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STATE WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIP/1B



**Columnist
gives view
from the
ranch**

VIEWPOINTS/5A

EAST OREGONIAN

FEBRUARY 25-26, 2017

141st Year, No. 95

WINNER OF THE 2016 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50

Mushroom farm eyes Athena for compost facility

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

A commercial mushroom farm based in Olympia, Washington has identified northeast Oregon as the ideal location for stewing compost, though neighbors are worried about what the smell will mean for their property values and quality of life.

Ostrom Mushroom Farms wants to build a composting facility along Sand Hollow Road between Adams and Athena, where it would make the fertilizer needed to grow a variety of edible mushrooms including white, portabella and shiitake.

The proposal was laid out at a community meeting Wednesday night in Athena, where Ostrom's president and CEO David Knudsen explained how the process works. Ostrom's uses wheat straw, chicken manure, canola meal and water in its compost, later adding in the fungus to grow mushrooms.

All of the composting is done indoors, within tunnels that resemble silage bunkers, where the material is left to decompose and pasteurize. That's what Ostrom's wants to do in rural Umatilla County, on private land owned by the King family where Knudsen said the company already sources its wheat straw.

"This is the source of our primary raw material," Knudsen said.

While the compost would be made locally, the mushrooms themselves would be grown and harvested at another farm with access to natural gas, Knudsen said. If built, the composting facility would produce 180 tons every week.

Composting is done over three phases — first, the raw materials are mixed and left to decay on an aerated floor. Second, the concoction naturally heats up and turns a chocolate brown color as it is pasteurized. Finally, workers mix in the mycelium, or mushroom cultures, which take two weeks to colonize.

Knudsen said the facility would start out with four tunnels and 15-17 employees, though future expansion could result in up to 10 tunnels. But before any of that can happen, Ostrom's needs to obtain land use and environmental permits from the Umatilla County Planning Department and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

State law requires the company hold a public meeting prior to

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PENDLETON



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Without a means to capture and remove vehicle exhaust, firefighters working in the Pendleton Fire Department's main station are exposed to carcinogenic diesel fumes.

PUTTING OUT FIRES

Fire department contends with aging station, short staffing

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

When talking about the cornerstones of his department, Pendleton fire chief Mike Ciraulo uses a stool as a metaphor.

Speaking before the city council Tuesday, Ciraulo said the stool's legs — staffing, facilities, and equipment — are all deficient.

Those areas could be fortified in 2017, starting with a \$9.93 million bond Pendleton voters will consider in May that would build a new fire station on Southeast Court Avenue and purchase new equipment.

Each leg is interrelated and there is consensus among city council that something needs to be done to alleviate the issues. But whether the money's there to repair them is an open question.

Facilities

Out of all the questions Ciraulo is asked, the most frequent relates to the fire station's current home. Namely, what's wrong with it?

The chief said renovating or tearing down and replacing Fire



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Pendleton firefighters practice CPR on a mannequin during a training exercise Thursday at the main station in Pendleton.

Station No. 1, built in 1959 at 911 S.W. Court Avenue, was a nonstarter for several reasons.

Acquiring the muffler shop next door, building a second floor to alleviate the overcrowding issues of the current facility and making the building compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act would

make a renovation prohibitively expensive, Ciraulo said.

And building a new fire hall at the current property wouldn't solve the problem of emergency vehicles getting stuck behind traffic at the intersection of Southwest Court Avenue and Southwest 10th Street.

And either option would require

the department to temporarily relocate to an interim facility that they don't possess.

But the problems with the fire station go beyond inconvenience. Besides being blighted with black mold and asbestos, an analysis from the Mackenzie Group showed that the structure was permeated with carcinogens from diesel exhaust in the garage bay.

Ciraulo said firefighters are already almost three times more likely than an average civilian to get cancer from the carcinogens they encounter fighting fires, so it's concerning that they're exposed to more of it when they return to their workplace.

Ciraulo said one of his lieutenants is currently fighting a cancer related to carcinogen exposure. And although he can't prove contact at the fire station caused it, the more his employees are exposed to it the higher their risk.

There's also the matter of housing firefighters on long shifts. While many staff members sleep in

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Ranchers oppose cuts to wolf compensation, predator control



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Two adult wolves from the Walla Walla Pack were caught on remote trail camera in January 2016 in northern Umatilla County. Oregon legislators are considering reductions in funding for predator control and reimbursing ranchers for livestock losses.

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Ranchers who suffer livestock losses from predators stand to lose state support under both budget scenarios currently proposed for the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Funding aimed at predator control and compensation for livestock depredation would be cut under recommendations from Gov. Kate Brown as well as the co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, Sen. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin, and Rep. Nancy Nathanson, D-Eugene.

The proposed cuts drew objections from the livestock industry during a Feb. 22 hearing on ODA's budget before a panel of Joint Ways and Means Committee members focused on natural resources.

As the wolf population has grown

in Oregon, livestock losses have been a continuing source of frustration for ranchers, said Mike Durgan of the Baker County Wolf Compensation Advisory Committee.

Even when wolves don't kill cattle, they cause health problems that are considered indirect losses and aren't compensated with state dollars, Durgan said.

Until wildlife officials find a better way to manage the predators, the livestock industry should receive state assistance, he said. "I want to make it clear I'm not advocating killing wolves today."

Oregon counties have steadfastly contributed money to their partnership with ODA and USDA's Wildlife Services division to pay for predator control, even as they've fallen short of funds for

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