

Umatilla weed board says hold the mustard

Garlic mustard dominates other species under trees and in cool drainages

By SEAN HART
EO Media Group

An invasive plant well known in western Oregon and the Pacific Northwest has been spreading in Umatilla County.

Umatilla County Weed Control Supervisor Dan Durfey said garlic mustard made its first appearance in Eastern Oregon atop Cabbage Hill several years ago and has since traveled down drainages to the Umatilla River all the way to the Oxbow site in Hermiston.

He said the weed will eliminate small native plants and “take over everything” in areas under trees, where the plant thrives. While Durfey is most concerned with preventing garlic mustard from spreading into the timber from Cabbage Hill, he said people should be aware of the high-priority invasive species and inform the county weed control department when it is found.

“As long as we know where it is, and people know about it, that’s half the battle right there,” he said. “When we know where it’s at, if it’s expanded like this stuff has, we can make a better game plan on containing it.”

He said garlic mustard is a cool-season herb native to Eurasia that few animals will eat because of its distinct smell.

“It’s pretty easy to identify,” he said. “All you’ve got to do is grab a leaf and



Submitted photo

Invasive garlic mustard, pictured here at an infestation on Cabbage Hill, has been found along the Umatilla River near the Oxbow site in Hermiston.

squish it between your fingers, and then you can smell it really easily. The leaves produce a distinct garlic odor when crushed.”

The plant has white flowers in April or May, Durfey said, but does not bloom for very long before going into seed production. He said the weed, with its “kidney-shaped leaves,” can be difficult to spot because it blends in with other plants in wetter areas next to trees.

Durfey said the Oregon Weed Board aggressively targets garlic mustard, and

he has received two grants to address the only known outbreak in Eastern Oregon. Although the herbicides registered to kill garlic mustard are not extremely effective, he said he tries to “stay on top of it” with spring and fall applications.

The weed can be pulled by hand, he said, but the plants should be placed in bags immediately and burned because their high-water content allows them to “go to seed” the same day.

Contact Durfey at 541-278-5462 or dan.durfey@umatillacounty.net.

BRIEFLY

TRCI inmate dies in infirmary

UMATILLA — An inmate at Two Rivers Correctional Institution died Thursday evening after attempts to resuscitate him failed.

George Phillip Murphy Jr., 70, was found unresponsive in the Umatilla prison’s infirmary, according to a news release from the Oregon Department of Corrections. Paramedics could not revive the man, who died at 7:10 p.m.

The Oregon State Police Criminal Investigation Division is investigating the incident, as it does with all unexpected deaths and possible crimes in state

Investment for women subject of meeting

PENDLETON — The American Association of University Women, in recognition of Equal Pay Day, welcome Lisa Newman of D.A. Davidson and Jill McEntee of Russell

prisons. Murphy had been at TRCI since Sept. 30, 2004, serving a sentence for second-degree sexual penetration out of Coos County. He was eligible for release as early as Feb. 27, 2017. His family has been notified of his death.

TRCI opened in 2000 and houses 1,800 male inmates.

Investments to their April program meeting. “Women: Wired to Invest” is Thursday, April 2 at 7 p.m. at the Vert Club Room, 345 S.W. Fourth St., Pendleton.

Equal Pay Day, April 14, acknowledges the additional time women must work into 2015 to equal the pay made by men in 2014.

The program will provide information and strategies for the unique investment needs of women, who make on average only 78 cents for every dollar made by men but live an average of 5 years longer, among other financial challenges.

The program is free and open to the public, but an RSVP is requested to

ensure adequate materials for all attendees. Call Linda Newman at 541-966-6400 or email lnewman@dadco.com if you plan to attend.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to news@eastoregonian.com

HERMISTON

EOTEC event center goes out for second bid

By SEAN HART
EO Media Group

Construction companies will get a second chance to bid on a major structure at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center after a formal complaint was filed about the bidding process the last time around.

Knerr Construction of Hermiston was one of three companies that bid to design and build the \$2.7 million event center, the centerpiece of the \$12.9 million project south of Hermiston. When G2 Construction of Kennewick was selected for the job in February, Knerr complained that the bid scoring was handled improperly.

The EOTEC authority board voted to put the project back out for bid during Friday’s meeting.

“One of the bidders disagreed with how the bids were scored based on the various categories,” said board chair Ed Brookshier. “And we simply decided, along with Frew Development, that our best course was to rebid the project.”

Brookshier said the original bid selection was canceled and the specifications of the project and scoring were clarified in a new request for bids.

John Frew, CEO of Frew Development Group that is managing the EOTEC project, said Knerr Construction was fair to question whether the bidders clearly understood the instructions. After clarifying the scoring methodology, he said, a new

request for bids was issued March 19. The bids are due April 16, Frew said, and the firm will deliver a recommendation to the board at its April 24 meeting.

Frew said the scope of the event center was also modified, and the budget for the building was reduced from \$2.8 million to \$2.7 million.

Despite the setback, Frew the project is still on schedule for completion by May 2016, and he hopes it will even be completed early.

Construction on the site near the Hermiston airport is currently on hold during a mandatory notice and comment period to comply with National Environmental Policy Act. But Frew said Barton Laser Leveling of Hermiston should be able to resume work on the site grading and utilities on April 13.

Frew said the documents soliciting bids to design and build the rodeo arena should be finalized for approval at the April 24 meeting and future bid packages will include lighting, vendor power, fencing, underground irrigation, paving and sidewalks. Multiple projects will be under construction during the second half of the year, he said, and piecing the “jigsaw puzzle” together will require careful coordination of the schedule and contractors.

Brookshier said the board is still working to acquire the total funding needed to complete the project, which is currently budgeted at nearly \$12.9 million.



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Back Row: Brent Fife, David Blanc, Kevin Hale, John G. McBee
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Blue Mountain Community College

Board Member in the Spotlight



Eddie De La Cruz
Owner, Sunrise Cleaning & Janitorial
BMCC Board of Education Member
Hermiston

Eddie De La Cruz has lived in Hermiston for 37 years. He is highly involved in the Hermiston community. Eddie is Chairman of the City of Hermiston Hispanic Advisory Committee, President of the Hermiston Cinco de Mayo committee, President of the Hispanic Soccer League, hosts the radio program “La Voz Del Pueblo” every Sunday on La Ley Hispanic Radio 99.5 FM, and has worked with the Umatilla County Fair Board organizing Latino Day. Eddie has five children and one grandchild, all of whom have been raised in the Hermiston community. His newest endeavor is serving on the BMCC Board of Education!

Have you heard about the BMCC bond?

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