

DESCHUTES WATER BANK

Bank sends water to farmers, but not as much as initially thought

BY MICHAEL KOHN
CO Media Group

A much-anticipated water bank designed to help Jefferson County farmers is underway, just not to the scale that everyone involved had initially hoped.

Patrons from the Central Oregon Irrigation District will this year set aside 90 acres of land to lie fallow, with the water that would have gone to those acres now diverted to the North Unit Irrigation District.

The water bank was set up to help commercial crop farmers and livestock producers in drought-stricken Jefferson County, where water allotments have been slashed to 25% of normal this year. The project will essentially shift water away from Central Oregon Irrigation District patrons who do not need their water this year into a bank of water for use by North Unit patrons. Both irrigation districts have water rights in the Deschutes River Basin, but the Central Oregon Irrigation District has senior water rights, meaning less is available in low-water years to junior rightsholders such as the North Unit Irrigation District.

While water bank facilitators are pleased to get the project off the ground, there was hope for stronger participation in the inaugural year. Around 150 water users expressed interest in giving up their water for use by North Unit farmers in Jefferson County, but only 17 were found to be eligible to participate in the program.

Prior to starting up the project, the Deschutes River Conservancy, the nonprofit organization that is helping to facilitate the project, had a target of putting 1,200 acres into the water bank project.



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin
Tommy King, treasurer of the Redmond Rod and Gun Club, stands in a tumbleweed-filled irrigation ditch near the club that could be flowing with water, but due to the club's participation in the water bank program, that water goes to people who need to irrigate crops.

"We were encouraged with the level of interest in the program (but) a bit disappointed with the final acres that could participate," said Kate Fitzpatrick, the conservancy's executive director.

Central Oregon Irrigation District landowners will receive \$100 per acre that they don't water, paid by the North Unit Irrigation District. The North Unit district will also need to pay \$25 per acre to the Central Oregon Irrigation District for administering the program, making the total cost to North Unit \$125 per acre.

One problem preventing more people from getting onboard was Oregon's beneficial use policy. Under Oregon water law, water rights must be used once every five years. If water users choose not to use that water on the land, instream leasing through the Oregon Water Resources Department qualifies as a year of beneficial use. However, enrolling in the water bank pilot project does not qualify for a year of beneficial use.

"Any acres that needed to prove up on beneficial use were asked to enroll in the instream leasing program instead if they weren't going to use the water on the land," said Fitzpatrick. "This ensures that the irrigation district protects the water rights within the district."

Fitzpatrick said there may be ways in the future to make participation in the water bank pilot program also count

as beneficial use, which could also expand participation.

A second problem encountered by project organizers was related to logistics and operational issues, mostly related to water users sharing a common point of delivery from a district irrigation canal.

"In some cases, leasing one person's water right can cause issues delivering water to other users. If that was the case, those acres were not eligible to participate," she said.

As part of its research into getting more people on board, the conservancy also found that some Central Oregon Irrigation District users wanted a program that allowed them to use part of their water allocation and share the rest, in other words, to use less water on their acres. Fitzpatrick said this underscores the need for better measurement capacity within the system so water can be accurately tracked.

The setbacks created a learning experience for project organizers and expectations are for greater participation in the future. The conservancy is seeking federal funding to expand the program and fix operational issues.

"Hopefully this program gets some backing to be a bigger program, and by next year they can do a lot more. We would participate next year," said Tommy King, treasurer of the Redmond Rod and Gun Club, which temporarily gave up some of its acres to the water bank.

For now, water from the

90 acres of Central Oregon Irrigation District land left fallow will be made available to North Unit Irrigation District. Additionally, the project will have some impact on the Deschutes River ecosystem. The North Unit will be required to release 25% of the water it gets through the project next winter into the river, helping to increase flows during the months when the river runs at its lowest level.

"Water is critical for all of us," said Fitzpatrick. "The pressing demands moving forward, particularly with the new normal of extreme drought, will make expanding all the solutions critical. These kinds of programs, alongside district piping and on-farm efficiency, have the capacity to make real change happen."

George Endicott, Redmond's mayor, and a participant in the water bank project, said for those who were able to participate, there was also a measure of helping farmers in need. He normally grows field grass for animals to come on his property to graze, but he gave up most of his water rights this year to benefit North Unit farmers.

"With the drought, those guys are really hurting," said Endicott. "We all need to be good neighbors. When it comes to farmers, they all get along and are willing to help their fellow man, so I am happy to do it."

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Wilson

Continued from A1

Wilson is Black and the three locals are white. All four were said to be intoxicated.

The alcohol-soaked fact pattern begins in a Redmond bar, the Tumble Inn Tavern, with a dispute over college football. Gannon, a fan of the Washington Huskies, noticed a conferencegoer enter the bar wearing a shirt bearing the logo of rival Washington State University.

After a verbal dispute in the bar, the conferencegoers elected to return to their hotel several blocks away and go to bed. Wilson was not with that group, but he encountered them outside the hotel and they told him about the dispute in the bar.

Later, Wilson and another man opted to get a drink at the Tumble Inn.

Outside the bar, Gannon was walking to a vehicle when Wilson shouted, "Hey, Butterbean."

