

Cost overruns hit Treasure Valley Reload Center

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Building the Treasure Valley Reload Center to original design specifications would cost almost one-third more than originally estimated, prompting proponents to scale back the project.

The truck-to-train loading facility to be built north of Nyssa, Ore., would ship onions and other commodities east to major markets. Southeast Oregon and southwest Idaho produce about one-quarter of the country's fall storage onions.

The 2017 Legislature approved a \$26 million ConnectOregon grant from lottery-backed bonds. Legislators this year approved a \$3 million grant, from federal coronavirus recovery funds, to the City of Nyssa, for a water line extension for the reload center and future industrial development.

Greg Smith, Malheur County Economic Development director and officer of the separate Malheur County Development Corp., said the project is about \$9.8 million over the original \$35 million budget. The original plan called for opening nearly 290 acres of industrially zoned land for development.

He said an overarching solution is to reduce the budget and features



Courtesy of Anderson Perry

An artist's rendering of Treasure Valley Reload Center as originally designed. It is under construction near Nyssa, Ore.

"from a Cadillac to a Chevrolet" including eliminating "unnecessary wants."

Cost overruns include about \$5 million in unexpected excavation to deal with excess groundwater, a price from lone building-construction bidder TCG Construction of Meridian, Idaho, that was about \$2.9 million above expectations, and higher steel and asphalt costs driven by inflation.

Smith said construction bidding interest has dropped due to development in southwest Idaho and high transportation costs. The corporation will solicit new bids.

About \$3 million could be saved

by delaying construction of one of the three rail spurs for three years, he said. And \$1 million could be saved by using a septic waste system instead of a lagoon system serving several companies.

Smith said \$2 million could be saved by eliminating all access roads except the one to the reload center. Industrial park roads could be added later as funding becomes available.

Substantial excess groundwater lies in the path of planned rail spurs. An engineering solution that uses riprap rock to displace water and add support strength is expected to reduce remediation cost

by about \$1 million, he said.

Another \$300,000 could be saved by reducing office square footage.

"We don't need \$10 million, we need \$3 million," Smith said.

The development corporation is inquiring with legislators and state economic development unit Business Oregon about potential solutions.

Smith said potential funding sources are the Legislative Emergency Board, which meets between sessions, and the state Special Public Works Fund that provides low-cost financing to municipalities.

A Special Public Works loan

would be repaid by Malheur County or the City of Nyssa, depending on which applies. He said it would be backed by the development corporation, either through the 65 acres it has acquired or future sale of industrial park lots.

Malheur County Judge Dan Joyce, who heads the commission-like County Court, said commissioners likely would be hesitant to borrow. The county at the outset did not plan to spend money on the project but ended up doing so to help the corporation purchase the site.

But the county supports the economic development project "and would like to see it come to fruition," he said.

Nyssa City Manager Jim Maret could not be reached immediately.

Site work started in October, triggering state funding. Steel for the building is on-site. Smith said rail will be placed starting by late this month or in early May.

"Our goal is to ship onions by Oct. 1, and as of right now we are within that schedule," he said.

A less expensive building is an option, though capacity to place and briefly store onions is important to handling efficiency, Smith said.

Reload center features would be added as funding becomes available, he said.

Northwest wheat crop tours back to full schedule

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The Pacific Northwest wheat crop tour schedule is back in full force this summer as farmers face another challenging year.

"There will be more (events) this year than last year," said Clark Neely, lead of Washington State University's cereal variety testing program. "Last year was almost a full schedule."

This year includes the return of the annual field day in Lind and revival of a program at WSU's Spillman Farm in Pullman after several years hiatus. The schedule also includes



Clark Neely

Oregon State University and University of Idaho wheat-related field days.

There are currently no COVID requirements for attendance, Neely said.

"I think it's going to be more or less normal," he said.

He provides data on variety performance to farmers during the field days. "They should keep in mind the context in which the data was generated," he said.

Neely recently toured

WSU CROP TOUR SCHEDULE 2022

<https://bit.ly/3OF6gut>

variety trial sites.

So far, new wheat varieties from the McGregor Co. and AgriPro look "vigorous," Neely said.

"There's more locations this year than normal probably that are in a little bit rougher shape than I'd like to see," he said. "I suspect it's going to be another rough year, especially in our low rainfall sites."

Even if there's more moisture in-season, farms

have less stored soil moisture this year compared to last year, Neely said.

Moisture levels depend on location, he said. Farmers in high rainfall areas feel that they're in decent shape, but growers in dryland Lind and Ritzville are "really limited."

"This moisture that we're getting, even though it's in the form of snow, is good (but) I don't know that it will be enough," Neely said.

The next two months will be critical for a spring crop in dry country, he said.

"It will very much be dependent on how much comes out of the sky,

because there's hardly anything in the soil," he said.

Researchers last year were "chasing moisture," seeding deeply with a no-till drill at trials in Fairfield, Creston and Almira, and the plants didn't emerge as well as Neely hoped.

