

# Senate committee passes \$145.1B ag appropriations bill

Farm research, organic programs could receive additional funding

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
EO Media Group

The U.S. Senate is poised to vote on a \$145.1 billion agriculture appropriations bill for fiscal year 2019.

The proposal passed unanimously out of the Senate Appropriations Committee on May 11. It details \$121.8 billion in mandatory program funding and \$23.3 billion in discretionary spending, which is \$710 million less than 2018 levels but \$6.1 billion more than President Donald Trump's

budget request.

Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley, who serves as the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, said the bill provides "significant resources for rural Americans and Oregonians," highlighting increased funding for rural broadband, organic farming programs and the USDA Agricultural Research Service, or ARS.

The USDA operates three ARS locations in Oregon — one in Pendleton, one in Corvallis, and one in Burns. Research projects focus on a variety of crops, from apples and pears to wheat and alfalfa.

Dan Long, director of the Columbia Plateau Conservation Research Center

north of Pendleton, said the station's budget annual budget has remained flat at \$1.9 million for the last three or four funding cycles.

The station currently supports five scientists on staff, including an agronomist, soil physicist, soil chemist, hydrologist and soil microbiologist. If one was to retire, Long said he would not be able to fill the vacancy due to inflationary costs.

"We've been able to survive through attrition," Long said.

Long said he is not sure where the additional \$100 million would be directed, but is pleased to see lawmakers mulling such a large increase for the ARS, which is more than the service has

seen in past years.

"It certainly is a great signal that Congress sees the work that ARS is doing is important to the viability of the nation, the nation's food supply and protection of its resources."

Funding for rural broadband internet would also receive a \$425 million increase in 2019, building on the previous fiscal year's investment of \$600 million. Farmers and ranchers are becoming increasingly reliant on dependable broadband service as they adopt more precision agriculture technology, such as real-time soil moisture monitors and GPS tractors, into their operations.

Organic farming is another focus in the Sen-

ate appropriations bill, with several programs in line for a funding increase in 2019. The USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program would receive \$37 million, up \$2 million from last year.

The National Organic Program would get \$15 million, up \$3 million from 2018, and the Organic Transitions Program — which helps farmers transition their land from conventional to organic farming, a process that takes three years before certification in Oregon — would receive \$6 million, up \$1 million over the previous year.

The appropriations bill also prohibits the federal government from interfering with industrial hemp

research and development. Both Sen. Merkley and fellow Oregon Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden are pushing to legalize industrial hemp as an agricultural commodity, which Oregon began regulating in 2016. The program now has 382 registered hemp growers and 119 registered handlers.

"This (appropriations) bill takes a much-needed step toward those rural Oregon goals I've long worked to achieve," Wyden said in a written statement.

The bill now heads for a full Senate vote. The House Appropriations Committee already approved its version of the agriculture appropriations bill on May 16 by a 31-20 vote.

## Target practice

Pendleton fans stand atop a motorhome parked just beyond the outfield fence at Steve Cary Field during Tuesday's state playoff game against Marist. The Bucks won the game 20-10 and will play Saturday in the state title game in Corvallis.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney



## HERMISTON

# Re-zone clears way for housing on Diagonal Road

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
East Oregonian

The stretch of Diagonal Road leading toward Sandstone Middle School in Hermiston could someday include apartments or a restaurant after the city council approved a re-zone.

The 52-acre triangle between Northeast Eighth Street and Northeast 10th Street was previously zoned for light industrial use but will now be a mixture of commercial and multi-family residential zones. It is mostly undeveloped besides the restoration business O So Kleen, a shop and a couple of former onion sheds.

Clint Spencer, the city planner, said the industrial zoning made more sense when it was put in place in the 1950s because Diagonal Road was a major truck route and the surrounding properties did not yet have housing on them. Now, however, he said it seemed like uses such as an auto-wrecking yard were not compatible with the neighborhood.

"Our opinion as staff is it probably isn't the highest and best use of the property," he said.

Spencer said the planning commission unanimously recommended the change as part of the city's efforts

to encourage more development of affordable housing in Hermiston. He said the city has a more than 40-year supply of industrial land, according to a recent analysis, but shortage of viable places to develop housing.

"What we have is too much employment land and not enough residential land," he said.

The new zoning, which the city council unanimously approved, would allow for offices, retail, restaurants or gas stations along Diagonal Road and various types of housing behind them. Spencer said if housing were developed Jennie Road would likely be pushed through from its current stopping point to Northeast 10th Street and extra roads added.

