

Series continues with trip to Nepal B1



HRV basketball upsets Pendleton



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Feds slash timber payments to counties

Funds greatly reduced as Secure Rural Schools ends

By **BEN MITCHELL**
News staff writer

Counties that have federal forestland within their borders recently received some bad news after the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that this year's federal timber payments to counties would be drastically reduced due to Congress' failure to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools Act.

The USDA says it plans to dole out approximately \$50 million to be split amongst 41 states this year as a way to supplement the loss of the federal program, which compensated states that have national forestland and have been financially hurt by the decline of the timber industry. That number denotes a drastic decrease from 2014 when \$300 million was disbursed

to 41 states under the SRSA.

With the loss of the SRSA, federal timber payments are now doled out through a 1908 law that requires the feds to pay 25-percent of national forest receipts to each state.

The change in funding means less money for county budgets, including Hood River County — two-thirds of which consists of national forestland, according to Sheriff Matt English. Last year, Oregon received \$67.9 million from the SRSA, of which Hood River County received \$884,000 to go to schools, public roads, firewise programs, and the Hood River County Sheriff's Office for search and rescue. For 2015, Oregon is slated to get less than a

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Fed cuts payments

2014 payments:

- \$300 million nationwide.
- \$67.9 million to Oregon
- \$884,000 to HR County
- Where the money was used in Hood River County: \$613,000 public works, \$204,000 school district, \$67,000 search and rescue and wildfire protection, additional funds were used for Title II National Forest projects.

2015 payments:

- \$50 million nationwide, \$5.9 million to Oregon, amount to HR County to be determined.

Gorge breweries craft an alliance

Map, website, and cooperative spirit blend in new group

By **KIRBY NEUMANN-REA**
News editor

The ale-liance is ready to pour together. Breweries In The Gorge, debuting this month is a formal cooperation among 11 Gorge purveyors of craft ales.

Eleven breweries on both sides of the river have developed a map and website, are planning their first joint events, and members say that collaborative beers are a likely result. Breweries In The Gorge has also formed an executive committee, with Christie Ellenberger of Everybody's Brewing serving as its first president.

"It's very exciting. We were already naturally promoting each other," Ellenberger said, "So it's fun to have everyone get together and promote each other."

Ellenberger said she sees Breweries In The Gorge as "an opportunity to do some cooperative things together, and give support for new people, or the less established breweries, and

The Ale List



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

FILLING glasses and filling seats is one goal of the Breweries In The Gorge alliance; Susan Lynch tops off an ale at Big Horse Brewery, now in its 26th year, one of the oldest makers of ales in the Gorge.

do marketing as one voice, because we have a unique area."

"Given the density and diversity of beer in the Gorge, we see the opportunity to really draw people in and see what the Gorge is all about," said Ken Whiteman, Breweries In The Gorge (BITG) marketing committee chair and co-owner of pFriem Family Brewing. "We decided to collaborate on it, and create this soon-to-be non-profit," Whiteman said.

The alliance got its start in casual conversations over beers, naturally, and representatives of several Gorge breweries held monthly meetings since July 2014 — the first one at a Waterfront Park picnic, and got the rest of the breweries on board.

"I was having a beer at Everybody's, and Christie said 'we want to get this thing going,

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Economic Priority

City council hears detailed appeal on affordable housing

By **KIRBY NEUMANN-REA**
News editor

The chronic issue of affordable housing received a thorough airing Monday at City Council, and a sense of progress was evident to the council and those who presented on the issue.

Dealing with the affordable housing issue was deemed a top priority by the council in December 2014, and Monday was the councilors' chance to hear a wide range of views on the topic from seven separate speakers, including County Commissioner Maui Meyer and Joel Madsen, executive director of Mid-Columbia Housing Authority.

Meyer noted that a two-year study by the regional Gorge Housing Affordability group revealed that 45 percent of workers in Hood River County had to drive 15 minutes or more to get to work. He said the basic goal of addressing affordable housing is, "if you work in this community you ought to be able to live in this community."

"The goal of living where you work is clearly not happening here," remarked Steve Wheeler, city manager.

"I ask that the council look for ideas on affordable housing so we can get more people in these communities living in safe, decent, affordable housing," said Jim Slusher, director of the Mid-Columbia Community Action Council, which serves low-income and homeless residents with heating and housing assistance.

A total of \$2.5 million in state funds are poised to be spent in Hood River, Wasco and Sherman counties on projects that create housing for low- to medium-income workers. The city or some other local jurisdiction must agree to serve as lead agency to administer the funds.

"Housing is an economic priority to all three counties," Amanda Hooey, director of Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, told the council.

The city has hired consultant Eco Northwest to conduct a housing needs assessment, to be managed by Hood River resident Scott Keillor, and the city is embarking on a "buildable

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At annual banquet, Chamber looks to '15

By **TRISHA WALKER**
News staff writer

Hood River Chamber of Commerce members gathered at the Columbia Gorge Hotel on Friday for the group's annual Membership Appreciation dinner. Many members came decked out in their formal best in keeping with the evening's prom theme.

As Executive Director Mike Glover noted, the dinner is held to thank Chamber members for "being members and supporting the business climate" of Hood River.

In his opening remarks, Glover

recognized the Chamber Team of Matt Werbach, Membership Manager; Ashley Huckaby May, Events Coordinator; and Kate Schroeder, Visitor Center Coordinator, as "the best team I've ever had, period," and the Chamber Board as being the "highest functioning volunteer board ever."

Glover thanked outgoing board members Lynn Harbor, Johnston Dunn and Bob Fox, and outgoing president Paul Robinson, for their hard work and dedication. Robinson thanked the Chamber for giving

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Photo by Trisha Walker

SUZANNE and Aaron Baumhackl, owners of Solstice Wood Fire Café, won the Member of the Year 2014 Chamber award at Friday's member appreciation banquet.

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Blood Drive Jan. 28

The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive Jan. 28, from 12:30-6 p.m. at Oregon National Guard Armory, located at 12th and Belmont. All blood types are needed. A blood donor card or driver's license or two other forms of identification are required at check-in. To make an appointment or for more information, visit the Red Cross website at redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

New exhibit kickoff at Discovery Center

The Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Museum, 5000 Discovery Dr., The Dalles, will present "Braceros of the Pacific Northwest" with Dr. Roberto de Anda from 5:30-8:30 p.m. on Jan. 31. An optional dinner (\$15) will be served at 6 p.m. with the presentation beginning at 7 p.m. RSVP by Jan. 28 to 541-296-8600 ext. 201 or gorgediscovery.org.

"Braceros of the Pacific Northwest" is a bilingual exhibit organized by the Smithsonian's National Museum and examines experiences of bracero workers and families, providing insight into Mexican American history and historical background to today's debates on guest worker programs. The show will run Jan. 31 through Feb. 15.

Three To Go

New Leaf Studio holds craft events

New Leaf Studio, a previous Gorge Soup for Kids winner, is hosting two craft events this week. The first, Friday Craft Night, is scheduled for Jan. 30 from 6:30-8:30 p.m., and students will learn to knit a hat, scarf or mittens. The second, Painting from the Heart, is scheduled for Jan. 31 from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

New Leaf Studio is located at Oak and Cascade Streets. There are some fees involved, although scholarships are available. For more information, contact Amy Zacher at 541-386-3996.

