

HERMISTON

Westland Water Users hope to educate, not miss future opportunities

By GEORGE PLAGEN  
East Oregonian

A group of Westland Irrigation District patrons is mounting its own public information campaign to provide greater knowledge and transparency of water law in the Umatilla Basin.

The effort comes in the middle of a lawsuit filed against Westland by other district members who claim they are being cheated out of their senior water rights. The litigation prompted Westland in May to abandon the \$14.4 million Central Project, which would have secured water for the district from the Columbia River.

In response, the Westland Water Users Group formed over the summer with a core team consisting of Kevan and Patty Horn, Mike Taylor, Hoss Hodges, Rob Cox and Raymon Smith. The goal, Cox said, is to educate patrons so they can make more informed decisions

in the future.

“The district is going to have future opportunities and issues that come up,” Cox said. “We want people to vote on those things based on the best information available.”

Together, the group has researched the history of Westland dating back to 1862, when Umatilla County was first established. It has also compiled a number of fact sheets explaining how water is delivered and water rights are managed within the district.

The group is not affiliated with the Westland board of directors or manager.

“We just wanted the patrons to be educated,” Cox said.

Losing the Central Project was an economic blow, Hodges said, because it cost farmers the chance to grow potentially more valuable crops. Unlike the neighboring Hermiston and Stanfield irrigation districts, Westland does not have the ability to pump water from

the Columbia River when flows in the Umatilla River drop below a certain point.

That means Westland relies solely on Mother Nature — as well as supplemental water stored in McKay Reservoir — during irrigation season. The \$14.4 million Central Project, designed by the Northeast Oregon Water Association, would have allowed the district to draw mitigated Columbia River water for patrons who agreed to buy in to the pipeline.

Instead, Westland board members backed out of the proposal in order to defend the district against the misappropriation lawsuit. Patty Horn said it was the second time the district has failed to capitalize on Columbia River water, and she did not want to see it happen again.

“I think if there was an educational clarification to the patrons, it would be really worthwhile,” Horn said.

The lawsuit against Westland, filed in Umatilla County Circuit Court, accuses the district of misappropriating senior water rights from 2010-2016 at the benefit of a few larger farms with junior rights. The plaintiffs are seeking a combined \$4.14 million in damages.

Though the Westland Water Users Group insists it does not take sides in the case, it estimates that if the lawsuit succeeds, it will cost each patron a one-time payment of \$360 per acre to cover the district’s attorney costs and settlements. Each patron will also see an annual fee increase of \$36 per acre.

Horn said the group is now trying to organize an educational seminar for district patrons sometime within the next five to six weeks.

“It should only help the board. It should only help the manager. It should only help the district,” she said.

Information about the Westland

Water Users, including the group’s research, is available online at [www.westlandwaterusers.weebly.com](http://www.westlandwaterusers.weebly.com).

District election

The Westland Irrigation District will hold an election Tuesday, Nov. 14 for one position on the board of directors.

Incumbent Jack Bellinger is running against challenger Ray Vogt. Polling will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the district office, 77096 Highway 207, Echo. Registration to vote may be completed prior to the day of election or on election day prior to voting.

Voting provisions are in place for absentee landowners, multiple ownership of land and ownership by a corporation, trust or LLC. For more information, contact the Westland office at 541-667-2030.

Contact George Plagen at [gplagen@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplagen@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0825.

BRIEFLY

BMCC to reschedule documentary viewing

PENDLETON — Information received Tuesday morning from Blue Mountain Community College announced the showing of “Indian Relay” will be rescheduled.

The screening of the PBS documentary about Indian relay racing is part of the college’s Native American Heritage month events. The free viewing is Wednesday, Nov. 15 at 6 p.m. in ST-200 in the Science & Technology building, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton.

For more information, contact Annie Smith, BMCC’s Native American liaison and success coach, at [asmith@bluecc.edu](mailto:asmith@bluecc.edu) or 541-278-5935.

College Community Theater offers preview performance

PENDLETON — A series of short comedies is featured as College Community Theatre opens its 2017-18 season with “All in the Timing.”

A pay-what-you-can preview night is Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in Bob Clapp Theatre at Blue Mountain Community College, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton. Subsequent performances, which cost \$10-\$15, are Nov. 10-12 and Nov. 16-19. For more information, visit [www.eastoregonian.com](http://www.eastoregonian.com) or contact CCT at 541-278-5953 or [cct@bluecc.edu](mailto:cct@bluecc.edu).

A story and photos about the production will appear in this weekend’s *East Oregonian* entertainment page, which also will be available for view at [www.eastoregonian.com](http://www.eastoregonian.com).

Columbia Grange hosts breakfast, craft sale

HERMISTON — A breakfast, pre-holiday craft sale and flea market is planned this weekend at the Columbia Grange.

The event is Saturday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the grange hall, 32339 Diagonal Blvd., Hermiston.



The planned viewing of the PBS documentary “Indian Relay” at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton has been rescheduled to Wednesday, Nov. 15 at 6 p.m.

The breakfast includes French toast, waffles, pancakes, hash browns, sausage, ham, eggs and a drink for \$6. In addition, take-out orders are available. Also, the event will feature extra value grab bags for \$5 to help local charities.

