

EAST OREGONIAN

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139th Year, No. 81

WINNER OF THE 2013 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

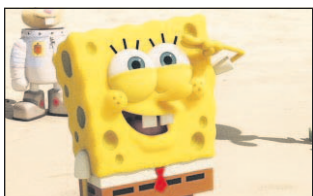
Your Weekend



- International Children's Choir in Hermiston
- "Feed the Children" wine tasting fundraiser
- Beach & Beef Crab Feed in Hermiston Saturday

For times and places see Coming Events, 6A

Catch a movie



Paramount Pictures/Nickelodeon Movies
Spongebob and gang return to the big screen in 3-D in "The Spongebob Movie: Sponge Out of Water."

For showtime, Page 5A

Weekend Weather

Fri	Sat	Sun
57/48	58/43	57/49

Kitzhaber
resignation
unlikely

By HILLARY BORRUD
and PETER WONG
EO Media Group/ Pamplin
Media Group

SALEM — Democratic leaders in the Oregon Legislature said Thursday they do not want the controversy around Gov. John Kitzhaber and first lady Cylvia Hayes to distract lawmakers from important policy and budget work.

Lawmakers spoke out after *The Oregonian* editorial board on Wednesday called for Kitzhaber to resign, and wrote that he is “now less a governor than a source of unending distraction.”

Hayes accepted several paid jobs at organizations with an interest in the same state policy issues on which she advised the governor, and *The Oregonian* reported this week that people involved in Kitzhaber’s 2010 campaign helped Hayes secure two of those positions.

Kitzhaber does not plan

See KITZHABER/8A

PENDLETON

Round-Up again
challenges taxes

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

The Pendleton Round-Up Association is seeking to have all its property valued at nothing. If Umatilla County’s Board of Property Tax Appeals agrees, the Round-Up’s property tax burden would be nothing as well.

Round-Up spokesman Carl Culham said the association simply is exercising its rights to challenge the

valuation of its properties.

The Round-Up filed the 16 property tax appeals on Dec. 30, 2014, a day before the deadline. Those appeals are public records, as is information about property valuation and taxes. Some quick math shows the 16 properties add up to an assessed value approaching \$6.5 million, and the property taxes total about \$107,000. The bulk of

See TAXES/8A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The Pendleton Round-Up Association filed 16 property tax appeals to have its property valued at \$0.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A flock of Canada geese graze in a field in Cottonwood State Park, outside of Condon, on Tuesday.

Ranchers worry over purchases of private land

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

The recent purchase of another large ranch on the John Day River near Condon has some members of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association worried about the overlooked — and perhaps unintended — consequences of turning more private land over to state or federal agencies.

Western Rivers Conservancy, based in Portland, completed its purchase of the roughly 14,000-acre Rattray Ranch in rural Gilliam County late last year. The organization plans to convey about 60 percent of the property to the Bureau of Land Management’s Prineville District for the protection of critical fish and wildlife habitat, including endangered Columbia Basin salmon.

Just two years ago, Western Riv-

ers finished selling the 8,000-acre Murtha Ranch between Condon and Wasco to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, leading to the opening of Cottonwood Canyon State Park in September 2013. That project helped preserve 16 miles of the lower John Day and unlocked key public access for recreation.

But ranchers say potential impacts on the landscape and neighboring communities are going unnoticed. Keith Nantz, owner of the Dillon Land and Cattle Company near Maupin, said he is seeing a growing trend of conservation groups buying up once-private lands and flipping them over to public management.

While Nantz doesn’t doubt the conservancy’s intentions are good, he said these transactions are un-

See LAND/6A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The John Day River winds through the Cottonwood Canyon State Park on Tuesday outside of Condon. The park was once a cattle ranch before being sold and the land donated to the state.

Umatilla County lines up to bat down Senate bill over energy facility siting

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County officials have raised their hackles in opposition to a new Senate bill that could strip away local control of energy facility siting. County commissioners and others have opposed the proposal.

The Oregon Department of Energy is pushing SB 258, which would allow the department’s Energy Facility Siting Council to ignore local land use laws when issuing a site certificate for an energy plant.

The bill also allows a facility to operate for its lifetime under an original site permit no matter if state or local governments change land use laws or if the plant expands.

Umatilla County Board of Commissioners voted Wednesday at its meeting in Pendleton to oppose the bill. County planning director Tamra Mabbott said the bill is unfair because it treats local land use laws different from state laws. Others also spoke against the bill, including Bob Levy of Windy River, an Echo farm. He called the bill “bad legislation” and said it needs

“I’m opposed to it and the way it’s poorly worded.”

— Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens

to die in committee or undergo revision. And J.R. Cook, director and founder of Northeast Oregon Water Association, said that board held an emergency meeting Tuesday to take a stand against the bill.

Commissioner Larry Givens said that bill is contrary to good

public policy and to the statewide planning goal that requires public involvement. Commissioner Bill Elfering called it a classic example of the kind of state government overreach that local governments must oppose.

The Department of Energy’s seven-member Energy Facility Siting Council, or EFSC, review applications for site certificates for energy facilities in Oregon and then issue or deny a certificate. Todd Cornett, administrator for the Energy Facil-

See BILL/8A



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