"A lot of that I attribute to, it was just so dry last fall, we were planting deeper than we normally do," he said.

Neely's team ended up re-planting at low-rainfall sites in Ritzville, St. Andrews and Connell because they had planted so deeply in August.

The results made for good emergence data, he

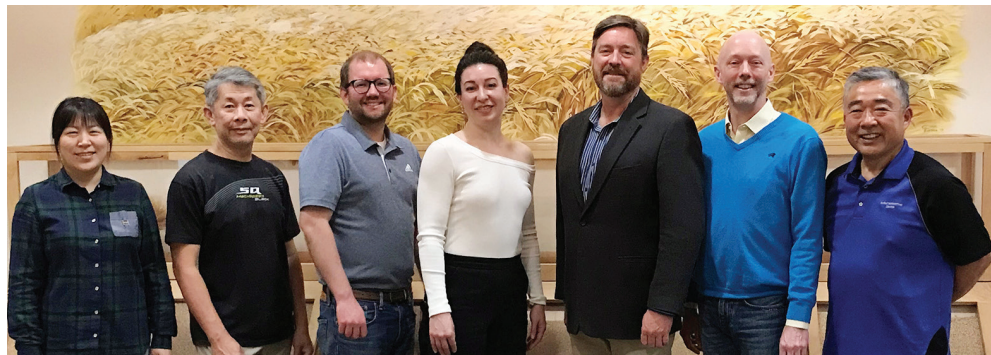
said, but wouldn't work for yield trials.

"The re-plant only worked well at Connell. We did not get good stands at Ritzville or St. Andrews," he said.

Neely thinks switching from a deep furrow drill to a conventional double-disk drill led to uneven moisture and soil density.

He estimates that spring seeding is 50% done, despite pauses due to snow and cold in the Palouse, in areas south of Rockford.

"A week ago, we were thinking maybe we would be done planting this week," he said. "We would have been, if it hadn't turned back to winter."



Wheat Marketing Center

Mike Moran joined the Wheat Marketing Center as its new executive director on April 1. From left to right are Liman Liu, assistant operations manager; Kin Wong, laboratory assistant; Andrew Mense, food scientist; Jayne Bock, technical director; Moran; Brent Haugen, office administrator; and Bon Lee, operations manager.

Wheat Marketing Center gets new executive director

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Mike Moran, a veteran of the Northwest wheat industry, took over as executive director of the Wheat Marketing Center April 1.

He previously operated bakeries in the Northwest and was manager of Shepherd's Grain, a farmer-owned wheat marketing cooperative.

"That's exactly what the Wheat Marketing Center does, build those bridges between farmers and the people that consume the food they grow," he told the Capital Press.

The center is a nonprofit research and teaching institution. Its technical staff works with domestic and overseas customers to test U.S.-grown wheat and its performance in a variety of products.

As manager of the Grand Central Bakery in Portland and Seattle, Moran became interested in farm-direct relationships. The marketing center helped Moran connect with Eastern Washington farmers, working to get their wheat into his bread.

"If you're in the baking industry, your No. 1 ingredient is flour, and that comes from wheat," he said. "Wheat is a product of the soil and the

farming methods that go into it and the breeding selection. If, as a baker, you're focused on delivering the highest quality you can, it is in your best interest to have a direct communication with the farmer, so that you can give them feedback on what you're seeing in your food."

The center conducted a national search, said Bill Flory, board chairman and an Idaho wheat farmer.

"Mike has executive experience, industry experience and baking experience," Flory said. He has a "great personality, high energy. ... This will be a great transition."

Moran replaces Janice Cooper, who will retire June 30. Cooper joined the center in 2015.

"You can't ask for a better situation than to be moving into a fully functional organization with a two-month-plus overlap with the existing director to do a clean knowledge hand-off," Moran said.

Moran credits Cooper and the center's staff for their work.

"It's a blessing not to have to come in and fix something that's broken," he said. "How do you take something that's really successful and continue to lead in wheat quality and testing?"

His focus will be build-

ing overseas markets for U.S. wheat, particularly meeting the growing demand in South and Central America.

"We do everything from noodles to tortillas to pan breads to sponge cakes to crackers — there are always new and emerging consumer trends, and we want to stay ahead of those," he said. "My focus is building a team that's focused on the future. Continue doing what we do well, and refine it for future needs."

Moran pointed to uncertainty caused by the war between Russia and Ukraine, two large wheat exporters.

"I'd like to see us play a big role in steadying people's nerves, assuring them that U.S. wheat is still going to be focused on quality and we're still going to be there for them when they need it," he said.

Moran's message to growers?

"We're here for you," he said. "We understand that the world is an ever-changing landscape, both politically but also with climate variability. Mother Nature is throwing wild cards to farmers left and right, and we're here to help them navigate the hand they're dealt and continue to produce some of the highest quality wheat in the world."