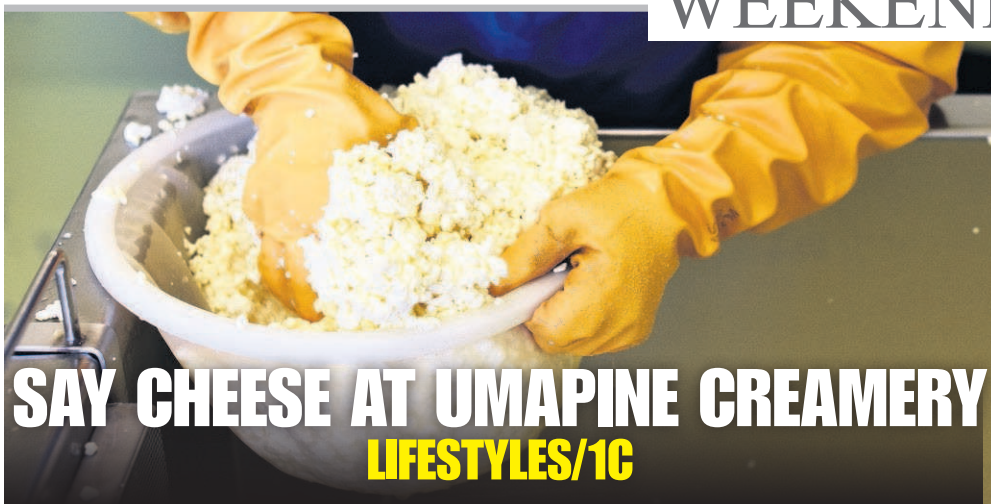




SAY CHEESE AT UMAPINE CREAMERY
LIFESTYLES/1C



SPEED RUNS TO FOUR TITLES
STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS/1B

EAST OREGONIAN

MAY 19-20, 2018

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BULLISH ON BIOCHAR

OSU agronomist seeks to expand trials of the charcoal substance, which offers the promise of water savings and soil benefits



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Oregon State agronomist Stephen Machado has been experimenting with biochar as a way to increase crop yields in pea and wheat harvests at the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center outside of Pendleton. Biochar, charcoal produced from plant matter, when used as an additive can increase the moisture levels and balance pH levels in the soil.

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
EO Media Group

Stephen Machado reaches into a clear plastic Ziploc bag and pulls out the brittle but still intact remains of a pine branch collected from the Umatilla National Forest in Eastern Oregon. The blackened tree limb looks and feels and lot like charcoal.

In fact, that's exactly what it is.

Woody debris from the forest is just another raw material for making what is known as biochar, which can also be made from organic material such as leaves, grasses, crop residue and even manure.

Machado, a professor and agronomist with the Oregon State University Extension Service, believes biochar has a huge upside potential for dryland farms in the



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Biochar is created through a process called pyrolysis, where biomass is burned at extremely high temperatures with low levels of oxygen to avoid combustion, which leaves behind mostly carbon.

arid Columbia Basin.

Working at the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center north of Pendleton,

Machado stumbled onto biochar as part of his mission to make local wheat farms more sustainable.

Most growers in the area use a fallow rotation, meaning they grow a crop every other year and leave their fields fallow during the off years to build soil moisture. But Machado said that system has led to a steady decline in soil organic matter, which is the foundation of crop health and productivity.

"Organic matter is a source of nutrients for both the microbes and the crops," Machado said.

Still, farmers are reluctant to give up fallow — especially in areas that get less than 10 inches of rain per year. With such little water available, they need every drop to grow enough wheat to pay the bills.

See **BIOCHAR/12A**

County tourism jumps in 2017

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Oregon's tourism industry has seen persistent statewide growth this decade, and Umatilla County is no exception.

Travel Oregon released a new report Thursday about the tourism industry impact, including detailed estimates for each county.

According to the report, Umatilla County generated \$165.5 million in direct tourism spending in 2017, a 13 percent increase from 2016 and a 3.1 percent increase since 2010.

That figure also accounts for 60 percent of the direct spending in the 11-county Eastern Oregon region.

Other statistics showed jobs, earnings and tax revenue derived from tourism had all risen in recent years.

A Travel Pendleton coordinator for four years before he became Pendleton Convention Center manager, Pat Beard said he wasn't surprised that the figures showed growth in Umatilla County tourism.

See **TOURISM/11A**

Oregon clarifies priorities on pot enforcement

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon's top federal prosecutor says that when it comes to cannabis, he wants his office to focus on higher-level violations that affect public health and safety.

U.S. Attorney for Oregon Billy Williams on Friday provided slightly more detailed information about the aspects of marijuana enforcement his office will prioritize now that Attorney General Jeff Sessions has given federal prosecutors wide latitude on the issue.

Cannabis is legal for adult use or medicinal purposes in 29 states, including Oregon, but it remains illegal under federal law.

See **POT/12A**



Mateusz Perkowski/EO Media Group

Marijuana plants grow in a high tunnel at a farm near McMinnville U.S. Attorney Billy Williams on Friday released his priorities related to cannabis prosecutions.

Business group gathers feedback for 2019 PERS reform legislation

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

When the 2019 legislative session convenes, Oregon's business community plans to be ready with legislation and budget recommendations to address Oregon's fiscal problems.

Tackling rising costs of the Public Employee Retirement System is on the top of the list.

On Friday, representatives of the Oregon Business Council and Oregon Business & Industry visited Hermiston, where they convened a roundtable discussion with area business and government leaders. The title was "Facing Oregon's Fiscal Crisis" and the goal was to gather feedback for a partnership known as the Oregon Business Plan, which will use that to create a series of proposals for the 2019 legislative session.

Ginny Lang, acting vice president of OBI, told the group that

the initiative would be a mixture of recommendations for cost containment, changes to revenue and new investments in areas such as education that can help grow the economy.

See **ROUNDTABLE/11A**

'We can't do it alone. Every one of you will be important ... this is a crisis and we need to get started on getting it fixed now.'

— **Ginny Lang,**

acting vice president of Oregon Business & Industry (OBI)



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