

EAST: 'I had no idea there was this much going on here'

Continued from 1A

Also making the trip were Curt Melcher, director of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife; Tom Byler, director of the Oregon Water Resources Department; and Brett Brownscombe, natural resources advisor to Gov. Kate Brown. They were greeted by a team of local farmers and community leaders, led by five members of the Northeast Oregon Water Association, which is pursuing new water rights from the Columbia River to expand the area's high-value farming base.

J.R. Cook, founder and director of NOWA, said it takes a lot of education for people to realize not only the benefits of the project, but how it will be mitigated through upstream conservation and groundwater recharge. Events like Monday only create more opportunities for discussion and understanding, Cook said.

"We think we've got a good plan, and we hope they saw that we will be good stewards of what is handed to us," Cook said.

The day started with a drive along Feedville Road to Stahl Farms, where growers demonstrated the latest technology and practices to conserve water. Burdick, whose senate district covers portions of western Portland and Tigard, said she was especially impressed by how farms are using water more efficiently in the face of drought.

"For me, the whole issue of water and how it's tied to economic development and economic success made a deep impression," Burdick said.

The Port of Morrow was another highlight of the day's tour, as general manager Gary Neal showcased a diversity of industries from food processors to biofuels and wood products. Port industries now employ more roughly 4,500 people, and are a major reason why Morrow County has the state's fifth-highest median family wage.

Troops who sought strike thought Taliban had hospital

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Army Green Berets who requested the Oct. 3 airstrike on the Doctors without Borders trauma center in Afghanistan were aware it was a functioning hospital but believed it was under Taliban control, The Associated Press has learned.

The new information adds to a body of evidence that the internationally run medical facility site was familiar to the U.S. military, raising questions about whether the decision to attack it violated international law.

A day before an American AC-130 gunship attacked the hospital, a senior officer in the Green Beret unit wrote in a report that U.S. forces had discussed the hospital with the country director of the medical charity group, presumably in Kabul, according to two people who have seen the document.

The attack left a mounting death toll, now up to 30 people.

Separately, in the days before the attack, "an official in Washington" asked Doctors without Borders "whether our hospital had a large group of Taliban fighters in it," spokesman Tim Shenk said in an email. "We replied that this was not the case. We also stated that we were very clear with both sides to the conflict about the need to respect medical structures."

Taken together, the revelations add to the growing possibility that U.S. forces destroyed what they knew was a functioning hospital, which would be a violation of the international rules of war. The Pentagon has said Americans would never have intentionally fired on a medical facility, and it's unclear why the Green Beret unit requested the strike — and how such an attack was approved by the chain of command — on coordinates widely known to have included a hospital.

"I had no idea there was this much going on here," Burdick said.

This isn't the first time Hansell has organized an Eastern Oregon outing for his western Oregon counterparts, but it is so far the largest. Two years ago, he hosted former Senator Jackie Dingfelder in Wallowa County to talk about how ranchers there were dealing with the reintroduction of wolves into the state. Hansell has frequently said that trip was a major catalyst for the legislature finally passing a wolf bill in 2013.

Then again last year, Hansell invited Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, to Umatilla and Morrow coun-

ties. Hansell pointed out the legislature thereafter passed a \$50 million funding package for water projects statewide — including \$11 million earmarked for the Umatilla Basin.

This year's trip started with a meeting between Hansell and Edwards at the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds. Edwards told Hansell that if they wanted movement on some of these issues, he would need support from other members of the caucus. Hansell took to inviting other west side Democrats on the Senate, and Barreto reached out to members of the House.

The group will continue their trip Tuesday with a

visit to Barreto's district in Wallowa County, where they will cover issues surrounding forestry and wolves.

"This has been a team effort," Hansell said. "I've built bridges with people in Portland and the Valley, and we have a great group of folks here who can tell our story."

Edwards, who represents Eugene and Junction City, said he couldn't help but be impressed with the region's irrigation, and acknowledged there might be a lack of understanding in his district at how sophisticated the technology has become.

"My constituents need to understand east side agriculture has a really good story

to tell," Edwards said. "It's important we make investments in public infrastructure to help build that future."

Beyer said that, while the visit doesn't necessarily change his mindset at the legislature, it does help him to become a better advocate for the entire state.

Johnson, who hails from far northwest Oregon, said this is not her first visit to the basin and she has already been advocating shamelessly for the NOWA project.

"All you have to do is fly over this place to see it more vividly, the effects of these pivots on irrigated land," Johnson said. "It makes all the difference in the world." Each lawmaker said they

are aware of the so-called rural-urban divide in Oregon. Edwards said trips like these show they take their job seriously.

"Nobody is out here for votes," he said.

Johnson said the public sometimes views the legislature as dysfunctional and insulated within their own parts of the state, but that's simply not the case.

"There are unique characteristics to all of Oregon," she said. "The more we can understand each other's places and issues, the better we'll be."

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