

WASTEWATER: DEQ has taken longer than EPA to issue permits

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District’s main canal, even though concerns about water temperatures for fish are irrelevant there because fish are blocked from swimming up into the canal.
“We’ve contacted the DEQ and said, ‘We’re waiting on you for a permit,’” Smith said.
He said the city has a first draft in hand but the permit still has to finish going through the public comment period. Environmental groups often push successfully for comment periods to be extended, although in this case it would be detrimental to their cause because it would keep the warm water flowing into the Umatilla.
Bev Bridgewater, the irrigation district’s manager, said if they don’t hit any roadblocks it is possible they could start using the recycled water in June, although at this point they’re just hoping to have it sometime this summer. She said it’s “crazy” that the DEQ has taken so long — longer than the federal Environmental Protection Agency — to issue the needed permits.
“We’re very disappointed,” she said.
The water coming from the city will amount to about 3.5 to 4 cubic feet per second out of the 120 cfs in the canal, so it’s not a big proportion of the district’s water. But Bridgewater said it is water that the district would normally have to pay to pump out of the Columbia River or not have at all.
“We are a water-short district, which means we don’t have enough water at some times of year for all of our patrons,” she said.
The district has also been pursuing grants to build a regional storage pond. Bridgewater said if that happened, they could take all of Hermiston’s recycled water year-round and also collect water from nearby cities, further reducing the amount of recycled water being put back into the river.
Bridgewater said the city has been “the best partner” on the project, which could



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The recycled water is 99.9 percent cleaned of solid waste materials.

provide a model for future cooperation between cities and irrigation districts.
Plant supervisor Bill Schmittle said irrigation customers don’t need to worry about how clean the water coming from the plant is. The biological oxygen demand, one way of measuring the water’s cleanliness, used to be close to the 20 parts per million limit and has been reduced to just one part per million.
As for the water temperature problem, he said adding a chilling mechanism in the new plant was cost-prohibitive, and piping the water all the way to the Columbia River or directly onto private property was expensive, too.
“We were just exploring options, and we figured out it could go to the irrigation district, and that solved a lot of problems,” he said.
Until the irrigation district can build a regional storage pond sometime in the

future, water will still enter the Umatilla River in cold months, when temperatures for fish aren’t an issue, using the same pipeline the city has always used to discharge all of its recycled water. But between March and October the DEQ permit would allow the water to be pumped to the irrigation district’s canal near Three Mile Dam.
According to a 2011 report from the DEQ itself, the solution is one that could help the health of the Umatilla River.
“Decreased temperature is a high priority for Umatilla Basin watershed restoration efforts,” according to the report. “Discharging the City’s warm wastewater to the canal rather than the river during the warm season would support progress towards this priority.”
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STABBING: Warrant issued Monday after Heathman missed court appearance

AMMONIA generated several complaints and was a focus of police activity.
“We had been in the middle of a three-prong approach to dealing with the residence and residents at the time of the call today,” Edmiston stated. “Not only did we have a dedicated directed patrol taking place

for that residence internally with our patrol division, but we also had code enforcement addressing violations, and our detective assigned to the drug task force was collecting information about the persons frequenting the house.”
Umatilla County Circuit Court records show Heathman had a court

appearance Monday to change his plea to driving under the influence of intoxicants. He did not show for the hearing, leading Circuit Judge Dan Hill to issue a warrant for his arrest.
Edmiston also stated “exact charges for Heathman have not been filed yet, but he will likely be facing assault and vandalism charges.”

BLUE ZONE: Healthy communities in Italy, Greece, Costa Rica, Japan, California

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Geographic to identify places in the world where people live longer and better.
“He studied where people are naturally living to a long age and doing it without health issues,” Morris said. “He identified communities in the world where people live into the hundreds in good health.”
Buettner found five such places.
“He took a map and a blue marker and circled the communities,” she said. “They became known as the Blue Zones.”
Teams of scientists traveled to five communities in Sardinia, Italy; Ikaria, Greece; Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica; Okinawa, Japan; and Loma Linda, California, to identify lifestyle characteristics that explain their longevity and robust health.
Buettner’s book “The Blue Zones,” a *New York Times* bestseller, lists nine characteristics shared in all five places.
The people move naturally, not necessarily at the gym, but walking from place to place, growing gardens and shunning mechanical conveniences. Residents live with purpose and know how to downshift using such tech-

niques as prayer, napping and happy hour. They observe the “80 percent rule,” filling their stomachs not quite all the way. They eat a plant- and bean-heavy diet, eating meat on the average of only five times a month. They have social circles called moais in Okinawa — groups of friends that walk together and commit to each other for life. They put their families first.
They enjoy “wine at five,” drinking alcohol moderately, but regularly. The group at Sno Road raised their wine glasses to that one and Morris laughed.
Buettner was asked if similar places could be created.
Thus the Blue Zones Project was born and Albert Lea, Minnesota, became the test town. Albert Lea residents created 46 new community gardens, attended workshops and 44 percent joined walking moais. After a year, health care claims for city workers dropped 49 percent and businesses saw a decline in absenteeism. After Albert Lea’s success, other communities started the process.
Klamath Falls was chosen by the Oregon as a Blue Zone demonstration community. Umatilla County, though not