Eric "Butterbean" Esch is a former heavyweight boxer whose distinct look featured a bald head and American-flag boxing trunks. On the night in question, Gannon, who is bald, was wearing American-flag cowboy boots and overalls, with no shirt.

Prosecutor Alison Filo acknowledged in her closing statement the comparison was "apt."

According to Wilson's defense, upon hearing the "Butterbean" comment, Gannon became enraged and tackled Wilson to the ground, though the prosecution disagrees with that description. Wilson says he was called a racial epithet by two of the locals. Regardless, the sides agree there was a physical altercation between Wilson and Gannon.

Though hundreds of hours of security footage from various businesses were reviewed by police, none captured the actual stabbings. An external security camera captures Wilson pulling out a pocket knife and following the local trio around a corner. Moments later, a woman can be seen running into view and screaming.

Wilson maintained he

acted in self-defense and pleaded not guilty. His trial before Judge Randy Miller lasted two weeks earlier this month at the temporary court facility at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center.

Defense attorney Katherine Griffith accused police of acting out of confirmation bias, telling the jury that from the moment officers arrived and placed Wilson

in handcuffs, they worked to support the conclusion he was guilty, rather than look at the case dispassionately.

In her closing statement, Griffith showed a clip from police body-camera footage in which a member of the trio can clearly be heard calling a handcuffed Wilson the N-word.

"He took out a knife to save his life," she told jurors. "The state is asking you to ignore the extreme violent acts of Gannon, Holdbrook and Bates."

Prosecutor Filo called Wilson's account "revisionist history" that's not supported by video evidence.

"What you need to determine guilt or innocence, really, remains on these videos," she said.

Filo told jurors all people have biases. "Just because I'm biased doesn't mean I'm wrong."

All three victims testified, as did Wilson. Because Wilson opted to testify in his defense, jurors were allowed to hear about Wilson's past incarceration for manslaughter and kidnapping. Jurors were also instructed on implicit bias.

Wilson is scheduled to be sentenced June 13.

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SOLUTION Sudoku on A2

6	2	4	5	3	7	9	8	1
8	7	9	4	2	1	5	6	3
1	3	5	8	9	6	7	2	4
2	5	6	3	1	9	8	4	7
4	8	1	6	7	5	2	3	9
3	9	7	2	8	4	1	5	6
5	1	2	9	6	3	4	7	8
7	6	8	1	4	2	3	9	5
9	4	3	7	5	8	6	1	2

SOLUTION Crossword on A2

F	R	I	A	P	L	A	N	P	A	N	S	Y	
L	L	U	N	L	O	V	E	O	V	O	L	O	
O	C	H	O	A	B	O	V	E	W	A	T	E	
S	H	O	G	U	N	W	E	D	L	A	D	E	
S	E	T	S	E	N	R	E	N	O				
	W	E	E	D	E	R	E	N	T	A	L		
B	R	A	N	D	W	O	R	L	D	A	V	A	
R	A	T	E	R	E	V	U	E	S	K	I	D	
A	G	E	B	A	L	E	D	S	E	E	D	Y	
G	E	R	M	A	N	R	E	M	I	T	S		
	I	N	G	E	R	A	T	A	S	K			
A	R	A	L	E	A	T	R	E	A	D	E	R	
S	I	N	K	O	R	S	W	I	M	D	I	N	O
P	O	K	E	D	T	I	R	O	A	V	O	N	
S	T	A	R	E	S	T	E	T	M	E	R	E	

REDMOND

Latino Association expands business hours

Spokesman staff

The Latino Community Association has been awarded two grants, totaling \$185,000, that will support its stability and growth.

The first is a \$135,000 two-year grant from The Collins Foundation to support LCA's program and services for Latino residents in Deschutes,

Crook and Jefferson counties. The award provides \$75,000 in 2022 and another \$60,000 in 2023.

With this grant, LCA will offer connection to services and advocacy for more Latino families to help them thrive in Central Oregon.

The second award is a \$50,000 grant from the Marie

Lamfrom Charitable Foundation of Wilsonville, which will be used to help LCA expand its services in Redmond and Madras by adding staff and doubling its office hours at both locations.

LCA will immediately expand its office hours to four days a week in Redmond and five days a week in Madras.

Thanks to these grants, more people across Central Oregon will be able to apply for the Oregon Health Plan,

participate in English, computer or citizenship classes, get connected to other LCA services and events or referred to other organizations and businesses.

LCA Redmond is located at the Becky Johnson Center, 412 SW 8th St. It's new office hours are Monday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Tuesday-Thursday. The office's phone number is 541-598-6316.

Council

Continued from A1
Other city action

Councilor Jay Patrick announced he plans to run for mayor in November. Current mayor George Endicott said he has not decided if he will run for another term in November.

The council amended the contract for Anderson Perry & Associates for engineering services, final design and construction management of the Red-

mond Wetlands Complex. The contract is now for \$5.9 million.

The council noted some city property as surplus, including three vehicles and irrigation pipe.

A hearing has been set for June 14 for the city council to consider a controversial housing project planned near Helmholtz Way. The project was approved by the city planning commission, but councilors later requested to have final say on the matter.

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