

Mitchell gets boost to cellphone service

East Oregonian

Mitchell, a bucolic town just miles from Oregon's Painted Hills, is getting a boost to cellphone service.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, announced in a written statement that T-Mobile is bringing cellphone service to Mitchell.

"Cell service is a must for the health and well-being of rural Oregon residents and visitors, and I am glad that T-Mobile recognizes the need for dependable service that businesses and emergency providers can rely on in Mitchell, the gateway to Oregon's iconic Painted Hills National Monument," Wyden said in the statement.

Mitchell and plenty of other small Oregon towns are readying for the Aug. 21 total solar eclipse, which promises to bring thousands of visitors to the area.

Wyden said the cell service will be in place for the event.

Residents of Mitchell, population 130, have been relying on network extenders, devices that act as mini cell towers with enough signal strength to reach several blocks, which the *East Oregonian* reported in August 2015.

Wyden visited the town and Wheeler County that year and heard from locals about the lack of cell service. He said he has been working on the problem since, and the new service has been "long sought to bolster public safety and the economy in the Wheeler County community."

The senator also said while he is glad this will help Mitchell and Wheeler County, he is committed to finding ways to upgrade cell service and broadband throughout Oregon.

Climate change panel urges delay in Oregon forest policy decisions

Forests store the equivalent of 9.7B tons of carbon dioxide

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Activists often urge a speedier government response to climate change, but the Oregon Global Warming Commission doesn't want to rush any decisions involving forest policy.

Angus Duncan, the commission's chair, recently told Oregon lawmakers it's better to wait until it's better understood how forest management can offset carbon emissions, which are blamed for climate change.

Up until now, the OGWC has focused on quantifying the amount of carbon absorbed by forests across different regions in the state.

Altogether, Oregon's forest store the equivalent of about 9.7 billion tons of carbon dioxide — roughly 150 times as much as the state emits per year, according to the commission.

Before making forest management recommendations, the commission plans to determine the historical carbon fluctuations in Oregon forests and how they're affected by climate change and human interventions such as logging, said Duncan.

"We don't see anybody else who is doing this type of work," he said.

Improving forest health and preventing wildfires may involve removing trees, but these choices involve a "trade-off" in terms of carbon accrual, Duncan said.

Wildfires in Oregon have been emitting roughly 1.5 million tons to 4 million tons of carbon dioxide a year since the beginning of the 21st Century, but it's unclear whether this level is normal or excessive, the commission found.

The impact of forest fires on carbon emissions is complicated by the extent and severity of fires — in some cases, fires can affect



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

The equivalent of about 9.7 billion tons of carbon dioxide are stored in Oregon's forests, which is roughly 150 times more than the state's annual emissions. The Oregon Global Warming Commission is studying how climate change and human intervention affect forest carbon storage.

large acreages but the forest will still store carbon in burned trees, he said.

Of the 63.4 million tons of carbon dioxide emitted in Oregon in 2015, about 37 percent came from the transportation sector, 35 percent came from the residential and commercial sectors and 20 percent came from the industrial sector, according to OGWC.

With about 8 percent of the total, the agricultural

sector contributed the smallest share of Oregon's emissions.

Oregon is expected to fall short of its carbon emissions-cutting goals in coming years, but Duncan said he expects the output of renewable energy to increase in the state and the nation due to technology improvements and lower costs.

In the future, the energy industry will move away from a "command and

control" structure, with utilities buying electricity from a variety of sources as needed, similar to the stock market, he said.

Oregon's contribution to reduce global emissions will depend on a "mutually-reinforcing club" of other states and countries taking similar steps, Duncan said.

"If we do our job and nobody else does theirs, we're toast, and I mean that literally," he said.

BRIEFLY



Contributed photo

Students learn about environmental stewardship and sustainability at the Cottonwood Crossing Summer Institute, which will take place for a week in June.

Outdoor education program offered for high schoolers

CONDON — For the third year, Oregon State Parks Foundation will offer high school students a chance to learn about careers in environmental stewardship and sustainability. The Cottonwood Crossing Summer Institute is set for June 18 through 23, and students and teachers from northeastern Oregon can register now.

The program is free, and can admit up to 25 students and their teachers from Crook, Gilliam, Grant, Jefferson, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Wasco and Wheeler counties.

During the weeklong program at Cottonwood Canyon State Park, students and their teachers will learn about watershed management, restoration of riparian zones, photography, writing, astronomy and the nocturnal lives of animals through courses taught by hydrologists, botanists, and specialists in watershed management and natural resources.

