

**ROADKILL
ON THE
MENU**
REGION/3A



**GOP UNVEILS
HEALTH CARE
OVERHAUL**
NATION/9A



**RICHARDS
ALL EO PLAYER
OF THE YEAR**
SPORTS/1B



EAST OREGONIAN

FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2017

141st Year, No. 179

WINNER OF THE 2016 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

Your Weekend



- Wiener dog races
- Friday in Pendleton
- Umatilla Landing Days at Marina Park
- Purple Ridge Lavender Festival in Hermiston

For times and places see Coming Events, 5A

Catch a movie



Paramount Pictures/Bay Films via AP
Summer just wouldn't be complete without another Michael Bay blockbuster full of explosions, CGI toys and Mark Wahlberg. "Transformers: Last Knight"

For showtime, Page 5A

Weekend Weather

Fri	Sat	Sun
85/54	91/58	98/69

Democrats give up on new biz taxes this session

By CLAIRE WITCOMBE
Capital Bureau

Major changes to the way Oregon taxes businesses won't materialize before the Legislature adjourns, the governor and top legislative leadership said Thursday.

The announcement comes after several weeks of heightened revenue discussions at the Legislature, and months of disagreement between business and labor groups over how the state should tax businesses after a divisive ballot measure campaign.

The decision effectively tables reforms to the state's public pension system and "clears a path forward" for a major transportation funding package, said Gov. Kate Brown.

See TAX/2A

Tensions flare over Rainbow Gathering



The Eagle/Ryan Boggs
Ken Mayhead, left, demands to know how the Rainbow Gathering will benefit Grant County while Rainbow gathering attendee Kathleen Todd waits to respond

Group refuses to sign permit for massive event in National Forest

EO Media Group

The U.S. Forest Service acknowledged there isn't much it can do about a Rainbow Family Gathering expected to bring thousands of counter-culture types to Eastern Oregon over the next two weeks.

The organizers don't have a permit, and the Forest Service's response to that as well as the toll the group is expected to have on county resources has

angered area residents.

Some 2,000 Rainbow Family members have set up camp at Flagtail Meadow off of Forest Road 24, near the towns of Seneca and John Day, the Forest Service reported Thursday. The 46th annual National Rainbow Gathering July 1-7 could draw an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 people.

The Forest Service requires groups of 75 or more to sign a special use permit. Ryan Nehl, deputy

Forest Service supervisor on the Malheur and the agency administrator for the event, took the permit form to organizers at the gathering spot Wednesday. The Forest Service reported the group refused to sign.

The Forest Service responded Thursday with an "event design criteria" document for the gathering to follow and said the Forest Service could take action if conditions are violated. But Nehl said the Forest Service will not attempt to stop the gathering.

See RAINBOW/6A

More than 50,000 acres set to expire from Conservation Reserve Program



Large swaths of Stage Gulch north of Interstate 84 are currently in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hard choices loom as farms exit conservation program

Putting land back in production a challenge for farmers

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

It was about a year ago when Pendleton farmer Henry Lorenzen learned, much to his surprise and disappointment, that a portion of his land would not be re-enrolled in the federal Conservation Reserve Program.

As a third-generation wheat grower with 4,000 acres west of town, Lorenzen remembers hearing "horror

stories" from his father about dust storms that would sweep across the fields, eroding soil and kicking up a dusty haze that reached all the way to Interstate 84.

Not only did the gusts cause some very serious traffic problems — like the 1999 pileup on I-84 that killed six people and injured 27 others — but created significant farm management and environmental issues as well.

"You lose topsoil, and ultimately you lose productivity," Lorenzen said.

The Conservation Reserve Program, or CRP, was established in 1985 to help protect vulnerable areas. Administered by the Farm Service Agency under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, CRP is essentially a rental agreement between the government and landowners where a portion of farmland is taken out of production

and planted in native grasses, which in turn helps protect against erosion, increase wildlife habitat and improve water quality.

General CRP contracts run for 10-15 years, with payments averaging around \$45 to \$65 per acre. Land enrolled tends to be less suitable for growing crops, and is scored by the feds based on a number of environmental criteria, known as the Environmental Benefit Index.

See CRP/10A

"If you look back in the mid-'70s, there were 270 to 280 farmers and now there's about 75 or 80. A big chunk of that was ground put into CRP."

— Eric Orem, Morrow County wheat grower

PENDLETON

Police staff to get eight percent raise over two years

Firefighters in mediation for new contract

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Pendleton's unionized police staff will receive an 8 percent raise over two years in a new labor contract.

The 19 members of the Pendleton City Police Association already ratified the contract, and Tuesday night the city council approved it. Andrea Denton, the city's human resources manager,

said the first 3 percent increase goes into effect July 1, then another 3 percent bump on Jan. 1, 2018, and the last 2 percent in July 2018.

Denton and Howard Bowen, president of the association, said the salary

hike is so Pendleton can catch up to other like-sized police departments.

Denton explained the city compared police pay in Oregon cities from about half Pendleton's size to 50 percent larger than Pendleton. The long list, she said, included

cities near the Portland-metro area, and thus under the "metro influence," as well as some of the most rural cities with the lowest pay. While not every city government provided information, she

See POLICE/2A



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