

RIVER: Riverfront Park is next to Oxbow site

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invasive garlic mustard — not to mention old barbed wire fences and litter — from the site on a regular basis. The bureau welcomes help from any group willing to take on a service project on the Oxbow site.

“There has been a lot of behind-the-scenes work that didn’t get much recognition,” he said.

There have been other people who have been detrimental to the area, however. Illegal homeless camps along the river disrupt habitats, and this summer a group of children allegedly sparked a fire that burned near the Oxbow Trail, which allows some recreational use through a piece of the Oxbow site.

Beyond planting trees and fighting weeds, the bureau would like to create a wetland enhancement area on Umatilla River’s former path, where water still rushes during a flood. The bureau has mostly left the river itself alone, other than an in-stream lease that keeps some of the bureau’s water in the river.

Next door to the Oxbow site is Riverfront Park, where manicured lawns and asphalt trails place the emphasis on recreation. Tai Ly, who was making his way slowly around the trail on Tuesday while using the exercise stations, said he spends about an hour and a half at the park multiple times per week. He enjoys the health benefits provided by the park.

“I just found out about it three years ago,” he said. “Before that I just go to work and come home.”

On the south side of Riverfront Park lies a stretch of riverbank known as Steelhead Park, which the city of Hermiston recently acquired from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Parks and recreation director Larry Fetter said it was a “big victory for Hermiston” to open up another half mile of land along the Umatilla



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Pine trees grow in a stand on the Oxbow site west of Hermiston. The trees were part of a planting of 7,000 meant to help rehabilitate the property.

River to public access.

“We live in an arid, dry area and so people want to enjoy what access to water they can,” Fetter said.

Unlike Riverfront Park, Fetter said development of Steelhead Park will be more passive, leaving most of the property untamed for activities like fishing and nature walks. There will be some parking, and one of the conditions of ODFW relinquishing the land to the city was that the city would create an access point for people to bring innertubes, kayaks, paddleboards and other recreational equipment into the river.

Fetter said the city will create a companion access ramp near the Recycled Water Treatment Plant roughly three miles downstream for people floating down the river to exit again on public property.

One of the city’s primary reasons for taking over ownership of the five-acre stretch of riverbank was to build the planned Highland Extension trail through the edge of the park that sits under the Bridge Road bridge. The pedestrian trail will run parallel to High-

land Avenue. Looping the trail under the bridge will allow users to connect with the Riverfront Park and Oxbow trail systems without crossing the road.

Fetter said having the trail through there should help deter illicit activity, including homeless camps and graffiti. The city will remove some vegetation on that edge of the property to make it more visible to the road, increasing safety for park users. But Fetter said beyond replacing some of the invasive plant species with native ones, much of the vegetation at Steelhead Park will remain in order to preserve habitat for wildlife and shade the river.

Several miles downstream, the city of Umatilla is working on a parks master plan that includes projects along the river. Community development director Tamra Mabbott said the city would like to add more trails to the one that runs behind the high school as well as “informal footpaths.” The city also plans to use a \$5,000 grant from Umatilla County Public Health to remove some Russian olive trees.

“Through town is some

of the most popular fishing areas, and this will open up more access along there,” Mabbott said.

Since Russian olive trees do help shade the river and foster fish habitat, Mabbott said any work to tear up vegetation along the river would be done in consultation with the tribes and ODFW to make sure the project isn’t doing more harm than good.

Elected officials over the years, including city manager Russ Pelleberg and county commissioner Larry Givens, have had a dream of connecting Echo, Stanfield, Hermiston and Umatilla with one long trail along the Umatilla River. Mabbott said that dream is still a long ways off, and faces a lot of potential roadblocks, particularly along River Road.

“I don’t think physically a trail could fit between the roadway and river in some places,” she said.

She said she welcomes comments from the public, however, on how a potential trail might look.

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GUNS: Democrats prepare for legislature

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in this manner.

Another would expand the types of relationships that qualify for gun disposition after a domestic violence conviction, which would close what is often called the “boyfriend” or “dating partner” loophole.

The governor’s proposal would also prohibit people convicted of misdemeanor stalking from buying firearms.

“I look forward to working with the Legislature to finish what we started last session and close the Charleston and boyfriend loopholes for good,” Brown said in a written statement to the press Friday morning. “These policies will keep guns out of the wrong hands and help keep our promise to families across the state to keep our communities safe.”

Brown, a Democrat, is running for re-election in 2018.

Oregon House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, D-Portland, indicated her support for the governor’s proposals Friday.

“For the safety of every Oregonian, it is vital that we ensure guns do not end up in the hands of individuals who would do harm to themselves or others,” Williamson said in a prepared statement. “I look forward to working with Gov. Brown in the coming months to close the Charleston and boyfriend loopholes.”

A spokesman for Williamson said she was “out of pocket” and unavailable to comment Friday on the viability of the legislation in the upcoming short session, or why it failed in 2017.

A spokesman for Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, did not respond to

requests seeking comment about why the legislation did not pass in 2017.

