



EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2017 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

"Thirty years of work, and within one night, everything is gone."

Ginger Afdahl, flooded property owner in Milton-Freewater



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Dalana Murphy and her future mother-in-law, Ginger Afdahl, walks through flood waters from the North Fork Walla Walla River running through their farm Wednesday outside of Milton-Freewater. The North Fork Walla Walla River broke its banks Sunday evening inundating their small ranch with more than a two feet of water in some places.

Flood wipes out family farm

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

What man takes years to build, Mother Nature can wipe out in a day.

Ginger and Brian Afdahl are learning that lesson the hard way after unusual weather patterns caused the North Fork of the Walla Walla River to wash through their 10-acre homestead east of Milton-Freewater Sunday afternoon. The couple had spent decades investing in improvements to the property, only to watch the river turn it into a tangle of broken irrigation lines, waterlogged equipment and uprooted fences.

"Thirty years of work, and within one night, everything is gone," Ginger said.

The river continues to flow through the property, carving a deeper and deeper channel. But the Afdahls say they have had to turn away friends' offers of pushing it back into its proper



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hogs sit on pallets placed in their pen to giving the animals a dry place to escape the flood waters on Wednesday at the Afdahl's ranch on the North Fork Walla Walla River east of Milton-Freewater.

channel with backhoes because of government regulations meant to protect fish habitats, particularly requirements for a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for any work to change

or "re-align" a stream's path.

"They say we can't run any equipment in the river, and right now my property is the river," Ginger said.

She said they are working

with state agencies to figure out what they need to do to fix the problem and what government help might be available. Beyond destruction of property, Ginger said there's also the problem of the property's lease, which defines the property line as halfway across the river. If the river doesn't move back to its previous channel, she said, there goes half their property.

The National Weather Service in Pendleton has been issuing flood advisories for the Walla Walla River east of Milton-Freewater due to rains and early snowmelt caused by the unusually warm February weather, and on Wednesday issued an updated advisory cautioning that "minor flooding is expected to continue through Thursday and impact residential property and fields along and near the river."

Flooding at the Afdahls'

See **FLOOD/8A**

BOARDMAN

Lost Valley Farm hit with \$10K penalty

Dairy also faces two lawsuits for unpaid debts

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
EO Media Group

Oregon's farm regulators have slapped a \$10,640 penalty on a major new dairy near Boardman for allegedly discharging waste in violation of permit conditions.

The company, Lost Valley Farm, is also facing two lawsuits filed by contractors who claim they haven't been paid for installing equipment and providing construction services.

A "confined animal feeding operation" inspection by the Oregon Department of Agriculture found on Dec. 5, 2017, that wastewater from the dairy had overflowed into a pit that's not authorized for storage, which wasn't reported to the agency as required.

The dairy, which eventually plans to milk 30,000 cows, was also faulted for maintaining inadequate lagoon storage capacity to deal with runoff in case of a storm.

Another inspection on Dec. 15, 2017, found that liquid and solid manure had discharged from a tank, flowing into areas unauthorized for waste storage, which against wasn't reported to ODA.

Civil penalties of \$10,640 were recently imposed on the dairy for these violations, but the company may request an administrative hearing on the matter by mid-February.

Aside from these violations, the company was issued three notices of non-compliance with its CAFO permit between late June and late November of

See **DAIRY/8A**

County plans to streamline path from jail to treatment

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Umatilla County aims to close the gap jail inmates face from when they get out to when they get into treatment for mental health and alcohol or drug addictions.

Dale Primmer, director of Umatilla County Community Justice, said while the jail provides treatment, the program has lacked the crucial component that helps inmates continue treatment outside the cell. The board of county commissioners Wednesday morning took action to remedy that with a 3-0 approval of a \$125,556 contract for Community Counseling Solutions to provide a full-time employee to handle mental health and drug/alcohol assessments, care coordination and referrals at the jail.

"So in theory, the person will go from one facility, the jail, right into a service provider that is orientated and ready to receive them," Primmer said. "That's the goal."

The funding comes from the Oregon Justice Reinvestment Grant Program, which provides money to help keep offenders out of state prisons. Primmer said with the board vote, Community Counseling Solutions can recruit and hire the person with the right credentials to conduct both mental health and drug and alcohol assessments, get the hire on board and roll out a program.

"I think April 1 is when we targeted to hit the go button," Primmer said.

That also is when he said a version of drug court could re-open.

Community Justice operated drug court until state funding declined last year. Since then, Primmer said, his department has been

See **JAIL/8A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

FFA teams test their skills at competition

Four FFA teams compete in the parliamentary procedure category at the Blue Mountain District Leadership Career Development Event on Wednesday at BMCC in Pendleton. Nearly 150 students from nine teams competed in the event. Students competed in categories that included parliamentary procedure, extemporaneous speaking, creed speaking, beginning public speaking, sophomore public speaking, and advanced public speaking.

