

Arena

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arena, including upgrades to the announcer stand's design. Seating capacity has been increased from 5,000 to about 7,500. That includes adding a third row of box seats.

There's no worry about demand for the new seats — Barnett said there are 185 people on the waiting list for box seats. The people on the top of the list were put on there in 1999.

"There's been always a huge demand," he said.

Stock contractors will also notice a big difference in their daily routine at Farm-City Pro Rodeo. In the past they had to keep their animals at feedlots around Hermiston during the day and then load them into

trucks to transport to and from the fairgrounds each evening. Now all the stock can stay right on the EOTEC grounds.

"It should save them hours," Barnett said of the contractors.

Some parts of the new project will likely take some adjustment, even if overall it will have a very similar feel. Barnett said the rodeo board is pleased with the quality of the dirt in the arena, but it will still take some tinkering to get just the right balance of firmness and softness, somewhere between "muddy and dusty."

"It's not a perfect science. Every arena is different," he said.

Board of Directors

The Farm-City Pro Rodeo board of directors are:

David Bothum
Seth Shaw
Jon Gill
Jim Michael

Dave Dickmeier
Dennis Barnett
Mike Kay

He said between the paved parking, rodeo arena lot and acres of grass that will be used as overflow parking during fair and rodeo week, people don't need to worry about being able to find a place to park on the EOTEC grounds when they come for the rodeo.

As for the landscaping, wrought iron and white fences around the arena, Barnett said the aesthetics of the arena should be "breathtaking" for visitors.

Volunteer labor has always been a vital part of getting the arena rodeo-ready each year, and the new arena is no exception.

Small work parties have been meeting nightly, and on July 29 a hundreds-strong group of volunteers from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were scheduled to descend on the EOTEC grounds and, among other things, lay nearly 2 acres of sod around the rodeo arena. Barnett said people should expect to see volunteers working up until the very night before the rodeo, including opening day of the fair.

All that labor combined is worth about half a million dollars, Barnett estimated, and he said the rodeo would not be possible without that kind of commitment from members of the community.

"Hermiston volunteers have always been very generous to this project," he said.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

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