On Monday the city council also made some adjustments to the city's garage sale ordinance, which previously did not allow any signs advertising garage sales in the public right of way, including on sidewalks, utility poles and street signs. Under the new rules passed Monday, people can place signs on vehicles that are legally parked and not obstructing views of traffic.

However, the city tightened the timeline for enforcement, allowing the code enforce-

ment officer to take action on illegally placed signs after four hours instead of 96.

City Manager Byron Smith said people often place signs illegally on cardboard boxes or utility poles on street corners, then leave the signs to blow away or clutter the street corner. By working hard to educate the public that they are now allowed to place signs on their vehicles, he said the hope is that they will go that route and then remove the sign after the weekend is over.

For people who persist in placing signs where they are not supposed to be, the code enforcement officer will now be able to give people four hours to remove the signs instead of waiting four days.

"We're hoping to do a lot of education," Smith said.

Police Chief Jason Edmiston said the city is looking into creating some sort of kiosk in one of the parks where people could post garage sale signs and shoppers could have a one-stop shop to look at. It would be wiped clean every Monday. He said the city could also promote a Facebook page as an alternative to posting signs around town.

City councilors said they didn't want to discourage people from selling unwanted items and

being able to make a little extra money, but it was also important to keep the city looking nice. Doug Primmer said he would like to see the city sponsor a location for a city-wide yard sale where people could all come together to sell items in one spot.

Smith said Al Davis, the new general manager for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, has been working on creating something along those lines in the form of a flea market at EOTEC.

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

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## COMMUNITY BRIEFLY

### Tamastlikt offers free admission

MISSION — Free Admission Friday provides the public with an opportunity to view exhibits at Tamastlikt Cultural Institute at no charge.

The event is Friday, June 1 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is located near Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Interstate 84 at Exit 216. Also, the Kinship Café offers light fare and there is a museum store.

The cultural center celebrates the traditions of Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla tribes. It features permanent exhibits and the Coyote Theater, where visitors are introduced to Spilyáy, the magical coyote who shares about wisdom and foolishness. Also, as part of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition program, "H2O Today" is on display through Saturday, July 14. It explores man's relationship with water.

Regular admission is \$10 for adults, \$9 for seniors, \$6 for youths 6-17 and free for ages 5 and under. There is a family rate of \$25 for four. Also, the Libraries of Eastern Oregon has provided many area libraries with family passes that can be checked out. For more information, call 541-429-7700 or visit [www.tamastlikt.org](http://www.tamastlikt.org).

### Thrift store open on Saturdays

HEPPNER — The thrift store at the Neighborhood Center of South Morrow County will be open on Saturdays through the summer months.

People can drop off donations or shop in the thrift store Saturdays from 1-4 p.m. through Aug. 25. The center is located at 441 N. Main St., Heppner.

Food boxes won't be distributed on Saturdays. For more information, call 541-676-5024 or search Facebook for "Neighborhood Center of South Morrow County."

### Caregiver class for challenging behaviors

MISSION — A free class that's designed to help those who provide care for an aging Oregonian will be offered in Mission.

People that provide care for an aging family member, as well as those who work in professional caregiver settings, public safety or social work are encouraged to attend. The session will provide insight in managing challenging behaviors that are common among older adults, such as anger, withdrawal and physical aggression.

"Challenging Behaviors: Effective Approaches to Common Behaviors" is Wednesday, June 6 from 12:30-5 p.m. at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, located off Interstate 84 at Exit 216. Offered through Oregon Care Partners, a professional instructor will share real-world experiences in an interactive format.

Also available is a series of free online videos designed to help family caregivers learn basic skills to assist loved ones. Most videos are under five minutes long and include such topics as bathing and dressing to promoting independence and privacy.

For more information, to register for the free class or view other resources, visit [www.oregoncarepartners.com](http://www.oregoncarepartners.com).

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## WHAT IS DSAC?

DSAC is a group of local volunteers who give advice, educate and advocate on issues that are important to people with disabilities. A majority of volunteers are people with disabilities, but all are advocates.

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## WHAT DOES DSAC DO?

The council reviews policies, quality of services, and issues pertaining to the Americans with Disabilities Act. We advise the local offices of DHS Aging and People with Disabilities as well as other state & local agencies.

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**To Volunteer or For More Information:**  
Contact the local Pendleton/Hermiston DHS APD DSAC Liaison

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