

# EAST OREGONIAN

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**BOARDMAN**

## Mega-dairy up for further review

Ranch on former tree farm would add 30,000 cows

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
*East Oregonian*

The public will have another month to weigh in on a controversial new mega-dairy proposed at the former Boardman Tree Farm property.

More than 2,300 comments have already poured in to the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Department of Environmental Quality on the Lost Valley Ranch, an operation that would add 30,000 cows to

the area and generate roughly 187 million gallons of liquid manure each year.

ODA and DEQ are responsible for registering the dairy as a confined animal feeding operation, or CAFO. But first, the agencies must approve a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit, which outlines how Lost Valley will manage wastewater and monitor for potential groundwater contamination.

A public hearing was held July

28 at the Port of Morrow, where a majority of people favored approving Lost Valley's permit application. Speakers included the project designer, local contractors and Marty Myers, general manager of neighboring Threemile Canyon Farms, which runs an even larger dairy with an astounding 70,000 cows.

"Sustainable agriculture is really what we're talking about here," Myers said during the hearing.

However, the bulk of written

comments oppose Lost Valley, arguing such large dairies have a negative impact on air and water quality. Wym Matthews, CAFO program manager for ODA, said the sheer number of comments they received was unprecedented.

"The agencies are bound to look at those comments and respond to them all," Matthews said.

The original public comment period ended Aug. 4, though it was reopened Monday at the request of the state Environmental Justice Task Force and

See **DAIRY/8A**

## PERS burden weighed locally

2017-2019 rates to cut deeper into budgets

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
and **PHIL WRIGHT**  
*East Oregonian*

Public employers have known since last year that their contributions to the Public Employees Retirement System will be going up again in 2017, but now they know just what the damage will be.

The PERS board released the rates for the 2017-2019 biennium last week, updating a previous forecast last fall by the actuarial firm Milliman.

More than 900 employers across the state are part of the PERS system, including cities, schools, counties and special districts. The increase in their required contributions depends on a variety of factors — such as how

**"We did know increases were coming, but it's difficult to prepare until you know what it is going to be."**

— **Amy Palmer**,  
Hermiston finance director

See **PERS/8A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

## Mixed greens, reds and yellows

A deer grazes in the fall-colored undergrowth on the exposed lake bed of the McKay Reservoir on Tuesday south of Pendleton.

## Aging farmers will turn over two-thirds of Oregon's ag land

By **ERIC MORTENSON**  
*Capital Press*

A new report estimates 64 percent of Oregon's farmland, nearly 10.5 million acres, could change hands in the next 20 years.

Farmers 55 and older, the ubiquitous Baby Boomers, control that much of Oregon ag

land, according to the report. As they leave the profession over the next two decades, they are likely to sell or transfer land to family members, neighbors or other current farmers and ranchers, or to business entities that are "primarily focused on investment, finance, property management, and development."

"How that land changes hands, who acquires it, and what they do with the land will impact Oregon for generations," the report concludes.

The report, "The Future of Oregon's Agricultural Land," said the average age of Oregon farmers and ranchers is now 60, up from 55 in 2002.

The report was produced by Oregon State University's Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems in conjunction with Portland State University's Planning Oregon/Institute for Metropolitan Studies, and with Rogue Farm Corps, a nonprofit striving to train the next generation of farmers, particularly those who weren't born to the farm or ranch.

Nellie McAdams, director of Rogue Farm Corps' farm preservation program and one of the report's co-authors, said bigger farms under fewer owners is a likely outcome of the coming ownership turnover. While farm



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

**Wheat is harvested near Condon. A new report estimates 64 percent of Oregon's farmland, nearly 10.5 million acres, could change hands in the next 20 years.**

size is not a problem by itself, she said, consolidation could result in fewer operators and less diversity in crop decisions and farming methods. With larger parcels, ownership becomes an even greater cost leap for beginning farmers, she said.

In addition to rising land costs, other hurdles for new farmers include the high cost of getting started, low income during a farm's "formative years," a lack of training opportunities for those without a farming background and "systemic barriers" that exclude "the growing pool of

women and people of color who are eager to farm."

The potential impact of older farmers letting go of land isn't a new topic — the question of "Who are the next farmers?" is closely related — but the researchers took deeper dives than most into farmland transition.

To verify findings, the authors used USDA data, interviewed farmers, Realtors and others, and went through sales and property tax records.

See **FARM/8A**

## PENDLETON Old city hall owners get two-week extension

Council says Quezadas must repair or sell damaged building

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
*East Oregonian*

The Pendleton City Council gave the owners of the old city hall a two week extension to fix their fire-damaged building and some stern words to go along with it.

Diana Quezada, the daughter of the building's owner, went before the city council Tuesday to appeal the city's decision to begin penalizing her family for failing to repair old city hall more than a year after an explosion and fire severely damaged it.

Quezada explained that the family's original plans to take out a loan to renovate the building into an apartment complex were dashed when the banks they spoke to told them they would need to put 30 percent down on a \$1.2 million-\$1.5 million loan, a figure they couldn't afford.

The family revised their expectations and now intended to ask the Pendleton Development Commission, a public body also comprised of the city council, for help in covering the costs of replacing just the roof and windows and repairing the bricks on the façade.

Councilor Chuck Wood, the chairman of the commission, said the Quezadas had previously approached him about the commission paying for a portion those repairs, which had an estimated cost of \$342,000.

Quezada said she would sell her share at Sister's Cafe, a Main Street restaurant

See **COUNCIL/3A**

