

Oregon

Pendleton Grain Growers will detach its grain division

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Pendleton Grain Growers, which has been hammered in recent years by financial problems and poor wheat harvests, will explore the option of detaching its grain division, General Manager Rick Jacobson announced Wednesday.

The co-op will consider selling, merging or entering into a joint venture with a third party before the next growing season, Jacobson said. An export company or neighboring co-op might be interested, he said, but there are no offers on the table.

The grain division will continue to buy and operate as usual until a transaction is completed, Jacobson said in a prepared statement. The decision was approved by PGG's board of directors.

Board Chairman Tim Hawkins said it didn't make economic sense for the co-op to



E.J. Harris/EO Media Group File

The Pendleton Grain Growers McNary Terminal can store 6.6 million bushels of wheat and handles 90 percent of the wheat in Umatilla County, Ore. The co-op has announced plans to seek a joint venture or other arrangement for its grain division.

continue operating the grain business itself.

"The grain business is one that requires scale to ensure competitiveness, and our grain division did not attract enough handle this year for us to effectively move forward," Hawkins said in a prepared statement.

The board's first choice is to have another co-op handle the grain division, but exporters are considering the investment as

well, he said.

"The decision will come down to who offers the greatest value for our members," Hawkins said in the statement released Wednesday morning.

"We had informed the growers in meetings that the future of the grain business would be evaluated based on the size of the handle this year," Hawkins said in the statement. "PGG greatly appreciates the support

of the producers that brought us their grain, but there simply were not enough of them."

PGG does not have a deadline for striking a deal, other than before the next harvest season.

The co-op has been wobbling for several years. Since 2014 PGG has sold or closed several divisions, laid off employees, reduced excess inventory, restructured its debts into a new loan package and obtained a \$20 million line of credit in response to the financial problems. Jacobson said in June that PGG was positioned to make a profit in 2015.

Earnings at the end of June were \$4 million above the same time in 2014, the co-op reported.

But a lack of moisture and intense heat early in the season "pinched" dryland wheat crops for some PGG growers, resulting in yield reductions of 25 to 30 percent and protein levels higher than exporters prefer.



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

A worker at the Threemile Canyon Farms dairy in Boardman, Ore., milks cows on a rotating carousel system. Oregon has recently adopted new state permits for dairies and other confined animal feeding operations.

Oregon CAFOs can now operate under water permits

Some livestock operations can opt out of federal permit system

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Confined animal feeding operations in Oregon can now work under state-issued water quality permits instead of the federal Clean Water Act permitting system.

As of Oct. 21, the Oregon Department of Agriculture has made available "water pollution control facilities" permits to livestock operations that don't discharge runoff into surface waters.

These state permits won't require CAFOs to file annual reports to farm regulators, thus reducing paperwork, and they won't be subjected to public notice-and-comment requirements if they expand, said Wym Matthews, manager of ODA's CAFO program.

"We don't have to inform the public of changes on the farm," he said.

Expansion plans at several Oregon dairies recently met with opposition from vegan and environmental groups, which used the public comment procedures to object to CAFOs as inhumane and unhealthy.

Livestock groups were concerned by the backlash because the public disclosures include maps and other data about CAFOs, which they fear will be exploited by animal rights activists.

State permits may be preferable for livestock operators who don't want to be part of the federal Clean Water Act

permitting system, but roughly 80 percent of the 522 CAFOs in Oregon are expected to remain federally permitted, Matthews said.

These CAFOs generally prefer to stick with the federal permits for legal reasons, he said.

Operating under a federal "national pollutant discharge elimination system" permit protects CAFOs from citizen lawsuits for alleged violations of the Clean Water Act, he said. "You can't get that with a state permit."

Oregon began requiring all CAFOs to operate under the federal system in 2002 due to regulatory changes at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, he said.

Federal court decisions have since held that EPA can't require NPDES permits for operations that don't actually discharge, which is why Oregon is making the state permits available, Matthews said.