an official Blue Zone, can access tools and best practices available from the state.
A Umatilla County coalition of people from healthcare, education, land use planning and other areas will use the \$130,000 grant to do initial planning and assess community needs and readiness. The coalition, led by Umatilla County Public Health Director Meghan DeBolt, County Planning Director Tamra Mabbott and Healthy Communities Coordinator Taylor Smith, will meet monthly.
“We will be doing partnership building, getting key stakeholders together from throughout Umatilla County who have the desire to build a healthy community,” DeBolt said.
What that healthy community will look like is yet known. Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock expects the group to think way outside the box, using data from Blue Zone studies and other programs.
“We are trying to take Umatilla County health to a place it’s never been,” Murdock said. “We’re going into a whole different arena.”
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Gas pipeline explosions bring new U.S. safety proposal

By **MATTHEW BROWN**
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — U.S. officials moved Thursday to strengthen safety rules for the nation’s 300,000-mile network of natural gas transmission pipelines in a belated response to numerous fiery accidents, including a 2010 California explosion that killed eight people and injured more than 50.
The Department of Transportation proposal would expand inspection and repair rules to include lines in some rural areas and recently-installed lines in burgeoning gas drilling fields.
Pressure-testing for leaks would be required on older lines that were previously exempt, such as the Pacific Gas and Electric Company pipe constructed in 1956 that broke and torched a residential neighborhood in San Bruno, California, six years ago.
But the government sidestepped for now action on emergency valves that can automatically shut down ruptured gas lines. That issue was highlighted by San Bruno, where a 30-inch-diameter pipeline buried beneath a suburban street continued spewing gas for 95 minutes after it broke, destroying 38 homes and damaging 70 others before a utility worker shut it down.
The Associated Press has reported on the potential benefits of automatic valves, and safety officials have urged making them

mandatory. The gas industry has resisted, in part due to their potential high cost.
In the past two decades, the government has recorded more than 2,000 accidents on gas transmission lines across the U.S., resulting in 46 deaths, 181 injuries and \$1.8 billion in damages.
The AP obtained details on Thursday’s proposal in advance of its public release. Complying would cost companies an estimated \$597 million to \$711 million over the next 15 years, according to federal and industry officials. Benefits primarily from hundreds of avoided accidents would total \$3.2 billion to \$4.7 billion over the same period.
Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said the changes represent commonsense measures needed to handle a dramatic increase in domestic natural gas production in recent years.
They would bring under federal regulation for the first time roughly 70,000 miles of “gathering lines” that transport fuel from gas fields to storage areas or into transmission systems, officials said.
“The significant growth in the nation’s production, usage and commercialization of natural gas is placing unprecedented demands on the nation’s pipeline system,” Foxx said in a statement provided to the AP.
The rules would extend pressure-testing to include lines built before 1970, a step the National Transportation Safety Board has long recommended.

AMMONIA: Permit extended in 2010

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under the revised water quality standard. Though Heppner uses wastewater to irrigate the Willow Creek Country Club golf course during summer months, the city says it cannot guarantee compliance with the law year-round.
Heppner Public Works Director Chad Doherty said that leaves them with two choices: either install ammonia upgrades at the plant, which would cost from \$750,000 up to \$1 million, and continue discharging into the creek; or find somewhere to build sewage lagoons that would take the creek out of the equation entirely.
System upgrades would be cheaper, Doherty said, but lagoons might be a more permanent fix should the EPA and DEQ ratchet up water quality rules again.
“This just fixes the plant for ammonia,” Doherty said. “What is the EPA going to come up with next that we have to take out of the water?”
The problem with lagoons, however, is find a location where they can be built. Heppner is located in a valley surrounded by steep, rolling hillsides, and flat land is tough to find that isn’t already being farmed.

Doherty figures they would need 40-50 acres for the lagoons, which would also need to be built far enough away from the neighboring creek. Heppner City Council passed a motion on Monday to hire an engineering firm that will begin studying what to do.
“We knew this could happen sometime,” Doherty said. “Now, we just have to figure something out working toward the future.”
Carl Nadler, a natural resource specialist with DEQ, is in charge of writing the discharge permit for Heppner’s wastewater plant. The plant was built sometime in the early 1950s, and designed to handle about 250,000 gallons per day.
The current permit was supposed to expire in 2010, but has been extended as DEQ catches up on an enormous backlog of permits. Nadler said there is no time frame for getting the permit renewed, but the agency would like to get something done as soon as possible.
“This is a big decision for the city,” Nadler said.
Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.



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