State Sen. Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, a leading advocate for gun control, was unavailable for comment Friday afternoon, a spokesman said.

Burdick told Oregon Public Broadcasting on Friday that “we should be aiming for bills that have broad bipartisan support,” but that she would vote for the proposals if they reached the Senate floor.

Penny Okamoto, executive director of CeaseFire Oregon, a group that advocates for stricter standards for gun ownership and gun safety, said it wasn’t clear to her why the legislation did not pass in 2017.

“I could not tell you why a Democratic governor’s priority could not get through a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate,” Okamoto said Friday. Democrats hold the majority in both chambers.

In the 2017 session, which concluded in July, lawmakers passed a bill that created a process for temporarily taking firearms away from people who were at risk of committing suicide.

Despite passing both chambers, it was not without objection.

Two Republican lawmakers sought to refer the legislation to the ballot, but announced Thursday they had not gathered sufficient signatures in time for the Secretary of State’s deadline.

Brown’s main challenger, State Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend, was quoted in *The Bulletin* — the paper of record in Bend — this week saying that “deranged madmen won’t be deterred by another new law no matter how well-intended.”

JOBS: ‘Those servers need work 24 hours. It’s shift work’

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McMichael said they have programs that can help students get into that field, such as industrial maintenance.

“A lot of people want to be electricians, and there’s a lot of need, but somehow that doesn’t match up,” he said. “A lot of people choose an electrician out of their maintenance department. One way to get into the field is to get into maintenance, and be poised and ready as soon as an electrical internship comes open.”

McMichael said an introductory class will give students an overview of the types of careers available to them, but they don’t start doing hands-on work until they pick a specific program.

But the program is open to those still exploring their options, too.

“That’s part of the way we designed the program,” he said. “There are very few prerequisites. You can do a two-year program, or you can take one class. We’re really trying to be accessible — the majority of our students are working full-time.”

McMichael said the Industrial Systems Technology program is in its third year, but really only became fully functional this fall.

He also discussed BMCC’s industrial automation program, showing students a robot that uses a mechanical arm to drop metal or plastic pucks into a cylinder, and uses sensors to sort them by size.

“Industry, for better or for worse, doesn’t like to hire people,” he said. “It’s expensive. If they can do an automated system instead of a living person, they’re going to do that instead.”

The problem, he said, is that those systems are not completely automated — they still need someone to push a button to turn the machine on.

And, the students discovered, to deal with glitches.

“System malfunction,” McMichael observed. “That’s why they need maintenance techs.”

The students then heard



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

Caitlyn Scrivner takes apart a computer at Manufacturing Day at the Port of Morrow. High schoolers from around the county learned about different industrial jobs in the area.

from Pete Hernberg, a math and computer science instructor who oversees BMCC’s data center technician program. Hernberg explained the purpose of a data center, and showed students a small one on site at the Workforce Training Center.

“If you think about all the apps on your phone, when you like a photo on Facebook, search for something on Google or buy something on Amazon — all those apps are talking to servers in some data center somewhere,” he said. “Those servers are talking to your phone, and keep data.”

It’s not just apps, he added. Data centers are used for everything from health care to government services.

“All of those depend on these data centers,” he said.

Though the server on the Workforce Training Center campus only took up one rack, Hernberg told students most data centers will have tens of thousands of them, filling buildings the size of football fields.

“But the basic components are all here,” he said. “Network cabling, power distribution.”

Students who go through the program will emerge



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

Students from around Morrow County observe a robot to learn about industrial automation at Manufacturing Day.

qualified for entry level information technology jobs, Hernberg said.

To give them an idea of what they’d be dealing with, Hernberg had supplied several computers, and had groups of students take them apart to see the functions and locations of different parts.

He showed them the heat sink, which distributes the heat a computer generates. He had them find, and remove, the two sticks of

RAM, or Random Access Memory, the computer’s short-term memory.

Though they couldn’t access the hard drive, Hernberg handed them each a separate one and asked them to find a way to connect it to the computer.

Ruben Leon, an Irrigon student, quickly connected his hard drive to the correct cables.

“I build my own PCs,” he said. “I like computers. I

want to go into IT.”

His deskmate, Roberto Ayala, had different plans.

“I want to go into an electrician apprenticeship,” he said. “I like hands-on stuff, I like being out and interacting with people.”

Hernberg also talked to students about some of the pros and cons of the field.

“I think students really appreciate a place where you can get an entry-level job and it pays well,” he said. “If you’re a 23-year-old and you’re getting paid \$25 an hour, it feels pretty good.”

But those in the field may find themselves working odd hours.

“Facebook runs 24 hours,” he said. “Those servers need work 24 hours. It is shiftwork.”

The event gave students a chance to start thinking about what’s available to them, even if they have a few years to go.

“Basically, I want to work with people, and to know about the things I do every day,” said Caitlyn Scrivner, a junior from Heppner. “I use my phone every day. I want to know about it.”

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