However, once a CAFO is found to discharge into surface water, it must switch over to the federal permit system, he said.

Another major change that will affect both state and federal CAFO permits is that operations will be required to test soil samples every year to ensure the ground isn't being overloaded with nutrients, Matthews said. Previously, such tests were required once every five years.

"The sampling basically validates the nutrient management system," he said.

Dairies and other CAFOs are allowed to broadcast manure on fields as long as nitrogen and other nutrients are applied at rates that are taken up by crops and don't enter the water.

OSU's Strand Hall returns to its former glory

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Strand Hall, the home of the Oregon State University's College of Agricultural Sciences for the past century, reopened Oct. 27 in Corvallis after a \$25 million restoration project.



Dan Arp

During a reopening ceremony Tuesday, Portland architect Doug Reimer said it was the most enjoyable project he's worked on in his 30-plus-year career.

The work included extensive seismic stability and accessibility improvements. The latter included making bathrooms and four entrances accessible to people using wheelchairs or with other mobility limitations, and adding an elevator that reaches the fourth floor. An older elevator



Courtesy of Hennebery Eddy Architects Inc.

This is an artist's rendering of the renovated Strand Hall on the Oregon State University campus in Corvallis. A restoration project has recaptured the College of Agricultural Science's central place on the OSU campus.

reached only the third floor.

The dean's office was moved from the first floor to the fourth floor. The building's wiring, sprinkler system, fire alarms and heating and cooling systems were renovated or updated throughout.

"It was pretty antiquated," said one of the project leaders, Kevin Cady of Hoffman Con-

struction in Portland.

The work may have accomplished something else: Restored the College of Ag to its central place on campus, as was intended in a 1909 master plan developed by famed landscape designer John Charles Olmsted. He was the nephew and adopted son of Frederick Law Olmsted, who

designed New York's Central Park.

The younger Olmsted's campus design had Strand Hall facing east and west into both of OSU's "quads," the rectangular spaces crisscrossed by sidewalks, lined with graceful trees and bordering the Memorial Union, OSU library and other notable buildings.

Strand, designed by John Benness, was built in three phases in 1909, 1911, and 1913. Over time, however, the "double fronted" look and grandeur of Strand Hall diminished, said Reimer, the renovation project architect.

"As you can imagine, 100 years of remodeling has a tendency to mess up the original idea that the architect had," Reimer said.

As administrators over the decades tried to squeeze in more offices, workers made such changes as narrowing the hallways and lowering ceilings.

District attorney still gathering evidence in Grant County wolf shooting

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

It may be close to Halloween before a district attorney decides whether to bring charges against a man who shot a protected gray wolf while hunting coyotes in Eastern Oregon.

Harney County District At-

torney Tim Colahan said he's waiting for evidence and reports from neighboring Grant County, where the shooting was reported Oct. 6. Colahan is handling the case as a courtesy because the Grant County prosecutor reportedly knows the hunter's family and wanted to avoid an appearance of a conflict of interest.

The hunter, identified so far only as a Grant County resident, reported to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife that he'd killed a wolf while hunting coyotes on private property south of Prairie City.

The hunter met with ODFW and Oregon State Police personnel, who investigat-

ed and recovered the wolf's carcass. Wolves are protected under state and federal Endangered Species Act laws, depending on the location, and it's a crime to kill one except to defend human life.

Ranchers in Oregon's Northeastern corner can shoot wolves caught in the act of attacking livestock or herd dogs,

but there have been no cases reported of that happening.

As with all criminal investigations, Oregon district attorneys have the authority to file charges, present evidence and ask a grand jury to return an indictment, or decide not to prosecute.

ODFW identified the dead wolf as a male designated

OR-22, which dispersed from the Imnaha Pack in February 2015. He had no mate or pups, according to ODFW.

OR-22 was the third Oregon wolf to die since late August. The Sled Springs pair, a male and female, were found dead of unknown causes in Wallowa County the week of Aug. 24.

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