

POOL: Grand opening is at 11 a.m. this Saturday

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Michael said many of the companies have also purchased corporate packages that give memberships to their employees at a bulk discount. Since Blue Mountain Community College's pool is closing in Pendleton and Hermiston's Columbia Court Club has not re-opened after a fire in June 2016, there has been particular interest in the center's indoor pool.

"I think it's not just the local community (that will use it)," Michael said. "We've had a lot of questions from Hermiston and even Pendleton."

The pool area features a four-lane swimming pool

that goes to 10 feet in the deep end, connected to a shorter recreational pool and a round vortex pool that creates a whirlpool effect. There is also a large water slide and a smaller, warmer therapy pool. A multi-use room and patio off the pool are both available for parties.

The center's 27-foot climbing wall features 500 different handholds spread out to create multiple routes to the top. Prag said someone with expertise in climbing walls came out and helped arrange the routes to provide a challenge for climbers at various skill levels.

"We will keep changing these as people get bored," she said.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The grand opening will be held this Saturday for the Boardman Pool and Recreation Center.

A multi-court gym will be available for basketball and volleyball games, and a room with floor-to-ceiling windows holds exercise machines and weights. Once the landscaping outside is finished it will include a walking path around the center. Prag said the district has put together a schedule of swim lessons and fitness classes and is looking for more instructors to expand those offerings.

After the center's grand opening from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. this Saturday, it will be open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturdays and noon to 7 p.m. on Sundays. Daily admission

will be \$4 for youth who live in the Boardman Parks and Recreation District ages 4 to 18 and \$5 for out-of-district youth, \$6 for in-district adults and \$7.50 for out-of-district, and \$4.50 for in-district seniors over 64 and \$5.50 for out-of-district seniors. Monthly and yearly passes are also available for families and individuals, including \$480 a year for adults living in the Boardman district. For an extra \$50 adults can access the gymnasium and cardio room 24 hours a day. For more information call 541-616-1050.

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A 27-foot climbing wall has many different levels of difficulty for climbers to choose from.

SAFETY: Fireworks sales are outpacing last year's

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Washington state also prohibits the sale, possession and use of firecrackers, bottle rockets and sky rockets and missiles, according to the state fire marshal's office. However, Oregon's northern neighbor allows Roman Candles and reloadable mortars, both of which explode in the air.

And some legal fireworks are easy to alter into illegal. Piccolo Petes, which Satterwhite said are top sellers, emit golden sparks and a piercing whistle. But they also can be changed into a loud explosive.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said his department aims to educate people first about fireworks

but each year issues two or three citations and seize materials for Oregon State Police to destroy. Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said his officers enforce the laws on the books and give warnings, citations, and seize illegal fireworks.

"We increase our staffing every Fourth of July due to the large event at Butte Park and with the inevitable increase in calls for service," Edmiston said, and this holiday two officers will work six-hour overtime shifts.

Pendleton could see an uptick in fireworks-related action. Satterwhite said sales are outpacing last year, and they tend to increase through the Fourth. And with the Pendleton Eagles canceling the community fireworks

show, more residents could be putting on shows of their own.

Oregon in 2016 had 192 fireworks-related fires resulting in more than \$519,000 in property damage, according to the state fire marshal's office, and from 2012 through 2016 there were 944 fireworks-related fires in Oregon resulting in one death and more than \$2.1 million in property damage.

Bohm said locals can mitigate the danger from fireworks. Adults — not children — should set them off on concrete, pavement or at least green grass, he said, and have a water bucket or hose at the ready. He also said to keep fireworks at least 25 feet from bushes or brush. Arborvitae, he said, tend to

go up like kindling.

People who cause damage with fireworks are liable and can pay for the cost of fighting a fire. Bohm said that can run \$600-\$900 an hour.

Local temperatures are on the rise this weekend, according to the National Weather Service, and there is no hint of rain. Bohm urged everyone to be safe and careful with fireworks this Fourth of July.

"It's super dry out there," he said. "It only takes a spark or two."

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LAND: Size of the state's holdings complicates the sale of rangelands

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realized in revenues.

The state holds a variety of trust lands, including forests, mineral resources and agricultural land. They're required to generate revenue for the Common School Fund, an endowment for public K-12 education. Rangeland is the largest trust land segment.

Environmental regulations have restricted logging on state forests, causing the forests to operate at a loss. So the state land board — which oversees state trust lands — has been considering selling the Elliott, an 82,500-acre swath of forest near the southwestern Oregon coast.

The possible sale of the Elliott galvanized the state's environmental activists, though, who spoke of the state's duty to protect public lands from privatization, turning the debate political in heavily-Democratic Oregon. In May, the board — the governor, secretary of state and treasurer — decided to pull out of its planned sale to a timber company.

By contrast, the state's rangelands, concentrated mostly in southeastern Oregon, haven't received much public attention.

Returns from the rangeland have varied.

Between 2013 and 2015, each acre of rangeland generated an average profit of only four cents. That means that rangelands did generate positive net revenues some years, but the margin is thin. The state's trust agricultural land had an average per-acre profit of \$18.84 in that period.

Much of last year's losses were due to the costs of fighting wildfires. Fires cost the department \$1.8 million in 2016, Department of State Lands Director Jim Paul said.

The risks that trust rangeland pose to the Common School Fund are not new. In the early aughts, the problem caught the attention of Oregon's chief public auditor.

Back in 2004, after finding that state rangelands had lost money as far back as 1987, an audit by the Oregon Secretary of State's Office made three main recommendations: that the state lands department sell some or all of the rangeland in a competitive bidding process, exchange it for a "better performing asset," or get market rates for leases.

More than 10 years later, though, the state's rangeland holdings remain relatively intact. In 2004, the state held 613,000 acres of trust rangeland. In 2016, it held 596,784 acres.

The department says the size of its holdings complicates the sale of rangelands. Putting a large share of it on the market could depress prices, meaning that sales have to be spread out over time.

And the state's trust forests, such as the Elliott, which are consistently losing more money more quickly, have presented a more immediate problem, Paul said.

"The bigger picture is just around the issue of prioritization and where do we need to focus now, versus which things are sort of in process and are going to take longer," Paul said.

He said you can look at the state's trust lands like an investment portfolio.

"An individual one-year loss or one portion of the fund that's doing poorly isn't necessarily the trigger," Paul said. "It's, are you tending to the whole and getting the performance that a prudent investor would with that kind of asset?"

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