People can rent vendor tables for \$8. For more information, call Doris at 541-567-8663 or Pat at 541-567-5706.

Public invited to gobble up bingo

IONE — Bingo games that include a chance to win turkeys and potatoes for Thanksgiving dinner are planned in Ione.

The Ione Legion Auxiliary Turkey Bingo is Saturday from 4-8 p.m. at the American Legion Hall, 325 W. Second St., Ione. A \$10 fee provides a bingo and dauber packet; blackout sessions are extra. Hot dogs, chili and a baked potato dinner are available for purchase during the bingo games. And frozen fruit pies and rolls for Thanksgiving will be for sale.

Money raised from the event will benefit the Ione Legion Auxiliary. For more information, call Becky Rietmann at 541-422-7230 or Maureen McElligott at 541-422-7156.

EOU hosts tours with STEM focus

LA GRANDE — A hands-on experiment featuring color-changing crystals is one of the highlights during the annual STEM Preview Day at Eastern Oregon University.

Organizers invite high school and transfer students to spend the day touring campus, learning about financial aid and interacting with current students — all with a special focus on science, technology and math. Faculty members and students will coordinate an interactive session, engaging visitors with an experiment that explores the interaction of light and liquid crystals.

The event begins Saturday at 8:30 a.m. on the university’s La Grande campus. Those planning to attend need to pre-register.

The event is open to all prospective students. Exclusive scholarships are available for those who attend a Preview Day event and later enroll at EOU.

For more information or to pre-register, visit [www.eou.edu/admissions/preview-days](http://www.eou.edu/admissions/preview-days). For questions, contact 541-962-3393 or [campusvisit@eou.edu](mailto:campusvisit@eou.edu).

HERMISTON

Suspected car prowler arrested

East Oregonian

Hermiston police early Tuesday arrested a car prowling suspect on charges of stealing purses from vehicles.

Night shift officers patrolling a neighborhood near Southwest 17th Street and Southwest Riverhill Drive noticed a suspicious vehicle leaving the area around 2:30 a.m., according to a written statement from Hermiston police. While catching up to the car, the officer saw a purse in the street and thought it had been tossed from the suspicious vehicle.

The officer stopped to collect the purse and another officer stopped the car. The investigation led to the arrest of

one of the vehicle’s occupants: Frank Jesse Walker, 38, of Umatilla. Police suspected he stole the purse.

Police booked Walker into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, on charges of unauthorized entry to a motor vehicle, first-degree theft, possession of methamphetamine and offensive littering.

Walker has been arrested 15 times and has been issued 27 citations, according to Hermiston police.

Police reported the case is an example of the recent uptick in thefts from vehicles. The department advised people to lock their cars, take their keys and remove valuables from vehicles to prevent these thefts.



Walker

PENDLETON

Several properties up for auction

East Oregonian

Approximately 18 acres of residential property in Pendleton will go up for auction at the Red Lion Hotel Wednesday.

The auction, organized by Stuart Realty Group of Canby and Macon Brothers Auctioneers of Walla Walla, will feature several properties in the Northgate area and a troubled apartment complex at 401 N.W. Bailey Ave. The Northgate properties are vacant.

Tim Stuart, the owner of the realty group, said the properties either feature a low opening bid or no opening bid at all. That’s the case for the Bailey apartment complex, which has six two-bedroom

units and three one-bedroom/studio units.

Stuart said auctions for developers and builders can receive good turnout, referencing a recent auction the realty group did in Walla Walla where there were 23 registered bidders for one property.

Pendleton Mayor John Turner, the chairman of the city’s housing committee, said low purchase prices for the properties could spur development. The city commissioned two separate studies that showed a need in Pendleton for all levels of housing.

The auction will begin at the Red Lion, 304 S.E. Nye Ave., at 5:30 p.m. Online bidders can also take part in the auction through a simulcast on the realty group’s website.

College Community THEATRE and the Blue Mountain COMMUNITY COLLEGE Theatre Arts Department

**All in the Timing**  
a collection of short comedies by David Ives  
directed by Craig McIntosh

November 10, 11 & 16, 17, 18, at 7:30 pm  
November 12 & 19 at 2:00 pm - 2017 -  
Pay-What-You-Can Preview Night - November 9 at 7:30 pm

TICKETS: \$15 Adults  
\$10 Children (over 3) and Students of all ages  
CCT Box Office at 541-278-5953

Bob Clapp Theatre  
Pioneer Hall, Blue Mountain Community College - Pendleton Campus

2017-2018 Superstar Season Sponsor: CHI St. Anthony Hospital

Blue Mountain Community College is an equal opportunity educator and employer. All in the Timing is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York. Approved 8/14/17.CWZ

The East Oregonian will not publish on Saturday, Nov. 11 due to the postal holiday

Look for your BONUS EDITION of the EO on Friday, Nov. 10

- Special section profiling local veterans from four wars: WWII to Iraq
- Friday and Weekend comics, Dear Abby, Days Gone By and This Day in History
- Double Sudoku and crossword puzzles
- TV listings for Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday

Veterans Day Tribute  
Friday, Nov. 10