it hard to follow social distancing rules. Bray noted in the past, for example, participants would travel together in vehicles during events, such as field trips.

"It is better to play it safe," Bray said.

He said Ladd Marsh is hard to beat as a place to find a variety of avian species. To illustrate his point, Bray said the approximately 187,000-acre National Malheur Wildlife Refuge in Harney County is regarded by many as one of the 10 best in the United States for bird-watching.

"Ladd Marsh is a miniature version of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge," he said.

Additional information about the Ladd Marsh Bird Festival is available at the Friends of Ladd Marsh website, www.friendsoffladdmarsh.org.

Union County mulls spending \$5.2M in stimulus funds

Possible projects include improvements at industrial park, recreation area

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Union County Board of Commissioners is tackling a challenge that likely will prove difficult yet fulfilling.

The commissioners are in the early stage of determining how to spend the \$5.2 million Union County will receive from the COVID-19 aid bill President Joe Biden signed March 11. The process started Wednesday, April 14, when the commis-

sioners met to make suggestions at a work session.

Many of the recommendations reflect what people in the community want the commissioners to consider, said Matt Scarfo, chair of the Union County Board of Commissioners.

"We put known projects on the list," Scarfo said. "We were brainstorming."

Suggestions for boosting business include the paving of Baum Industrial Park and adding a railroad spur to the park to allow rail shipping; assisting busi-

nesses hurting from the COVID-19 pandemic; adding lights at the Elgin train depot; and purchasing new golf carts for the Buffalo Peak Golf Course.

Recommendations also call for installing lights at the Mount Emily Recreation Area to increase security and for improvements at Morgan Lake Park.

Infrastructure suggestions included the repair of bridges on the Wallowa Union Railroad, maintenance work on U.S. Forest Service roads and the repaving of several roads in the county.

Recommendations for

construction include the building of a new county jail to replace the Union County Correctional Facility, which is almost five decades old, a new building for the Imbler Rural Fire Department and the construction of a new North Powder City Hall. The structure there is nearing the age of 100 years.

Another suggestion called for money to help pay off the loan Union County took out when it purchased Buffalo Peak Golf Course.

Recommendations also included one on the historic preservation front —

the restoration of Eastern Oregon University's grand staircase on the north side of Inlow Hall. The staircase, built in the late 1920s, has been closed for at least 10 years because of its declining condition.

Just what the county can spend the money on remains a question because the federal government has yet to hand down funding guidelines. Commissioner Donna Beverage said the guidelines may be released by Wednesday, April 21.

Beverage said the projects in total are far from what the county can afford.

"It is a dream list," Beverage said.

Grant County has highest infections, lowest vaccination rate in Oregon

By **STEVEN MITCHELL**
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Grant County had the highest rate of COVID-19 infections per capita in Oregon last week, and the county also has the worst vaccination rate in the state.

The county's rate of COVID-19 infections was 625 per 100,000 people, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As of Sunday, April 11, Grant and Coos counties had the lowest vaccination rate in the state, 17.4%, according to the CDC, which calculates the percentage based on complete vaccinations.

Kimberly Lindsay, Grant County public health

administrator, estimated that around 30% of the county's residents are partially or fully vaccinated.

Lindsay said the county has stopped requesting additional vaccine doses from the Oregon Health Authority because of a lack of demand. She said the county put first shots into the arms of 73 residents last week, along with 273 second shots for the two-shot vaccines.

On April 12, Jessica Winegar, health department clinic manager, said the health department had 1,200 doses on the shelf that she would not be taking to that day's vaccination event.

Greg Armstrong, the owner of Len's Drug, told

the Eagle the pharmacy has more doses than people coming in to get the shot.

The surge in cases and the county's low vaccination rate, particularly among seniors, also concerns public health officials.

As of April 11, Grant County had vaccinated 34.8% of residents 65 and older, the lowest rate among Oregon's 36 counties, according to CDC data.

Meanwhile, in Harney County, 53.1% of people 65 and older received the vaccine. In Lake County, 48.7% rolled up their sleeves. In Umatilla, 57.7%; Morrow, 55.1%; Union, 53%; Baker, 99.9%; and Malheur, 58.5%.

Pine Eagle High School senior wants to resurface track

By **LISA BRITTON**
For the Baker City Herald

HALFWAY — Grace Davis wants future Pine Eagle High School students to have a real track, and she's dedicated her senior project to raising the necessary money.