The program is a collaboration between several state agencies, including Oregon State Parks Foundation, Eastern Oregon University and the Department of Environmental Quality. Students can contact Tim Pfau to learn more, at Tim.Pfau@oregonstateparksfoundation.org

Crash sends Weston man to hospital

MILTON-FREEWATER — A two-vehicle collision in Milton-Freewater stopped traffic Wednesday afternoon on North Columbia Street near Safeway and sent one local man to the hospital.

Gordon A. Giger, 53, of Weston was driving south at about 5 p.m. when he had an unspecified medical

emergency and his Honda Odyssey van crossed into oncoming traffic, according to Oregon State Police.

Giger's vehicle sideswiped a Chevrolet Tahoe SUV driven by 23-year-old Chance A. Royle of Walla Walla. The van reentered the southbound lanes and came to rest against a concrete barrier, according to the police report.

Giger was taken by ambulance to Providence St. Mary's Medical Center in Walla Walla, where a spokeswoman Thursday morning said he was in satisfactory condition.

— Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

Concert celebrates Women's History Month

PENDLETON — In celebration of National Women's History Month, Lauren Pelon will perform in Pendleton.

Hosted by the Pendleton Public Library, the free event is Tuesday at 7 p.m. in the Little Vert Theater, 480 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton.

Pelon traces the story of women in music and performs music from around the world. The concert celebrates music written by or for women. Crossing the boundaries of time, distance and culture, she sings and plays ancient and modern instruments, including some of which were traditionally played by women, some forbidden to women.

The program features voice and a variety of antique and contemporary instruments from many countries and cultures — from the ancient bone flute, gemshorn and lyre to a modern electronic wind instrument and pedalboard.

For more information, call the library at 541-966-0380.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to news@eastoregonian.com

Uni-Tech wins bid for Umatilla County phones

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Uni-Tech Communications Inc. of Hermiston won the contract to replace Umatilla County's aging phone system.

The local business was the only bidder to meet all six of the county's criteria for the work, including doing the job for no more than \$150,000, the amount the county budgeted for the project. Uni-Tech's bid was for \$141,663.

The county board of

commissioners during its meeting Wednesday in Pendleton selected Uni-Tech, which has been servicing the county's phone systems.

Dan Lonai, head of administrative services for the county, said the phone system has been in use since 1995 and is at the end of its life. The system has regular breakdowns, he said, and that means calling Uni-Tech to make fixes.

Paying for a new system means county phones can utilize four-digit dialing and doing away with old exten-

sions not in use. Lonai said the county pays about \$8,000 a month for phone service, and the upgrade will save about \$1,000 a month.

Between that and the savings on maintenance and repairs, Lonai estimated the new system could pay for itself in about 10 years.

The county board also approved bylaws for the weed board.

Teddy Orr, county weed department supervisor, told commissioners he found the board had no bylaws, so he looked at what other

counties have done and created bylaws based on that research. He said the weed board also approved the new rules.

The board opted to vote on adopting the bylaws rather than wait for another reading, and Commissioner Larry Givens asked if was any further discussion before the vote.

Commissioner George Murdock quipped, "I really didn't want to get into the weeds on it."

The board passed the bylaws 3-0.

Many elected positions vacant week ahead of filing deadline

East Oregonian

With less than a week left before the filing deadline, plenty of seats are available on school boards and taxing districts across Umatilla County.

Out of the 124 seats up for election in May, nearly 40 percent have yet to draw a single candidate. Plenty more feature a single candidate running unopposed.

While many of seats without candidates are from small, rural fire and cemetery districts, more prominent boards have vacancies as well.

The position 3 seat on the Hermiston School Board — currently filled by board member Don Rankin — has drawn no candidates. Incum-

bents Jason Middleton, Bonnie Luisi and Karen Sherman have all filed for their respective seats.

The Blue Mountain Community College Board of Education Zone 5 seat, which represents Umatilla County, has no incumbent or candidate either. Incumbents Bob Savage, Heidi Van Kirk, Kim Puzey and Tony Turner have filed for re-election.

The Pendleton School Board position 7 seat is one of the few contested races in Umatilla County, with incumbent Debbie McBee drawing a challenge from Chris Roop.

When he was appointed to fill the rest of the term of Bob Rosselle, board member Gary George was one of 10 people who applied for the position

4 seat. As of Thursday, he has no challengers.

Incumbent Steve Umbarger holds the position 1 and is also currently

running unopposed.

The filing deadline to run for any of the elected positions is March 16. The election is May 16.



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