

Oregon

Grant funding OK'd for wastewater irrigation study

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The City of John Day has obtained a \$50,000 grant to study the possibility of using wastewater for hydroponic crop production or pasture irrigation.

The award was one of eight grants totaling more than \$400,000 approved for water project feasibility studies by the Oregon Water Resources Commission.

John Day currently stores treated wastewater in four ponds near the John Day River, but the system may not pass regulatory muster in the future due to potential adverse impacts on water quality.

For this reason, the city wants to examine re-using the wastewater, which amounts to 87.6 million gallons annually, in hydroponic greenhouses.

The other option would be to pipe the water to two 40-acre lagoons north of town that would feed a 120-acre center pivot irrigation system.

The total cost of the study is expected to be \$110,000, with matching funds provided by the city and another state grant program.

After the approval of the eight grants, the Oregon Water Resources Commission still has more than \$600,000 available for future water project feasibility studies.

One of the proposals submitted to the commission — \$93,935 to study removing sediment from the Applegate Reservoir in Southern Oregon to increase storage capacity — was rejected.

The Oregon Water Resources Department, which is overseen by the commission, recommended against funding the study because it only proposed removing sediment, which is a temporary solution.

Fire sweeps through dairy farm's barn, destroying hay and equipment

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

An Oregon dairy farm lost approximately 600 tons of hay early May 19 when a fire of unknown origin swept through a wood and steel commodity barn.

Firefighters from the Mount Angel, Monitor, Silverton and Woodburn fire districts responded to the fire reported at 1:06 a.m. at AJ Dairy, 16153 Marquam Road. They found the barn fully involved in flames. The cause was undetermined; a preliminary estimate put the damage at about \$300,000 for the building and contents, according to the Mount Angel Fire District.

Tim Kuenzi, co-operator of the dairy, sustained burns on his hands and ankles when he tried to move a front-end loader out of the burning barn. Kuenzi said he threw on coveralls and rushed to the barn when the fire was discovered, but the equipment was too hot to move.

"I'm thankful there was no loss of life and the animals are safe," he said. He said his burns were bandaged and he was able to work the following day.

Bill to expand self-service gas in rural counties heads to governor's desk

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A bill to expand the hours of self-serve gas stations in rural counties in Eastern Oregon is headed to Gov. Kate Brown's desk, after the Senate passed it May 23 on a 26-1 vote.

Oregon is one of only two states that prohibits customers from pumping their own fuel at gas stations. New Jersey is the other state.

Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, voted against the proposal.

She is a strong believer in the Oregon way when it comes to gasoline service," said Rick Osborn, a spokesman in the Senate Democrats' Office.

Two years ago, the Legislature passed a bill to allow self-fueling between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. in certain rural counties, to prevent travelers from being stranded overnight.

"In many of these smaller communities, people would get stuck without a full tank of gas" because no gas sta-



EO Media Group

A bill to expand the hours of self-serve gas stations in rural Eastern Oregon counties is headed to Gov. Kate Brown's desk. The proposed change affects 15 counties in Eastern Oregon: Malheur, Union, Wasco, Hood River, Jefferson, Crook, Baker, Morrow, Lake, Grant, Harney, Wallowa, Gilliam, Sherman and Wheeler.

tions were open, said Sen. Rod Monroe, D-Portland, who carried the bill to the floor.

The bill passed Tuesday ex-

pands that period to 24 hours in 15 counties, with populations of less than 40,000. Stations would still be required to have at least one attendant

between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., but customers could pump their own gas if the attendant is busy and a cardlock machine is available.

Legislators pursue changing appointment authority for ODOT director

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Legislators on a joint committee crafting a transportation package plan to propose shifting authority to appoint the director of the Oregon Department of Transportation from the governor to the Oregon Transportation Commission.

"If you are going to have entity with fiduciary responsibility, they need the ability to appoint the CEO," said Committee Co-chairman Lee Bey-

er, D-Eugene. Under the plan, the five-member commission would appoint the director "in consultation with the governor."

The proposal is one part of a transportation package that would raise about \$8 billion over the next 10 years to pay for projects to relieve congestion and maintain roads and bridges.

The 14-member committee has met over the last two weeks to refine points they wanted to include in the legislation, which legislative

counsel is in the process of drafting. Lawmakers emphasized that their agreement for the first draft of the legislation did not necessarily indicate their support for all of the provisions. Many of the finer points will be hashed out after the first draft is completed. Co-chairwoman Caddy McKeown, D-Coos Bay, estimated the first draft would be finished by May 31, with public hearings later.

The money for the plan would come from hikes in the gas tax and registration and li-

cense fees, tolls and new taxes on payroll and purchases of new vehicles and bicycles. The legislation also would require a website so taxpayers could follow the progress and budgets of projects in their area and create an independent staff for the OTC.

Tammy Baney, OTC chairwoman, earlier this year asked Gov. Kate Brown for a separate staff and for more involvement in the appointment of the ODOT director.

The plan identifies a few specific projects to ease con-

gestion, but other projects would be prioritized by the OTC. Specific projects would:

- Add lanes on Interstate 5 near Portland's Rose Quarter from Interstate 84 to Interstate 405.
- Add northbound and southbound lanes on Highway 217 through the Portland metro area.
- Widen Interstate 205 to six lanes from Oregon City to Stafford Road.
- Widen and seismically reinforce Interstate 205's Abernethy Bridge.



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