

# THE OBSERVER

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## West Coast chlorine shortage reaches Eastern Oregon

Power failure at Washington plant leads to issue

By CARLOS FUENTES  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Certain cities across Northeastern Oregon are experiencing chlorine shortages for their water supply due to a major electrical failure at a Washington chlorine manufacturing facility that supplies chlorine for much of the West Coast.

According to Doug Wiggins, city administrator for

the city of Union, the city has a six-month supply of gas chlorine, which is used to clean drinking water. However, there is a shortage of liquid chlorine, which is used to treat wastewater, he said.

“There’s just not a lot we can do, because people are going to continue going to the bathroom,” Wiggins said. “On the water side, we’re okay. There doesn’t seem to be a need for any restrictions, but that might be something we have to discuss in the future.”

The city receives its chlorine in barrels, each of which provides 10 days

of sanitation. The city of Union currently has about 1-1/2 barrels’ worth of liquid chlorine for wastewater, or a 15-day supply, according to Wiggins.

“We’re hoping they figure out the supply, because you can’t stockpile the liquid, so we’ve been barely keeping up every week,” Wiggins said. “If it gets worse, we could be in danger of violating state regulations.”

Union receives its chlorine from OXARC in La Grande, a company that supplies industrial gases and chemicals. OXARC gets its chlorine from West-

lake Chemical, a chlorine manufacturer in Longview, Washington, which experienced a power failure in early June when a piece of equipment connected to an electrical transformer at the facility stopped working.

Officials expected the repair to take several weeks, but on Wednesday, June 23, NORPAC, a customer of Westlake, gave the company a spare transformer that allowed production to resume.

“Westlake Chemical’s Longview, Washington, plant successfully installed

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The Observer, File  
Residents make use of La Grande’s community Veterans’ Memorial Pool in this undated photo. A major electrical failure in early June 2021 at Westlake Chemical, a chlorine manufacturing facility in Longview, Washington, has caused chlorine shortages across the West Coast. According to La Grande Parks and Recreation director Stu Spence, there is no chlorine shortage at the Veterans’ Memorial Pool for the time being.

## Inlow Hall to receive facelift

EOU’s 1st building to be restored and modernized with \$18.5M in funding

By DICK MASON  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The future of Inlow Hall, Eastern Oregon University’s oldest building, now looks as solid as the face of Indian Rock near Mount Emily.

The building is set to receive major restoration and modernization work after a committee in the Oregon Legislature voted on Thursday, June 24, to allow the use of nearly \$446 million in state bonds to finance major building and renovation projects. The request for the \$446 million in funding by the state’s universities later received final approval from the Legislature.

EOU’s share of this funding will be \$18.520 million, all of which will be used for work at Inlow Hall.

“It will be a great upgrade and update,” said Tim Seydel, EOU’s vice president for university advancement.

The funding, which includes about \$500,000 in matching funds from

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Davis Carbaugh/The Observer  
Reese Delaney, of Cove, sits in his soap box derby car in a tune-up session in the family’s garage on Tuesday, June 22, 2021. The 14-year-old qualified for the 2021 All-American Soap Box Derby World Championships in Akron, Ohio.

## Facing the world’s best

Cove youth travels to Ohio next month for Soap Box Derby World Championships

By DAVIS CARBAUGH  
The Observer

COVE — When Sam Delaney saw his son, Reese Delaney, flying down the road on a scooter at the age of 5, he had an idea.

Fast forward 10 years and the father-son duo is headed to the All-American Soap Box Derby World Championships on July 24, 2021, in Akron, Ohio. Reese Delaney, 14, took first place in

the Soap Box Derby Oregon Championship to advance to the Super Bowl of soap box derbies.

“It makes me happy when you work hard toward something, then you step back and see the success,” Reese Delaney said.

### Humble beginnings

The journey toward making it to Derby Downs, home of the All-American Soap Box Derby, has been one of modest origins

for Reese Delaney.

For the Delaneys, it all started when Reese Delaney fearlessly rode down that hill in Cove on his scooter in his early childhood. Sam Delaney saw his son’s size and fearlessness, and his son was looking for a sport to get involved with. In 2016, they bought the parts for their first soap box derby car and put it together in the family’s garage.

“We had no idea what we were doing,” Sam Delaney said.

Sam Delaney grew up in Salem, home to the most esteemed soap box derby track in Oregon. While he was never involved in soap box derby competition, he heard stories from his dad and used to skateboard down the track in Salem.

With no experience in soap box racing, the Delaneys started entering local competitions and paid their dues as rookies.

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## The Local opens doors for business downtown

By CARLOS FUENTES  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Three years after the Texaco gas station closed in downtown La Grande, the site is now occupied by The Local — downtown’s newest coffee and ice cream shop — which opened Friday, June 25.

The menu consists of coffee drinks, tea, milk-

shakes, ice cream and various pastries.

According to manager Randy McPhetridge, the most important part in opening the shop was making sure the product was high quality.

“We know our product is good. We’re using the best stuff, so we’re just excited to get customers driving through so we can deliver them these high-quality

products,” McPhetridge said.

For now, only the drive-thru is open, although customers may go inside to order beverages to go.

“The drive-thru will be opening first, and with a limited menu until we get everyone trained,” co-owner Karin Tsiatsos said.

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Carlos Fuentes/The Observer  
The Local, a new business offering coffee drinks, tea, ice cream and pastries, nears completion in early summer 2021 in downtown La Grande. The drive-thru window opened Friday, June 25, and the shop will also have indoor and outdoor seating.

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

Tonight 68 Low Clear and warm  
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### CONTACT US

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Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.  
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THURSDAY

ELGIN YOUTH ACTORS WIN NATIONAL AWARD

Online at lagrandeobserver.com