

# THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

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## Commission to give UC voters a chance to opt out of Measure 109

Weighing the pros and cons of psilocybin

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Union County Board of Commissioners voted 3-0 on Wednesday, Aug. 3, in favor of an ordinance that would prohibit the sale and manufacturing of psilocybin products in unincorporated portions of the county. The proposed psilocybin

ordinance will be referred to voters in the Nov. 8 election.

The sale and manufacturing of psilocybin in Oregon will be legal starting Jan. 2, 2023, under Measure 109, which voters approved in 2020. Measure 109 will go into effect at that time in unincorporated portions of Union County if the proposed ordinance is defeated by voters.

Measure 109 passed with a 56% majority in Oregon in 2020, but voters in Union County rejected it.

The measure directs the Oregon Health Authority to license and regulate the manufacturing, transportation, delivery, sale and purchase of psilocybin products.

Psilocybin is the active ingredient in hallucinogenic mushrooms, and research has indicated it may be a useful drug in treating a variety of conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder, which many veterans suffer from.

Cheryl Campbell, of Imbler, an intensive care unit nurse for

**INSIDE**

The La Grande City Council voted to declare an emergency in order to pass an ordinance banning psilocybin service centers within city limits during its regular meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 3, which means the issue will be put to the voters on the upcoming November ballot.  
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Campbell said many studies over the past 10 years have shown that patients who receive psilocybin therapy for depression, PTSD and addictions receive major reductions in their symptoms or experience complete remission. She said studies repeatedly show patients treated with psilocybin experience few side effects or adverse reactions.

“Many mental health scholars see psychedelic-type therapies,

30 years in Union County, spoke in support of psilocybin at the board of commissioners meeting.

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## Jury finds Lee guilty of murder

Judge sentences Lee to life in prison

By **ISABELLA CROWLEY**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Union County Circuit Court Judge Thomas Powers sentenced a La Grande man to life in prison on Friday, Aug. 5, after a jury convicted him of murdering his wife in November 2018 at her Cove home.

Ronald Lee, 74, will serve a life sentence for killing Loretta Williams. The two were in the process of divorcing.

“This could be described, as it was by many witnesses, as a cold-blooded execution,” Powers said.

The jury deliberated for about three hours on Thursday, Aug. 4, after the prosecution and defense presented closing arguments earlier in the day.

“I’m very grateful that the jury saw the evidence for what it was and held the defendant accountable,” said Union County District Attorney Kelsie McDaniel. “This has been a long journey, not only for my team, but especially for the family. I hope that the conclusion of the trial brings them some peace and closure.”

Powers said the murder conviction comes with a mandatory sentence of life in prison. Lee will, however, be eligible for parole in 25 years.

**Lee takes the stand**

Lee took the stand Wednesday, Aug. 3.

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## Environmental excellence

ODOT’s Whiskey Creek Culvert Project wins national award

By **SHANNON GOLDEN**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — At the confluence of Whiskey Creek and the Grande Ronde River, the traveling public and migrating fish alike are reaping the benefits of an award-winning new project.

The Whiskey Creek Culvert Replacement Project, completed in 2021, was among 14 projects nationwide honored with the 2022 Environmental Excellence Award from the Federal Highway Administration.

“It was an incredible honor,” said Paul Kennington, the Region 5 Environmental Program Coordinator for the Oregon Department of Transportation.

The FHA reached out to Kennington about the honor in April. The project was selected for its exemplary achievement in the Roadside Resource Management and Maintenance category. Kennington credited the many individuals who went “above and beyond” to make the project a success.

Out of 70 entries, ranging from infrastructure reconstruction to park and trail transformations, the Whiskey Creek Project stood out for its environmentally focused efforts to improve the state’s roads and waterways. ODOT’s mitigation project at Klamath Lake in south-central Oregon also received an award.

This nearly \$1.4 million project involved the

See, **Project**/Page A6



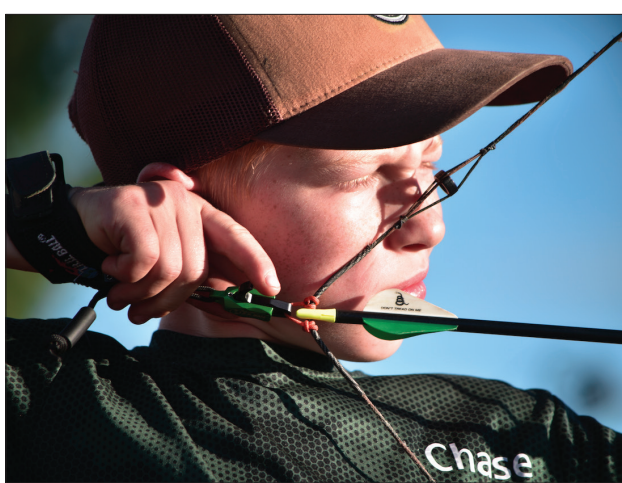
Keller & Associates and Tom Strandberg/Contributed Photos

The first aerial photo above shows the confluence location before construction on Oct. 17, 2018 (left). The second (right), taken June 6, 2022, shows water flowing freely through the new culvert and weirs into the Grande Ronde.



Water levels at the confluence of Whiskey Creek and the Grande Ronde River were low on Monday, Aug. 1, 2022, but the Oregon Department of Transportation’s newly renovated culvert is working in perfect form.

Shannon Golden/The Observer



Chase Burton, 10, aims for his target during the 4-H Archery Competition at the Union County Fair on Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022.

## 4-H archers hit the mark

Union County Hawkeye club members make a name for themselves at county fair

By **SHANNON GOLDEN**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — As the sun set over the Blue Mountains, young archers stepped into the line for the Union County Fair 4-H Archery Competition. They nocked their arrows and set their sights on the rings of their targets.

“Fire when ready,” said Jordan Null, her voice traveling across the Union County Fair Horse Arena.

Arrows whizzed toward hay bales. The archers quietly drew again from their quivers, zeroing in once more on the yellow center of the target face.

For the Union County Hawkeyes 4-H Club — the

county’s only archery club — the yearly fair may not mean livestock and showmanship competitions. But just as other 4-H members spend all year caring for their animals, these young archers have worked for months for the chance to show off their skills.

“Learning archery long-term is a much different journey than learning how to hit a target in a week,” said Null. “Getting to see kids take

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

	<b>Tonight</b> 45 LOW Clear and cool		<b>Sunday</b> 95/48 Sunny and hot
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