

THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

May 8, 2021

WEEKEND EDITION

\$1.50

LG may begin plans for corridors

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — People who walk and bicycle in south La Grande may have a new reason to celebrate several years from now.

The city of La Grande has applied for a \$134,595 grant from the state that would fund the planning work needed before starting on corridor projects that would make it possible for people to walk and bike safely and with ease.

The grant would come from the new Oregon Community Paths Program, which is dedicated to helping build off-road walking and biking paths that connect communities and destinations. House Bill 2017, known as Keep Oregon Moving, funds the Oregon Department of Transportation program.

A total of \$11.3 million is available via OCP in 2021. The Oregon Transportation Commission on Thursday, May 13, will review the applications it received and make recommendations regarding which projects the state should fund.

La Grande Public Works Director Kyle Carpenter said the Oregon Department of Transportation's recommendation likely will determine if La Grande receives the grant.

Should La Grande get the planning grant, the city would look at projects that would help make it easier for walkers and bikers to get from Eastern Oregon University to Gekeler Lane, a popular exercise route because of its paved pathways and sidewalks.

Carpenter noted people on EOU's campus have to use 12th or Sixth streets to reach Gekeler Lane. Building an asphalt pathway from G Street through Eastern's campus to Gekeler Lane, for example, would make this much easier and safer.

Another option the city might consider would be making it safer for La Grande School District students who live east of the university to walk or bike through its campus while traveling to and from La Grande Middle School, La Grande High School and Central Elementary School.

Presently, the routes children walk and bike on through Eastern's campus are not as safe as they could be because

See, **Paths/Page 5A**



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Jon Hanley, who has made a career as a political cartoonist, is creating several murals in Halfway, as well as making a cartoon-style map of the area from Hells Canyon to Sparta.

MAKING HIS MARK

Artist working on murals in Halfway grew up in La Grande

By **LISA BRITTON**
Baker City Herald

HALFWAY — Jon Hanley is a temporary resident of Halfway, but he's leaving a permanent mark.

Hanley is wrapping up a mural at the Old Pine Market that depicts the history of horses in Pine Valley.

"He's doing a beautiful job. I love coming in and seeing the new progress," said Laurie Bryan, an owner of the market.

Hanley paints after hours, adding a colorful touch to a previously blank wall above the produce area.

"I've had murals on my mind," Bryan said. "I knew Jon was a fabulous mural painter, and he showed up in town."

His work space is a challenge — a ledge about 3 feet deep and 3 feet high, so he has to kneel or lay on his side to paint.

"I take a lot of breaks," Hanley said.

Hanley drew 10 different scenes that incorporate the local scenery and various uses of horses, from providing transportation for Native Americans to logging, agriculture, mining, rodeo and more.



Jon Hanley/Contributed Photo

One panel of Jon Hanley's mural at Old Pine Market in Halfway depicts how horses have been used in agriculture in the Pine Valley of eastern Baker County.

"We could have incorporated 40 more horse scenes," he said.

The mural is about 30 feet long, with each era blending into the next.

"I wanted to do something that tells a story and how integral horses were to daily life," he said. "I've never done anything quite like it. I hope people love it as much as I loved doing it."

His second mural at the

market will be in the entryway and depict how the building and town looked in 1906.

Decades as a cartoonist

Hanley lives in Pocatello, Idaho, but grew up in La Grande.

That was where, at age 15, he began his journey as a political cartoonist. He first drew

See, **Artist/Page 5A**

Wells saluted for work in Union schools

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

UNION — Union School District Superintendent Carter Wells starts each day expecting to be surprised.

Still, none of his wildest expectations could have prepared him for the surprise he received on Monday, May 3.

Wells received the Doug Flatt Memorial Leadership Award.

"I was extremely shocked," Wells said, also noting nobody dropped the faintest of hints about possibly receiving the award.

The Mid Columbia Bus Company and InterMountain Education Service District sponsor the award. Flatt was the chief executive officer of Mid Columbia who died in a plane crash in 2003. The purpose of the Doug Flatt Leadership Award is to recognize a school administrator in a district Mid Columbia serves who exemplifies the same qualities Flatt was well known for.

IMESD Superintendent Mark Mulvihill presented the award to Wells at the annual Union County Crystal Apple Excellence in Education ceremony at La Grande Middle School. Mulvihill had high praise for Wells.

He said under Wells, Union's superintendent since 2013, the school district has had significant improvement in test scores, staff retention and graduation rates. Mulvihill said Wells' signature achievement was the role he played in voters passing an \$8 million bond package in 2019 to upgrade the school district's aging facilities.

The award puts Wells in select company. Each year only one administrator in the school districts and community schools the InterMountain Education Service District contracts with in Union, Umatilla, Baker and Morrow counties receives the Doug Flatt Leadership Award. The four

See, **Wells/Page 5A**

Dam controversy continues

Simpson, NW lawmakers clash over dam conversations with Oregon's Brown

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

SALEM — Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson and representatives of Oregon Gov. Kate Brown spoke for months about removing dams on the Snake River, sparking criticism from other members of Congress from the region.

"I don't know how many times I have to say that I have not written legislation," Simpson said in a press release. "What is available to the public is what currently exists."

Lawmakers in Oregon and Washington accused Simpson and Brown, who supports removal of the dams, of a lack of transparency. They say it's part of an effort to push Simpson's \$33.5 billion plan to remove the

dams, in the name of preserving salmon and benefiting agriculture, through Congress without regional support.

Brown did not respond to requests for comment.

A 397-page document containing conversations between Simpson's office and Brown's office was released in response to a public records request from the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental group.

"It's clear this proposal is not just a starting point, but rather a radical and fully-baked plan he is actively seeking to put into law," Reps. Dan Newhouse and Cathy McMorris Rodgers, of Washington, and Cliff Bentz, of Oregon, said in a press release.

They asked why Simpson appears to be building his plan



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/Contributed Photo

Ice Harbor Dam on the Lower Snake River holds back Lake Sacajawea, a source of irrigation water for 47,000 acres of farmland. Some Republican members of Congress from the Northwest are accusing a GOP Idaho lawmaker of conducting secret negotiations with the Democratic governor of Oregon over a controversial proposal to breach four dams on the Snake River to save endangered salmon runs.

behind closed doors and supporting Brown's perspective, instead of the governor of his state, Idaho's Brad Little.

"Not only does this have harmful impacts on our regional dialogue, but it also raises questions about the viability of the 'Four Governors' agreement

signed last year which was purportedly intended to formalize a collaborative platform to work together to address these important issues in the Northwest," they stated.

Simpson asked how he could

See, **Dams/Page 5A**

INDEX

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

WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight
39 LOW
Rather cloudy

Sunday
59/35
A stray t-shower

CONTACT US

541-963-3161

Issue 53
2 sections, 14 pages
La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.
More contact info on Page 4A.



8 51153 00100 6

TUESDAY

SHAKESPEARE IN THE SUMMER

Online at lagrandeobserver.com