

CARTY: Facility already about 75 percent built

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located on Tower Road in the shadow of the existing Boardman Coal Plant. PGE identified the need for Carty in 2009, and hoped to have the plant up and running by mid-2016.

Carty is already about 75 percent built, and PGE is now assembling a new construction management team to finish the job. Spokesman Steve Corson said some

employees could get back to work as early as this week, though most will likely have to wait until after the holidays.

“I think many of the same contractors will be working at the plant again,” Corson said.

Jim Piro, PGE president and CEO, said they have closely monitored progress at Carty, and all major components of the plant are either in place or in the process of being installed.

“Our responsibility to our

customers and our investors requires us to step in now and assume control so construction can get back underway,” Piro said.

PGE has started discussions with Liberty Mutual Surety and Zurich North America, which provided a performance bond of \$145.6 million under the original construction agreement. Carty was originally estimated to cost up to \$514 million. PGE says it will

provide an update on costs and expected completion after work resumes.

“Our focus here is on getting the plant built and online for our customers,” Corson said.

PGE serves roughly 840,000 customers in the Portland metro area south to Salem.

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ORGANICS: Becoming certified takes at least three years

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in Oregon between 2007 and 2012, yet total organic acres nearly quadrupled over that time, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Organic sales also rose from \$88 million to \$194 million in Oregon, making up 4 percent of all farms sales statewide. Nationally, the organic food industry made \$39 billion in 2015 — an 11 percent increase over the previous year.

Despite the demand, becoming an organic farm takes serious time and money. Fields cannot be sprayed with any prohibited chemicals for at least three years before they are certified organic. Without certification, products won’t fetch the same kind of premium price at the market, which can be as much as double or more depending on the commodity.

Nelson said he had help from the U.S. Department of Agriculture getting started, but even that didn’t help pay all the bills. Organic fertilizer costs up to twice as much as the conventional stuff, and managing weeds can become a real issue without being able to use Roundup.

In order to make it over the hump, Nelson said he had to get creative with his cropping systems. He uses spring grains such as mustard and barley to break up soil-borne diseases and replenish nutrients underground.

“We basically have to create our own nitrogen,” he said.

Wheat is still the big money-maker on the farm, but Nelson recently started selling organic mustard seed to Barhyte Specialty Foods in Pendleton as an additional source of revenue.

“Some years are tough, but we have made a profit. We’re still surviving,” he said.

A portion Nelson’s wheat goes to Hummingbird Wholesale, a company in Eugene that distributes dry organic goods to small independent grocery stores, restaurants and food processors.

General Manager Justin Freeman said most of the products they buy come from western Oregon, but there is a growing interest among Eastern Oregon farmers in going organic. The key hurdle, he said, is supporting growers during that three-year transitional phase in certification.

“It’s about finding solutions for people and getting risk out of the equation as much as possible,” Freeman said.

In the past, Hummingbird Wholesale has purchased rice, beans and cranberries at premium organic prices from farmers who have started the process of certification. The goal is to win over more organic farms to keep up with demand, Freeman said.

A similar initiative for wheat has also been launched by Ardent Mills, of Denver, which hopes to double U.S. organic wheat acres by 2019. Oregon Tilth, a nonprofit organization that helps certify local organic farms, has also signed on as a partner.

Chris Schreiner, executive director of Oregon Tilth, said the growing demand for organic products is being driven in part by a renewed interest in food and earth-friendly practices.

From a grower standpoint, Schreiner said there is a tremendous opportunity for going organic, but recognizes it doesn’t come without risk.

“Their challenge is figuring out a new management system and accessing those new markets,” Schreiner said. “We’re committed to supporting them and helping them seize that opportunity in the marketplace.”

One of Eastern Oregon’s largest irrigated organic growers, Threemile Canyon



Produce Manager Aaron Mitchell places stickers on apples Monday at the Pendleton Safeway store, identifying them as organic.

Farms in Boardman, now has 7,800 acres in certified organic vegetables. General Manager Marty Myers said they hope to grow that total to 12,000 acres over the next two years.

Threemile Canyon Farms grows organic sweet peas, sweet corn, onions, carrots, potatoes and edamame, which are mostly sent to the farm’s own frozen foods plant in Pasco. Frozen products are sold primarily to Costco under the brand name Organic by Nature.

The farm also developed its first organic dairy earlier this year just east of Hermiston, with about 1,300 cows. Part of the requirement for an organic dairy is to let cows graze in pasture for at least 120 days out of the year.

Myers said Threemile Canyon first dipped its toes in organic farming in 2002, using fertilizer generated from the farm’s dairies. Without that in-house fertilizer source, Myers said they likely couldn’t make the organic operation work.

Organic vegetables yield about 75 percent versus conventional methods, though Myers said premium prices make up for the hit. Growing organic means going back in time about 20 year in terms of production practices, he said. Sometimes, the only way to manage weeds is to pull them by hand.

“There are a lot of farmers who have tried it and didn’t like it, for obvious reasons,” Myers said. “We feel we can be a low-cost producer. That gives us an advantage over a lot of other producers.”

On a much smaller scale, Gus Wahner grows organic produce on about one-third of an acre in Stanfield, including tomatoes, basil, cucumber and garlic.

Wahner has been farming on and off for 30 years at his home, which he’s named Way of Life Farms. Though not certified organic, he said the land hasn’t been sprayed since 1970. He raises produce from the greenhouse to the hoop house, and made \$15,000 in profit last year.

