

HERMISTON

Pacific Ag acquires Calagri

Company bolsters status as largest crop residue supplier

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Two of the Northwest's largest biomass and crop residue companies are joining forces.

Pacific Ag, of Hermiston, announced Thursday it has acquired Calagri after nearly two decades working side by side in the industry. Terms of the deal were not disclosed, but Pacific Ag CEO Bill Levy said it will help provide better service for growers and a more reliable stream of products for different markets.

"I think it says great things about the future of Pacific Ag and our markets," Levy said. "There's a lot of great opportunities out there, and we felt we could meet those opportunities better together than we could separately."

Pacific Ag is the nation's largest harvester of crop residue and forage — such as corn stover and wheat straw — used to make things like animal feed or tree-free paper products. Composted wheat straw is also what's predominately used to grow commercial mushrooms for grocery stores.

But perhaps one of the



Photo contributed by Pacific Ag
Pacific Ag, of Hermiston, announced Thursday it has acquired Calagri, a hay and forage company based in Washington.

biggest future markets, Levy said, is plant material as a feedstock for biofuel and biochemicals.

"We believe that's going to be a significant part of our future," Levy said.

Based in Ellensburg, Washington, Calagri has collaborated and even shared equipment in the past with Pacific Ag, Levy said. Now, they'll be able to continue that work seamlessly under a single operation.

Calagri's co-owner, Kerry Calaway, is joining Pacific

Ag's leadership team and said it is an exciting time to be joining forces.

"New markets for forage and crop residue are growing across the region and the country, and farmers are increasingly looking for ways to sustainably generate additional income per acre," Calaway said in a statement. "Together, we will create more opportunities for farmers while providing better service to our customers."

Levy said Pacific Ag will

retain Calagri's employees, and as a result of the transaction the company will now harvest more than 300,000 tons of forage every year across Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

"This is a significant addition for us," Levy said. "It's exciting, truly, to be working with them and to be one company."

Growers interested in learning more about generating income off crop residue can contact Pacific Ag at 1-844-RESIDUE.

PENDLETON

Council looks at utility discount

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

marijuana policy discussion.

After spending the past year imposing water and sewer rate hikes and a street utility fee, the Pendleton City Council could provide some relief for the city's low and fixed-income residents.

The council will consider a 10 percent utility discount for people with incomes of less than or equal to 125 percent of federal poverty guidelines.

Staff will also recommend retaining its current assistance program, which offers assistance of up to \$150 in a 12-month period for incomes of less than or equal to 150 percent of federal governmental poverty guidelines.

Applicants for both programs would be screened through nonprofits Community Action Program of East Central Oregon and Helping Hand.

The city estimates to provide the discount to 400-450 households, or \$33,600-\$37,800 in assistance in the first year.

The city's current assistance program is much more modest, assisting 42 households for about \$4,425 two years ago.

The rate discount is supposed to balance the effects of recent water and sewer increases, which have risen a combined \$7 per month since December 2015.

The council meeting will be held Tuesday at the council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave.

Council to discuss marijuana at noon meeting

The Pendleton City Council scheduled a public meeting to be held at lunch hour Tuesday, their main course consisting of a

At the request of the council, the city scheduled a rare noon meeting to discuss the state's marijuana opt-in and taxation laws with League of Oregon Cities Assistant General Counsel Carl Sniffen.

At the center of the debate is whether the city should ask voters to keep a ban on recreational and medical marijuana sales separately, which City Attorney Nancy Kerns said would preclude the city from collecting taxes if one but not both is legalized.

The city is on a tight timeline to put the marijuana sales question on the ballot and will be holding the first reading for an ordinance referring legal sales to the ballot at the council's regularly scheduled meeting Tuesday evening.

The noon meeting will be held in the council annex while the evening meeting will be held in council chambers at 7 p.m.

Both meetings are at city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave.

Long churning transportation plan on agenda

After months of planning and committee meetings, the update of the Pendleton Transportation System Plan is ready for city council consideration.

The 162-page plan calls for the creation and improvement of dozens of sidewalks, walking paths, bike lanes and public transit options.

The city will seek funding for these projects through outside grant opportunities.

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

Umatilla County trims costs with reorganization

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Umatilla County Board of Commissioners formalized the reorganization of county human services and public health programs to save \$250,000 a year.

Commissioner George Murdock has been heading up the revamp project and Wednesday the board voted 3-0 to divide the county's Health and Human Services Department into the Public Health Department and the Human Services Department, each with its own director. The changes go into effect July 1.

The county had planned to have public health administrator Meghan DeBolt oversee the Health and Human Services Department with the aid of two deputy directors.

But DeBolt is leaving in July, which prompted the county to sever the department, give each a director and cut out the deputy positions.

The county also continues to forgo having a manager for the developmental disabilities program. Instead, Kim Weisenfluh, head of the county's juvenile department, oversees the program that operates in the juvenile building.

Marie Simonis, assistant

director of county Business and Finance, estimated the entire plan saves \$253,766, including general fund savings of \$218,086. Most of that comes from not hiring the deputy directors or the developmental disabilities manager, she said, and some comes from tapping other funds to pay for salaries.

Pinching every penny matters, Murdock said at the meeting Wednesday, with the county facing a \$1.1 million increase in 2017 from the Public Employee Retirement System. The county already established a reserve fund to deal with that cost, but Murdock said it may have

to make more adjustments throughout the year.

The county is now searching for DeBolt's successor. Murdock will serve as interim director of public health, a position he held for five months during a similar search.

The county has hired Amy Ashton-Williams of Pendleton as the new director of Human Services, a department that oversees alcohol and drug programs, gambling addiction services, veterans services, and mental health and other services. She starts July 1.

Motorcycle wreck injures two

HERMISTON — Two people were taken to the hospital on Friday morning after the motorcycle they were riding collided with a pickup at the intersection of Baxter and Canal roads east of Hermiston.

Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services responded to the crash shortly after 9 a.m.

Rollover wreck sends 15-year-old juvenile to hospital

A 15-year-old girl was flown to a Tri-Cities hospital with serious injuries Friday morning after a single-vehicle rollover on Highway 207 at Bombing Range Road in Morrow County.

Oregon State Police Trooper Jerrad Little did not identify the victim, but said she was the only person in the truck, which rolled three or four times before ending up on its side in a field. Little said the girl was wearing her seatbelt.

Authorities closed the highway for about 45 minutes while the juvenile was loaded into an air ambulance and taken to Kadlec Regional Medical

BRIEFLY



Staff photo by Jade McDowell
First responders from Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services move a patient to an ambulance after a crash between a pickup and a motorcycle outside Hermiston Friday morning shortly after 9 a.m.

Center in Richland, Washington. Little did not have an immediate update on her condition.

Little said the girl is

from the Heppner area, and was traveling north on the highway before she crashed. The cause of the wreck is under investigation.

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