

DEQ: Governor's new picks could start May 3

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news release on the change included the names of her nominees to replace the three commissioners, indicating the decision had been in the works for some time.

"After the past two years, it has become clear to Gov. Brown that the Environmental Quality Commission has not been able to meet new challenges and implement policies that protect Oregonians' air and water resources," said Bryan Hockaday, a spokesman in Brown's office. "It is critical to Gov. Brown that leadership of the agency ensures DEQ achieves this mission."

The commission selected Brown's natural resources adviser, Richard Whitman, as DEQ director Feb. 15, following a national search.

Whitman, who had been adviser to Gov. John Kitzhaber, then Brown, had served as interim director since October. That month, former Director Dick Pedersen resigned amid scandal over the agency's response to heavy metal emissions in the Portland area.

The governor asserted that the process for hiring the director "did not signal a collaborative approach that will lead to significant improvements in the operations at DEQ," Hockaday said.

"Gov. Brown is confident in Richard Whitman's ability to guide DEQ, and by appointing new members to the EQC to support his leadership, she looks forward to a more collaborative and transparent approach to DEQ's policy and rule

making process."

Johnson defended the commission's process for selecting the director.

"We take extreme pride in the way those searches were conducted — open, impartial, and always informed by our judgment of what was best for the state and DEQ," Johnson wrote. "After considerable time, effort, and deliberation, including a self-imposed two-week delay to thoroughly and carefully consider the comments from the Governor's Office, the commission unanimously decided to hire Richard Whitman. Unfortunately, Governor Brown seems to feel that despite the clear language of (Oregon statute), the decision about the new director was really hers to make."

She said the governor "is now trying to distance herself from the idea that our firing has anything to do with the decisions about whom to hire as a director, rather saying it was the process that concerned her."

Yet commissioners Sam Baraso and Ed Armstrong will remain on the commission, Johnson noted.

Brown has nominated Kathleen George, a member of the Grande Ronde Tribal Council; Wade Mosby, a founding member of the Forest Stewardship Council; and Molly Kile, an associate professor at Oregon State University, to replace them. If confirmed by the Senate April 26, they will start their new positions May 3.

The governor believes her new picks will bring news perspectives to the commission and work more collaboratively with her office, Hockaday said.

CATTLE: The bull to cow ratio in the herd was too high

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for him. He said Hockensmith will be barred from owning livestock for five years.

Hockensmith was indicted in March on 14 counts of first-degree animal neglect, and 186 counts of second-degree animal neglect. Each count represented one animal in the herd. His arraignment is scheduled for April 3.

On January 5, 14 dead cattle were discovered on the property at Columbia Lane and South Edwards Road. Several animals were found to be so malnourished they couldn't be moved safely, and three more animals died after the initial investigation. Several more calves were also born since the herd was seized from Hockensmith.

In late January, about 170 cattle were rounded up, tagged and immunized. Several community members helped, including Blue Mountain Community College students and a local veterinarian who assessed each animal.

Rowan said he didn't have much contact with Hockensmith, but felt that this incident could largely be

chalked up to mismanagement of the herd. There were about 56 bulls in the herd and about 77 mature cows — a ratio way too high for the size of the herd, Rowan said.

"One bull to 20 or 25 cows is sufficient," he said. "There should have been three bulls, maybe four. Not 56."

Rowan said he suspected the bulls had also been left with the herd all year instead of being removed when they were done breeding. Typically, Rowan said, herds are managed so that cows are calving 120 to 180 days per year, instead of year-round.

"That played into the health of the herd," he said.

Rowan said the department periodically sees cases of animal neglect, though rarely on such a large scale.

"I can think of one other case where we seized about 300 sheep," Rowan said. "They were lambing, so their numbers increased on a daily basis."

"It seems to go in ebbs and flows," he said.

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HEALTH: Uninsured rate dropped from 24 percent in 2012 to 13 percent

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The report also ranks counties by length and quality of life. Here, Umatilla County fared a little better, coming in 16th and Morrow ranking 11th.

Umatilla County Public Health Administrator Jim Setzer explained the discrepancy between the two rankings. Basically, it takes a while for behaviors to turn into outcomes. But eventually they will, Setzer said, unless the behaviors change.