Wahner, who serves on the Umatilla County Soil & Water Conservation District, is a longtime advocate of organic farming. He uses an aerobic system to brew his own compost “tea,” which he sprays along with a mix of fish, kelp, molasses and sea minerals to create healthy, organic soils.

“When people talk about organic, it needs to be biological,” he said. “The whole essence of organic is improvement in the soil.”

Wahner said he’s not an environmentalist, but growing organic requires being in tune with nature. Spraying chemicals kills off components in the

ground, he said, but organic farming is about working with nature to grow what you need.

The food is also healthier, he said, because it absorbs a greater host micro-nutrients from the ground.

“I don’t do farming to make money, necessarily. I do it for people to experience great food and be healthy,” Wahner said.

Ten years after switching to organic, Nelson said they continue to make a living while preserving the legacy of their land.

“It’s a leap of faith on some levels,” he said. “It’s not without it’s challenges, but it can work.”



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Members of the Pendleton Arts Committee count votes Monday afternoon for the public’s favorite historic figure to honor in bronze.

STATUES: Will pay for half of the costs with grants, donations

Continued from 1A

saddle bronc champion, Ernie Gallaher (50), a long-time police chief whose refusal to reopen Pendleton’s brothels put an end to legal prostitution in the city and Bonnie McCarroll (80), a rodeo competitor who died following injuries she suffered from a Round-Up accident in 1929.

The 300 block of Main Street is Raley’s future home, directly across from Stella Darby.

The write-ins included a smattering of votes for saddle maker Duff Severe and Pendleton Mayor Phillip Houk.

It was hard to gauge how many people submitted ballots for the downtown statues because some voted in one race while ignoring the other, but committee Chairman Keith May said at least 257 people cast a vote.

According to the committee’s strategic plan, it expects the statues, plaques and other incidentals to cost \$75,000. The committee also wants to make improvements to the traffic island on Court Avenue where the Esther Motanic bronze is located, which has an estimated cost of \$20,000.

The bronzes are funded by the transient room tax, 1.75 percent of which is specifically earmarked for public art, meaning

the money can’t be spent on other budgetary items like street repair or public safety.

Although the arts committee has \$90,000 available to spend, the committee plans to pay for 50 percent of the costs of the two bronzes with grants and donations.

Houk, a member of the committee, said he’s already spoken with a foundation interested in donating \$10,000 to the projects.

The strategic plan also included a general timeline of the bronze process.

The committee will request proposals from sculptors and begin fundraising in January, select an artist proposal in February, send the proposal to the Pendleton City Council for consideration in March and install and dedicate the statues in Fall 2016.

The committee intends to involve the families of Burke and Raley in the sculptor selection process, although none of the committee members knew of any Raley descendants.

If one of the statues isn’t erected next year, it will be postponed to 2017. If both are done by 2016, the committee will start site selection for the next round of public art.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

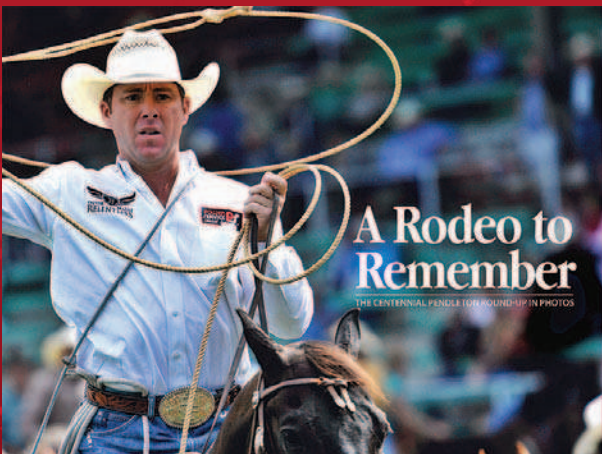
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Notice of Availability of the Naval Weapons Systems Training Facility (NWSTF) Boardman Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations [40 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 1500-1508]), the U.S. Navy, in cooperation with the National Guard Bureau and Oregon National Guard, has completed a Final EIS to evaluate the potential environmental effects associated with ongoing and proposed military readiness activities within NWSTF Boardman and associated airspace.

Proposed Action:

The Navy and Oregon National Guard propose to:

- Increase the types and the number of certain training activities conducted at NWSTF Boardman
- Develop and enhance training facilities at NWSTF Boardman
- Create additional special use airspace to support existing aircraft training

The Proposed Action is needed to enhance the training environment at NWSTF Boardman – including ranges, training areas, and instrumentation – to better support current and future unit and personnel training requirements.

The Final EIS will be available for public review from Dec. 18, 2015, to Jan. 19, 2016.

The document is available online at www.NWSTFBoardmanEIS.com and at these locations: Multnomah County Central, Salem Central, West Salem, Oregon Trail Heppner, Oregon Trail Boardman, and the Stafford Hansell Government Center.

For more information:

Visit the project website at www.NWSTFBoardmanEIS.com or contact: Naval Facilities Engineering Command Northwest Attn: NWSTF Boardman EIS Project Manager 1101 Tautog Circle, Suite 203 Silverdale, WA 98315-1101

Comments may be submitted by U.S. postal mail to the above address by Jan. 19, 2016.

Public Involvement:

The completion of the Final EIS follows years of research, analysis, and public involvement. The Navy held two public scoping meetings in October 2010 and two public meetings in September 2012 to provide information and receive public comments. The Final EIS includes responses from the Navy and the Oregon National Guard to the public comments received on the Draft EIS. Regulations provide for a 30-day public review and wait period after the Final EIS is published before action may be taken.