

IRRIGON

New boat launch opens at Marina Park

District plans more upgrades to come

By **GEORGE PAVLEN**
East Oregonian

With its hot summer days and prime location below McNary Dam, Irrigon Marina Park is home to some of the Columbia River's best walleye fishing.

But an aging, crumbling boat launch was making it increasingly difficult for anglers to get out on the water. Larger trucks and trailers struggled to back down the narrow ramps, which were beginning to break apart over years of wear and tear.

Recognizing the value of sport fishing to the local economy, the Irrigon Community Park & Recreation District waded through multiple state and federal permits to finally rebuild the launch, which broke ground last December and recently passed its final inspection.

A ribbon cutting ceremony is set for 9 a.m. Saturday, though Phyllis Danielson, member of the parks district board of directors, said boaters have already visited from as far as Spokane and John Day to use the new and improved marina.

That's more people potentially spending money at Irrigon's shops and restaurants, said Danielson, who also serves as president of the Irrigon Chamber of Commerce and runs a bed-and-breakfast in the city of about 1,800 people.

"The more people who access our launch, the more visibility we have," she said. "We're feeling an energy of positive momentum moving forward."



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The Irrigon Community Parks and Recreation District has finished constructing a new boat launch at the Irrigon Marina Park. The district has future plans for more improvements to the park.

It wasn't a quick or easy process. The park district leases Marina Park from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the same agency that operates hydroelectric dams and monitors endangered salmon returns up the Columbia River.

Building in the river means running a gauntlet of environmental checks from the Army Corps, Oregon Department of State Lands, Department of Environmental Quality, State Marine Board and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation before getting the final go-ahead — a process that took three years for the park district to clear.

In addition, the district is responsible for planting trees along a stretch of river upstream as part of the deal, mitigating for in-water work by enhancing native fish habitat.

"The bottom line is, when you start a project, you have to be long-sighted," Danielson said. "It's a whole language, with all these agencies you have to communicate with and know their regulations."

Funding for the new boat launch came from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through its Sport Fish Restoration Program, as well as the State Marine Board and in-kind work provided by the district. The total bill rang up to \$425,602.

Sticking with the project over the long haul has given the district a newfound sense of hope and confidence that they can work with complex agencies to get work done at the marina, Danielson said. Which is good, because the boat ramp is only the beginning of other improvements they would like to see happen

at the park.

Irrigon Marina Park hosts a number of community events during the year, including the annual Watermelon Festival and summer music series. Eventually, the district would like to double its parking capacity and plans amenities including a shower station, fish cleaning station, gazebo and vaulted toilets.

Danielson is not sure how much all that work will cost, but it would mean another feather in Irrigon's cap as they try to bring in new residents and businesses. She mentioned the city has made several recent strides, such as reopening its high school in 2005, building a new city hall and finally opening its new \$1.2 million library in March.

Contact George Pavlen at gplavlen@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4547.

BRIEFLY

Hermiston man jailed for sex abuse

HERMISTON — Robert Wayne Price, 48, faces five counts of first-degree sex abuse. Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said detectives arrested Price at his home Tuesday evening after an investigation began Nov. 10, 2014.

Edmiston said Price's relatives in Washington state notified the Yakima County Sheriff's Office about a possible sex crime, and the sheriff's office contacted Hermiston police. Edmiston said the allegations occurred in Hermiston, so his department took the case.

Price pleaded not guilty to all charges Wednesday in circuit court in Hermiston. Court records show there were three victims. Edmiston said they are all children and appear to be related to Price.

Price remains in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, in lieu of a \$250,000 bond. His next hearing is May 4.



Price

Richland man dies in Morrow Co. crash

LEXINGTON — A Richland man died Wednesday in a head-on crash on Highway 207, north of Lexington.

Neal Reau, 35, was traveling southbound in a Honda Fit when he crossed into the oncoming lane and sideswiped a 2009 Chevy pickup towing a heavy flatbed trailer. Reau was pronounced dead at the scene.

Theodore Bither, 44, of Echo, was driving the pickup and was transported to the hospital in Heppner with minor injuries.

Highway 207 was closed for more than five hours while Oregon State Police troops investigated the crash and removed the vehicles. It reopened around 7 p.m. Wednesday.

An OSP collision reconstructionist responded to the scene to assist in the investigation, which is ongoing.

Shank trial pushed backed for Craigen

PENDLETON — The latest trial for convicted murderer George West Craigen of Milton-Freewater is on hold.

Craigen was set to go to trial this week for having contraband — a shank — in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, in 2013 while awaiting his murder trial. Craigen's attorney, Will Perkinson, filed a motion last Friday to withdraw from the contraband case. Perkinson said that was at Craigen's request.

Circuit Court Judge Dan Hill of Hermiston heard the request and continued the trial to give Craigen time to decide the motion. Hill on Tuesday, though, denied the request but the court did not set a new trial date.