Davis lives in Oxbow, along the Snake River at the Oregon/Idaho border, and is a senior at Pine Eagle in Halfway, about 17 miles west of Oxbow.

"I chose this as my senior project because I've been a track and field athlete ever since my freshman year and I know how much it would mean to have an official track to future generations of Pine Eagle athletes," she said.

Davis launched her project in January 2020 by writing a paper on her



Contributed Photo

Grace Davis, a senior at Pine Eagle High School in Halfway, started a GoFundMe account and has done other fundraisers for her project to resurface the track at the school.

goal. She started fundraising in May 2020 with a raffle for flights at the annual fly-in in Richland. Her goal is to raise \$50,000 for a "good quality surface on the

track." All donations are for the upgrade.

Davis set up a GoFundMe account to gather online donations. As of Monday, April 12, the account raised \$2,035. Go to www.gofundme.com and search for "Help surface Pine Eagle's track."

People also can send checks for "Pine Eagle Track" directly to the school at 375 N Main St., Halfway OR 97834.

"If we end up getting more money than needed, the excess will be put toward making our field events qualified for competitions," she said.

She must present her senior project by the end of April. But Caleb Brown, who will be a senior next year, is continuing the fundraising effort.

Roof replacement major component of Enterprise schools bond project

By **RONALD BOND**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The Enterprise School District's plan for how it intends to use the funding from the bond tax levy approved by voters in November is in place.

Roof repair, HVAC update, asbestos abatement and installing energy-efficient windows are among nine projects that will be performed at all three schools in the district and paid for by the \$8 million the district has on hand — \$4 million from the bond levy 57% of voters said yes to late last year and \$4 million matching from an Oregon School Capital Improvement grant from the Oregon Department of Education.

The roof at all three schools will be tackled first, as Superintendent Erika Pinkerton called that the most urgent com-



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

The Enterprise School District's \$8 million refurbishment project calls for replacing the flat-top membrane roof of Enterprise High School with a peaked roof this year. The district has planned other improvements, such as energy-efficient windows and HVAC.

ponent of the project.

"We're in crisis mode with the roof, to be honest," Pinkerton said.

She shared a story of being at a Christmas play in the school her first year on the job and felt a drip of water hit her shoulder. She asked high school Principal Blake Carlsen, who was standing next to her, about it, and he pointed to a tarp on the ceiling full of water

that was starting to drip.

A flat membrane roof is currently what is on the building, but there are times when there is standing water on it, and when the water freezes then thaws, it causes cracks in the roof.

"The installation quality was not at par," Pinkerton said of the roof, which she said was put in place about 15 or 16 years ago. "There were multiple issues when

ENTERPRISE BOND PROJECT

Below is a list of the projects the Enterprise School District will perform with funding from the bond levy voters passed last November.

For all three buildings:

- Replace membrane roof.
- Address stormwater runoff.
- Install hydronic water piping to serve new HVAC distribution system.
- Abate asbestos.
- Install energy efficient windows.
- Remove and replace damaged sidewalks.
- Remove and replace damaged asphalt.
- Safety and security upgrades.
- Remodel key restroom to ADA standards.

For the high school and junior high school:

- Remodel and update science rooms.
- Install elevator.

For the junior high school only:

- Remodel locker rooms.
- Install a ramp and a lift from the gym foyer to the gym floor level.

Source: Enterprise School District Superintendent Erika Pinkerton

that roof was installed."

The new roof will have a pitch on it to allow better runoff.

Of the \$8 million in the project, Pinkerton said \$1.12 million is budgeted for the roof. She added that had the bond not passed, the district still would have addressed the problem, but it would

have done so building by building and not the three schools at once.

"The roofs, there are multiple leaks throughout the entire campus, (and) there are harder-hit areas than others," she said.

Construction on the roof is set to begin in June.

The rest of the resto-

ration or replacement projects will begin later in the year and will run through next summer.

Among them is another project of high importance — getting the district to ADA standards. That includes remodeling restrooms and upgrading wheelchair ramps currently in the schools that are too steep, Pinkerton said. Part of the upgrades also include installing elevators in the junior high and high school building, and installing a lift and a ramp from the foyer to the gym.

"I'm really excited about the lifts," Pinkerton said. "There's going to be an elevator. Our ramps are going to be at an appropriate incline."

She said that because of the current ramp layout, portions of the school are more difficult to access by someone in a wheelchair.