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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Participants in the Mass Timber Rising Summit look up into the canopy while touring a thinned section of forest Thursday north of Union.

Building with wood moves beyond the boards

Forest products find new uses in construction

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Bill Gamble stood before the crowd Thursday in the Sandbox and touted the work to restore its health.

The Sandbox Vegetation Management Project encompassed 16,000 acres in the Blue Mountains near Union in the Upper Catherine Creek Watershed. Gamble is the U.S. Forest Service ranger for the La Grande District. He oversaw the work that resulted in a more open and natural forest while selling 16 million board feet of timber. The project wrapped up in 2015.

The crowd was a couple dozen academics, forest managers and industry insiders who were attending the Mass Timber Rising Summit in La Grande. The Sandbox, Gamble said, is an example of good, smart work to keep the forest healthy. Around 1.2 million acres of the Blue Mountains needs some kind of restoration, he said. That includes thinning and timber sales, which the mass timber industry wants and needs.

Mass timber is about engineering load-bearing structures of wood and using those to build high, such as Framework, the 12-story high rise going up in Portland this fall. Nearly



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Participants walk through a cleared section of forest while on a tour during the Mass Timber Rising Summit north of Union.

all of the building is wood in one form or another, including cross-laminated timber, or CLT, which comes in panels the size of walls. The material is catching on in urban construction, but the U.S. lags behind its use in Canada, the United Kingdom and some other parts of Europe.

Jonathan Heppner is with Lever Architecture, the firm that designed Framework. He told the crowd earlier in the day that Lever spends a lot of discussion on how to build to “elevate the human experience.” But the firm did not shirk the obligation to keep

people safe in a wood building.

Fire, after all, is the big threat.

Heppner said Lever had to prove load-bearing beams could withstand a two-hour fire at 2,000 degree in a furnace, the kind of test steel and concrete also have to pass.

Lever did that in the fall of 2016, becoming the first mass timber products in the world to pass the test.

Framework also uses a “self-centering design” for earthquake livability. “This building won’t be torn down

See WOOD/8A

CSAs help bring local farms to your doorstep



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Val Tachenko, who operates Val’s Veggies, sets up shop Thursday at the Nixyaawii Governance Center.

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

As Val Tachenko smiles and hands over a carton of just-ripe strawberries to a customer on Thursday afternoon, one person is not happy.

Her young grandson pokes his head over the edge of the table and frowns at the remaining boxes. “He took my best one!”

It’s hard to say what looks best. The table in the Nixyaawii Governance Center groans with baskets of fresh greens, onions, cherries and strawberries, which Tachenko, owner of Val’s Veggies, sells alongside the CSA boxes that she’s brought to deliver to weekly customers.

A CSA, or Community-Supported Agriculture, allows people to pay a fee at the beginning of a season and then get a box of fresh vegetables delivered to them each week from a local or regional farm. As of this week, Tachenko has expanded her delivery service to customers in Pendleton and Hermiston.

Tachenko said she’s noticed more awareness about eating local since she started her CSA in 2009 at her Baker City farm, where she raises cattle, chickens and grows vegetables in a 16-acre garden. Before that she sold wholesale produce, operated farm stands and

sold at farmer’s markets.

“I’ve always been very passionate about people eating local,” she said.

Tachenko has been one of the only consistent growers in the region to maintain a CSA. She has 48 customers, and usually caps the service at about 60.

Tachenko sells at farmer’s markets in La Grande, and has a fruit stand in Baker City. Each Thursday, she sells produce at a table in the Nixyaawii Governance Center in Mission.

With so many opportunities to buy local produce, Tachenko said many people don’t understand why a CSA box is a good option.

The service relies on seasonal vegetables, which means that you won’t find peppers in early June.

“People struggle to eat seasonally,” Tachenko said. “The first few weeks it’s mostly greens. (People) want tomatoes, corn. Those aren’t available yet.”

But the boxes allow people to get vegetables that may not be available at the market.

“The CSA boxes come first,” she said, opening up one of the boxes awaiting pickup. It’s stuffed with kale, rainbow chard, spinach, bok choy and green onions.

“Today they got zucchini and broccoli. I don’t have enough of that to sell at the table, but the boxes got that.

See CSA/10A

MILTON-FREEWATER

Neighbors oppose proposed hay processor



EO Media Group graphic



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Tim Werhan, who owns Smiley RV, opposes the proposed Blue Mountain Hay facility next door because of increased truck traffic and potential water quality concerns.

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

More than 18 acres in the exclusive farm use zone near Milton-Freewater could be home to a hay processing operation. But Tim Werhan and some other locals are fighting the development.

“I support a good business,” Werhan said. “But let’s find a place to put them that won’t conflict with all these people’s lives and property values.”

Jeremy Christman represents Blue Mountain Hay, the company in question.

“What we’re really try-

ing to do is just bring all of our farming and baling operations to one central location,” he said.

Blue Mountain Hay operates out of Walla Walla but has an office in Milton-Freewater. The company is an offshoot of the Derstine family’s Valley Hay Co., which ships pressed forage products from the Willamette Valley. The family — a father and five sons — formed Blue Mountain Hay in 2008 to take advantage of wheat and alfalfa products east of the Cascades.

See HAY/10A

