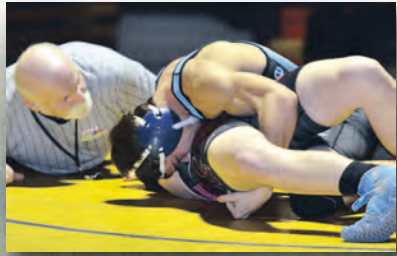


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WEEKEND EDITION

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Tensing up

Bridge lift span issue tied to cables;
re-tension work likely this summer

By BEN MITCHELL
News staff writer

The Hood River Bridge's lift span has not been setting correctly and an engineering firm contracted with the Port of Hood River believes it has discovered why.

At a port meeting on Tuesday, David McCurry, project lead at Portland engineering firm HDR, reported that the cables responsible for raising and lowering the main lift span of bridge were no longer all tensioned correctly, causing the span to set slightly out of balance. McCurry likened it to a four-legged stool where one of the legs isn't quite touching the floor.

The News published a story about the issue in November of last year, where it was reported that a three-quarter-inch gap had formed between the bottom of the lift span and the bearings — points of contact between the bridge piers and the span. Port Executive Director Michael McElwee said at the time that the issue with the bridge was not an imminent threat to motorist safety but was "about careful, prudent, active management of the movable lift span."

Workers with HDR performed

daytime inspections of the bridge on Nov. 17 and Nov. 24 of last year to examine bridge operations in general and to determine the cause of the setting issue, examining the lift span's control room, climbing up and down the side of the bridge to check the cables, and conducting other inspections.

What they found was generally good news for the port. Although HDR discovered some other issues — switches not operating properly, warning gates on the bridge not dropping on the first try — the problem affecting the lift span did not require repairs to the physical structure of the bridge.

"There really just needs to be a span balance exercise done, a re-tensioning of the wire ropes," explained McCurry. "There's not a lot of wear."

"Once the issue is fixed, the span should come down nice and level," he added.

The other good news the port received was the cables did not need to be replaced, which would have significantly increased the cost of the project.

McCurry said the cost of reme-

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Giving a boost to Gorge Commission

Legislation would create taskforce, fund more employees

By BEN MITCHELL
News staff writer

The Gorge may be renowned for its beauty, but the law that protects the area, the National Scenic Act, and the entity that implements it, the Columbia River Gorge Commission, aren't always so visible.

Rep. John Huffman (R-The Dalles), has recently introduced a bill he hopes will boost both the act's and the commission's profiles with his colleagues in the State Legislature and help support the commission as it struggles to obtain enough funding to adequately carry out its federally-mandated duties.

The bill, HB 2039, would provide for the creation of a bi-state, bi-partisan, bi-camera taskforce comprised of Gorge legislators and Governors' representatives who would meet

with the Gorge Commission to address funding issues, the "various effects" of the National Scenic Act, and determine any needed changes to the act that "could enhance the relationship between the (Gorge) Commission and Oregon and Washington."

The bill comes on the heels of what has been a long pattern of reduced budgets and staffing that have affected the Gorge Commission, which is tasked with protecting Gorge resources, promoting economic development within the region, and addressing land use issues. The agency, which was created a year after the National Scenic Act was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1986, must be equally funded by Oregon and Washington. If one state earmarks less money for the Gorge Commission than the other, the Gorge Commission is required to accept the lower amount.

When both states unveiled their budget proposals last month, that's

See GORGE, Page A2



Rep. John Huffman

At town hall, Walden faces tough climate

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA
News editor

A dialog, and silent protest, on climate change wove through U.S. Rep. Greg Walden's hometown town hall meeting at Hood River Adult Center, attended by about 75 people.

Walden spent about 15 minutes with a legislative update, in which he reiterated his long-standing advocacy for legislation that would allow forest thinning and other practices in high-risk fire areas of the state.

Then, for about 75 minutes, Walden took audience questions,

many of them critical of his record. (In the Jan. 17 forum, Walden also took criticism on health care and immigration. A longer version of this article appears on the newspaper's website, hoodrivernews.com.)

Walden voiced his support for the Secure Schools Act (SSA), and said it would be among the top House priorities in February.

At the Jan. 17 town hall, County Commission chair Ron Rivers encouraged Walden to push for continua-



Rep. Greg Walden

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WORKERS FROM HDR inspect cables on the Hood River Bridge in November 2014.

Photo courtesy of HDR

Spotlight

A weekly series about a day in the life ...

Karen Gass finds joy in teaching, hiking

By TRISHA WALKER
News staff writer

Karen Gass — or Teacher Karen, as she's commonly known — has been teaching at Little Feet Cooperative Preschool for the past 20 years.

While much has changed over that time, one factor has not: The preschoolers themselves. Too young to be influenced much by iPads or the Internet like their older counterparts, they've stayed pretty much the same.

What has changed is the busyness of parents and the increase of two-income families.

"I think it's harder and harder, as the years go on, to have a commitment for parents to do a co-op," she said. "Years ago, it was not uncommon for more stay at home moms. Now, families are a lot more creative on how they can make it work, one, in Hood River, a pretty pricey community, and two, to be in the classroom and in their kids' lives."

Another change? More stay at home dads. "There are lots more stay at home dads," she said.

Please see KAREN, Page A5



Photo by Trisha Walker



Photo by Blaine Franger

KAREN GASS — or Teacher Karen to her students — has been teaching at Little Feet Cooperative Preschool for the past 20 years. Class begins and ends with circle time, with stories and songs.

LOOK INSIDE

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- A8 — Kid Space
- A9 — Happenings, Legals
- GC — Classifieds

Three To Go

Community Ed class offering deadline Feb. 15

Do you have a skill or interest you can share? How about an event you want to inform the community about?

Feb. 15 is the deadline for class offerings and advertisement for the new Community Education catalog, scheduled to be distributed in late March.

Community Ed is actively seeking instructors to present all types of classes. Submit a proposal before Feb. 15 for the Spring/Summer 2015 catalog.

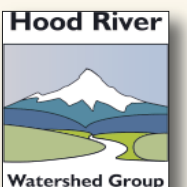
For more information, contact Community Ed at 541-386-2055 or email community.ed@hoodriver.k12.or.us.

Public hearing on zoning ordinance Wednesday

The Hood River County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on Jan. 28 at 7 p.m. to consider proposed amendments to Article 61 of the county's zoning ordinance regarding review of land use decisions by the Hood River County Board of Commissioners. The amendments pertain to simplifying language, creating a more straightforward hearing process, and address the existing limits to which the board can affect a decision. For more information, go to the county's website at <http://www.co.hood-river.or.us/> and click on "Community Development" under the "County Departments" tab or call 541-387-6840.

Watershed Group looks at Indian Creek

Hood River Watershed Group will host presentations on "Fire Hazard Conditions along Indian Creek and Reducing Risk to Homes" by Fire Chief Devon Wells and Indian Creek Stewardship: Successes and Challenges by the Indian Creek Stewards at 6 p.m. on Tuesday at the OSU Extension meeting room, 2990 Experiment Station Rd. Based on the multiple fires along Indian Creek this summer, Wells will discuss the fire risks in the area and what might be done to reduce hazards. The Stewards' presentation will describe community engagement, restoration projects, current conditions, and future potential around Indian Creek.



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