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# EAST OREGONIAN

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## BOARDMAN

# Farmers worry power line would zap profits



Staff photo by George Plaven  
**Todd Adams, left, of Idaho Power, discusses the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project with farmer Earl Aylett during a public meeting Monday in Boardman.**

Proposed transmission project may run through Morrow County ag land

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
*East Oregonian*

A proposed transmission line stretching 300 miles from Boardman to southwest Idaho could cost local farmers millions of dollars in lost production, depending on the route ultimately selected by federal agencies.

It's all part of the delicate balancing act as Idaho Power seeks greater flexibility to transfer electricity between the two regions, while considering impacts to agricul-

ture, wildlife and other resources.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation recently unveiled its draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project, known as Boardman to Hemingway, after four years of scoping and tracing numerous alternatives where the line could be located.

Officials with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service and Oregon Department of Energy hosted the first of seven open houses Monday in Board-

man to gather input on the proposal and environmental report. About 40 people attended within the first hour, including farmers concerned about how the 500-kilovolt transmission line might affect their ability to raise high-value crops.

In some cases, growers worried the line would take whole fields entirely out of production. Craig Reeder, vice president of Hale Farms, said that's left a number of operations "fighting for our lives."

"The land is not replaceable," said Reeder, who also serves as a board member for the Northeast Oregon Water Association. "We're frustrated, but we're optimistic people will wake up."

Reeder pointed specifically to one variation of the proposal that would build transmission towers along the east side of Bombing Range Road. Given the project easements, Hale Farms stands to lose up to seven ir-

See **POWER/6A**

## PENDLETON

# Business licenses to remain the same

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
*East Oregonian*

After prolonged debate, the city council Tuesday decided to leave Pendleton's business license fees unchanged.

By taking no action, the council avoided a potential domino effect that could have resulted in higher fees for temporary business licenses issued the week of Round-Up.

City staff asked the council to consider amending an ordinance to allow the prorating of licenses for businesses that come into Pendleton after February, when the city's business year begins.

To make up for the \$3,400 shortfall from adopting the amendment, staff presented the option to raise the fees for temporary businesses that operate during Round-Up.

The fees for in-town temporary businesses is \$100 while out-of-towners pay \$160. After issuing 51 licenses to out-of-town businesses and 22 to in-town stores, the city generated \$10,360 in 2014.

The only voice of dissent during the public meeting proved key in tabling the amendment.

Finance Director  
See **BUSINESS/6A**

## IRRIGON



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

# Doe see doe

A herd of deer graze in a field in the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge on Tuesday outside of Irrigon.

# Jewell orders firefighting strategy that protects sage grouse habitat

By **KEITH RIDLER**  
*Associated Press*

BOISE, Idaho — Interior Secretary Sally Jewell is calling for a new wildfire-fighting strategy that protects a wide swath of sagebrush country in the intermountain West that supports cattle ranching and is home to a struggling bird species.

She issued an order Tuesday seeking a "science-based" approach that safeguards the greater sage grouse while contending with fires that have been especially destructive in the Great Basin region of Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Oregon and California.

The order from Jewell, who toured southern Idaho last summer and saw firsthand the scars left by massive wildfires, creates a task force and sets a March 1 deadline for it to report on guidelines to be put in place for the 2015 wildfire season.

"Targeted action is urgently needed to conserve habitat for the greater sage grouse and other wildlife in the Great Basin, as well as to



AP file photo  
**Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell speaks to reporters on Jan. 22, 2014 in Salt Lake City.**

## More inside

**The U.S. Forest Service has scrapped a \$10 million ad campaign aimed at improving its image. 2A**

maintain ranching and recreation economies that depend on sagebrush landscapes," Jewell said in a statement.

Task force member Janice Schneider, assistant secretary for Land and Minerals Management, declined to comment on what the

new strategy might look like. But she noted Jewell's order marks a "very significant point in time for the department in terms of how it handles fire."

"We're undergoing a top-to-bottom review of our fire policy and fire management strategies," she said.

Rangeland wildfires in the West have grown more massive and destructive in recent decades. Scientists say warmer and dryer summers have increased the length of the region's wildfire seasons, which are made worse by fire-prone invasive species, particularly cheatgrass.

The recurring fires wipe out grazing areas for cattle and native plants such as sagebrush, in turn eliminating the native species that rely on them, notably the greater sage grouse.

Since 2012, Schneider noted, more than 2.5 million acres of sage grouse habitat has burned on U.S. Bureau of Land Management land.

See **WILDLIFE/6A**

# Re-elected labor commissioner sets priorities for term

By **PETER WONG**  
*Capital Bureau*

PORTLAND — As economic issues remain on center stage for the Oregon Legislature, newly re-elected Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian says he'll take an active role in advancing many of them during its 2015 session.

The issues range from more state grants to re-establish career and technical education in public schools to a higher state minimum wage and pay equity.

Despite Oregon's economic recovery, Avakian said, the downturn has had lingering effects on many families.

"Families still are having a hard time making ends meet, especially those who are our lowest wage workers," Avakian said in an interview Monday, only hours before he was sworn in for a second four-year term at a ceremony in Portland.

See **LABOR/6A**



Avakian



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