A jury convicted Craigen in 2014 of murdering Cecil "Rob" Carter of Milton-Freewater. Craigen, 52, is serving a life sentence for that crime. And in March another jury convicted Craigen of possessing explosives, a case that stemmed from the murder investigation. The court docket shows the sentencing for that case is Monday in Pendleton.

Water treatment plant ribbon-cutting

HERMISTON — The public is invited to join the city of Hermiston for a ribbon cutting ceremony at 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 23 at the city's recycled water treatment plant.

The plant, located at 2205 N. First Place, began handling all of the city's sewage flow on Oct. 1, 2013, but construction on the project continued until recently.

The plant brings the city's discharge to a Class A standard, meaning it is "virtually indistinguishable from drinking water," according to plant superintendent William Schmittle.

Construction of the plant was paid for by bonds and a 16 percent increase in the city's sewer rates.

B2H comments available online

BOARDMAN — The public comment period has ended on the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project's draft environmental impact statement. Those comments are now available online for review.

About 380 comments were filed and can be found at boardmantohemingway.com/deiscomments.aspx, along with the draft statement. The Bureau of Land Management will look at these comments as it writes a final impact statement.

Boise-based Idaho Power has proposed a 300-mile transmission line that will cross both farms and forest land between Boardman and Hemingway, Idaho.

Walla Walla County suffering whooping cough outbreak

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

Another pertussis epidemic is in full swing in Washington. Hardest hit is Walla Walla County, which has seen the highest rate of infection in the state.

Walla Walla has 28 confirmed cases so far this year with additional suspected cases boosting the number to about 55, said Walla Walla County Public Health Director Harvey Crowder. The official rate is 47 per 100,000 persons.

Public health officials attribute the surge in pertussis, or whooping cough, to a weaker vaccine first used in 1997 to replace an earlier vaccine that triggered high fevers and seizures in some children. The current vaccine is safer, but protection seems to wane

faster. In the mid-2000s, fully immunized people started coming down with whooping cough.

Crowder said he wasn't surprised by the upsurge this year.

"For whatever reason the vaccine doesn't provide long-lived immunity," Crowder said. "We're going to see this again and again and again every three-to-five years until we get a vaccine that is longer-lived."

He said the majority of people coming down with whooping cough were fully vaccinated as children.

"Most of our cases have been adolescents and young adults," he said.

Across the border in Oregon, Umatilla County has had only two confirmed cases, according to public health director Meghan DeBolt, and no current ones.

"There are no active pertussis cases in Umatilla County," DeBolt said. "We haven't seen a surge here."

That doesn't mean Umatilla County residents should feel invincible, however. Crowder and DeBolt urged people to get boosters, especially if they spend time around babies. Pregnant women should get vaccinated every time they get pregnant. Infants are particularly susceptible, they said.

"Families should build a cocoon of immunization around their babies," Crowder said. "They are not eligible for their first pertussis vaccination until they are two months old."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends five shots of DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) between two months and age

six, one shot at age 11 or 12, one shot in adulthood and boosters every 10 years.

To put the current outbreak in perspective, Washington saw epidemic numbers in 2012 with nearly 5,000 whooping cough cases, dozens of hospitalizations and one infant death. So far, this year, 341 cases statewide have been reported. In 2014, at this time, there were 57 confirmed cases.

Oregon has seen 144 cases so far in 2015 after ending last year with 413.

The bacterial lung infection triggers violent coughing spasms that have caused adults to break ribs, Crowder said. People sometimes take as long as three months to recover.

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or call 541-966-0810.

COMMUNITY

Indian tacos benefits Espana

PENDLETON — A fundraiser for Espana June 2015 is planned tonight at the First Christian Church.

The event includes Indian tacos for \$8, fry bread for \$3 and a silent auction. In addition, drinks will be available for purchase. The Indian Taco Fundraiser is Thursday from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at 215 N. Main St., Pendleton.

For more information, call Kathy Youngman at 541-278-9663.

WW.Friends plans brunch event

PENDLETON — A gathering of widows and

widowers is planned this weekend.

WW.Friends will enjoy an afternoon brunch Saturday at 1 p.m. at 511 N.W. Eighth St., Pendleton.

The group gathers monthly to visit and make friends. All widows and widowers are invited to attend.

For more information, call 276-4708.

IMAC hosts breakfast fundraiser

IRRIGON — A fundraising breakfast is planned for the Irrigon Multicultural Arts Center.

The monthly meal is Saturday from 7:30-10:30

a.m. at Stokes Landing Senior Center, 195 N.W. Opal Place, Irrigon. The cost is \$4.50 per person. Money raised from the event will help a group that's dedicated to preserving Irrigon's 1921 school building and creating a regional art venue.

For more information, call Peggy at 541-567-3806.

Catholic Daughters host wine event

HERMISTON — A wine tasting event will benefit the scholarship fund of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Our Lady of Angels Court No. 1692.

The event is Saturday from 6:30-8 p.m. at the Bistro at Bellingers, 1823 S.



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