



# EAST OREGONIAN

FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2016

140th Year, No. 110

WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

## Your Weekend



- Celebrate Wee Bit O' Ireland in Heppner
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Banquet
- Night at the Children's Museum on Friday

For times and places see Coming Events, 5A

## Weekend Weather

Fri	Sat	Sun
56/29	59/37	60/42

## Watch the madness



<sup>7</sup>Oregon State vs. <sup>10</sup>VCU  
Friday, 10:30 a.m., TNT



<sup>1</sup>Oregon vs. <sup>16</sup>Holy Cross  
Friday, 4:27 p.m., truTV

## Recreational pot brings in \$3.5M in first month

SALEM (AP) — Oregon officials say they've collected about \$3.5 million in taxes from recreational marijuana sales in January.

The 25 percent-tax on recreational pot sales began at the start of 2016 and the state began collecting the taxes from dispensaries last month.

Data released Thursday show the \$3.5 million collected came from 253 individual payments. That's fewer than the 309 medical dispensaries statewide that have elected to sell recreational pot.

Officials say it could mean dispensaries are either late with their payments or they simply decided not to sell recreational pot.

An Oregon Department of Revenue spokeswoman says they'll have a better idea of the situation after the dispensaries file their tax returns at the end of the quarter.

## HERMISTON



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Wastewater churns in the aeration basin before being sent through a filter to remove organic matter on Thursday at the Hermiston Wastewater Treatment facility in Hermiston.

# WASTED WATER

DEQ permit holding up plan to use recycled water for nearby irrigation

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

The city of Hermiston plans to start sending its recycled water to the West Extension Irrigation District instead of the Umatilla River during growing season, but it can't until the Department of Environmental Quality issues a permit.

City Manager Byron Smith said part of the reason Hermiston built its upgraded wastewater treatment plant was because it was beginning fall out of compliance with DEQ regulations for the temperature of discharge into the river during the summer months. The regulations are in place to help protect fish from being killed by warm water when they swim upstream to spawn.

The city signed a memorandum of agreement and order with the DEQ in 2010, creating an acknowledgment on both sides that the city was in the process of addressing the issue. The upgraded recycled water treatment plant came into full usage in Oct. 2014, discharging water that Smith described as not just adequate but "amazingly clean" compared to the old discharge.

"It's probably cleaner than the water a lot of people pull out of wells," he said. But the water is still warm, and until the DEQ issues the city a new permit it can't divert the water into the West Extension Irrigation

See WASTEWATER/12A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

This new irrigation pump station will be used to pump recycled water to the West End Irrigation District from the Hermiston Waste Water Treatment facility in Hermiston.

## HEPPNER

### DEQ targets ammonia in wastewater

By GEORGE PLAVERN  
East Oregonian

The city of Heppner could be facing costly upgrades at its 65-year-old wastewater treatment plant to reduce the amount of ammonia dumped into Willow Creek.

Oregon environmental regulators recently tightened their water quality standards for ammonia to better protect fish, as well as certain kinds of freshwater mussels and snails. The Environmental Protec-

tion Agency signed off on these new rules on Aug. 4, 2015.

Meanwhile, Heppner's own waste discharge permit has been up for renewal since 2010 with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. The city operates a wastewater plant just north of town on Riverside Avenue, and during the summer it discharges treated sewage into Willow Creek — home to populations of redband trout.

The EPA now says ammonia levels from the plant are too high

See AMMONIA/12A

## HERMISTON

# Stabbing suspect attacks officer en route to jail

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

A man arrested for stabbing a woman Thursday also tried to choke an officer transporting him to the Umatilla County Jail.

Hermiston police Chief Jason Edmiston in a written statement said Richard D. Heathman, 32, of 1100 W. Sunland Ave., Hermiston, is in custody after the violent confrontation.

Edmiston reported Hermiston officers responded to Heathman's home at approximately 11:05 a.m. on a report of a domestic disturbance with one person



Heathman

possibly stabbed. Police arrived, and Hermiston Fire and Emergency Services medics tended to a 41-year-old woman with a wound to her neck.

Officers searched the neighborhood and within minutes caught Heathman, the statement said, but he was "extremely aggressive and non-compliant with officers," so they handcuffed and transported him to the jail in Pendleton.

While en route, though, Heathman stepped through his arms, Edmiston said, caused significant damage to the patrol car and then tried to choke Hermiston police Cpl. Doug Gill with the seatbelt while on Interstate 84 starting near milepost 193.

The officer told dispatchers to send help, according to police radio transmissions, and Edmiston said Oregon State Police found Gill and helped secure Heathman.

An emergency flight took the stabbing victim to a Portland hospital. Edmiston reported her injury did not appear to be life-threatening.

The Sunland home has

See STABBING/12A

# Going into the Blue Zone

Low-ranking Umatilla County focuses on improving health

By KATHY ANEY  
East Oregonian

The idea of dramatically improving the health of an entire community seems a crazy dream. After all, people will do what they will do. They'll eat junk, smoke and stress out. They will too often choose to drive instead of walk. Those who think otherwise are pie-in-the-sky.

Or are they? The crowd that gathered last Thursday evening at the Sno Road Winery hope to improve Umatilla County's less-than stellar health outcomes with some out-of-the-box approaches. About 35 health providers, farmers, small business people, county commissioners, land use planners and others gathered to discuss how to improve the health of Umatilla County residents.

The county recently won a grant to jump start the effort with \$130,000 from the American Planning Association. It is early days for the Plan4Health program, but the crowd at Sno Road was spirited. A lot of the hope comes from something called the Blue Zone Project, which was explained by keynote speaker Klamath County Commissioner Kelley Minty Morris.

Morris said Klamath County came in dead last in the 2015 county health rankings. Umatilla came in eight places ahead of Klamath. Both counties struggle with high obesity and smoking rates.

"Our health outcomes are one of the very worst in the state," she said. "We have a lot of work to do."

That may be coming to an end, though, with Klamath County's designation by the state as a Blue Zone demonstration community.

So what is a blue zone? In 2004, author Dan Buettner worked with National

See BLUE\_ZONE/12A



Klamath County Commissioner Kelley Minty Morris talks about her county's selection as the state's first Blue Zone community and other topics during a Plan-4Health gathering last Thursday night at the Sno Road Winery.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney



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