"Those health behaviors will catch up with us," he said. "Umatilla County has to find ways to be healthy."

As the clock ticks, though, he has reason to be hopeful. The public health department and other partners have conducted health assessments on the population and meet regularly to forge positive health changes, such as prevention efforts within schools and elsewhere in the communities. Those

prevention efforts take time to bear fruit, though. Instant gratification isn't part of the picture.

"It's like turning a big boat," Setzer said. "Mortality indicators — they change very slowly and very subtly over time."

Another reason for optimism is the drop in the uninsured rate, directly attributed to Medicaid expansion in Oregon. Umatilla County dropped from 24 percent in 2012 to 13 percent. Fewer uninsured means the health department doesn't have to do as much one-on-one service providing and can spend more time looking at the bigger picture.

"We can embrace the county as the patient," Setzer said.

To see the full report, go to www.countyhealthrankings.org.

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Craig Coleman, managing partner at Ordnance Brewing, uses a forklift to move empty cans into the canning machine on Thursday in Boardman. Staff photo by E.J. Harris



Kaitlin Gustafson prepares an order of Cow in the Garden at her food cart, Food on the Fry, as her son Connor, 7, looks on outside of Ordnance Brewing on Thursday in Boardman. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

ORDNANCE: Brewery and tap house opened in 2015

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and Bottling for the job, a company based in Portland but serving beer and cider makers across the Northwest. Matt Stump, who heads up the canning side of the operation, said they arrived Thursday morning to set up their mobile assembly line.

The machine, called an MC-250, runs empty cans single file along a continuous automatic conveyor where they are filled and sealed. Stump said they serve between 80 and 100 clients, and is noticing more craft brewers and beer drinkers alike coming around to cans.

"Now that we're getting past people thinking that when it comes out of a can it is going to taste like metal, we're really seeing the benefits," Stump said.

Ordnance, which opened its brewery and tap house at the Port of Morrow in 2015, already expanded production last year, going from seven barrels to a 50-barrel system. The company also signed on with the Odom Corporation last summer to extend its distribution into eastern Washington, Seattle, northern Idaho and Alaska.

Coleman, a local farmer who opened Neighbor Dudes tap house in Hermiston with friends and family before they decided to try brewing, said he is impressed at how quickly Ordnance has caught on in the craft beer community.

"We've been very well supported," he said. "We make beer for everybody."

Canning isn't the only thing new at Ordnance. The owners are also spinning off a sister distillery — Ordnance Distilling — which will make vodka, gin and whiskey using all ingredients from their own farms.

That means locally grown corn, potatoes and rye for their varieties of vodka, gin and whiskey.

"Farm to bottle is a good story," Coleman said. "Everybody wants to know where their food comes from. That's something we can do at a volume that other people can't."

Coleman said the distillery received its final license from the Oregon Liquor Control Commission last month. Labels still need to be approved by the



Topped and sealed cans of EOD Double IPA move down the production line during the canning process Thursday at Ordnance Brewing in Boardman. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, but Coleman said that should be done soon.

Distilling equipment is housed in the same building as the brewery, but kept separate by a chain link fence. Coleman said the vodka and gin are getting close to bottling, while the whiskey will take some time to age properly.

"It's kind of an adventure," he said. "If consumers

accept us, it's game on. And they will accept us."

Meanwhile, outside of Ordnance, a new food truck has also sprung to life. Food on the Fry, operated by Kaitlin Gustafson and her family, has developed a symbiotic relationship with the brewery, serving up french fries with loads of toppings and wings for customers who stop in for a drink.

"It just seemed like a good business opportunity," Gustafson said.

So far, Gustafson said the reception has been positive. They opened about a month and a half ago, starting from nothing, and celebrated their grand opening on Saint Patrick's Day.

As the weather gets nicer, Gustafson said they are already beginning to see an increase in foot traffic and plan to diversify their menu based on customer recommendations.

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An order of Cow in the Garden is ready to be served at the Food on the Fry food cart outside of Ordnance Brewing on Thursday in Boardman. Staff photo by E.J. Harris



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