

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## BMCC project gets \$13M in Brown's budget

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
*East Oregonian*

The Blue Mountain Regional Training Center, formerly known as FARM II, just received a \$13 million endorsement from the governor.

Gov. Kate Brown released Wednesday her recommended budget for the 2019-2021 biennium, which

included allocating \$8 million from state lottery bonds toward the Blue Mountain Community College project.

Combined with the \$5 million the state has already budgeted for multi-use agricultural facility, the state should cover the training center's estimated \$12.5 million cost.

Connie Green, BMCC's interim president, said the

training center's inclusion in the budget proposal wasn't just an achievement for the college, but a feather in the cap for the whole community.

She credited BMCC's project partners for helping the training center get this far. The city of Pendleton, Umatilla County, and Port of Umatilla all contributed \$150,000 toward the

training center. The Pendleton Round-Up Association is providing the college with land and the InterMountain Education Service District also recently joined in the partnership.

As it's currently conceived, BMCC plans to build two-story, 87,092-square-foot facility with classrooms and lab space for its veterinary program and an

indoor arena that would host the BMCC rodeo team and other equine events.

Pendleton Mayor John Turner, who worked on the project when he was BMCC's president, was excited by the development.

"It's a huge step forward," he said.

Turner said Brown supported the project because of its potential to boost

career technical education and be an economic driver for the community. Local officials expect the training center's indoor arena will draw equine events during the winter, typically a slow time in Pendleton's tourism schedule.

In October, the city and Round-Up engineered a land

See **BUDGET/8A**

## Umatilla County approves \$17K to help bail out AOC

By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
*East Oregonian*

Umatilla County is giving \$17,377.38 to help the Association of Oregon Counties cover more than \$900,000 it misspent. The county board of commissioners voted 3-0 at its meeting Wednesday in Pendleton to approve the handout.

County Commissioner George Murdock said the board anticipated the expense, which will come out of funds for membership dues and the like.

"This whole issue has been under discussion and consideration for a year," he said, and Oregon's 36 counties were involved in the process.

The association is an intergovernmental organization that lobbies for Oregon's counties, which in turn pay annual dues. The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners in March approved \$23,256.95 for the dues.

An audit in August revealed the association over five years took at least \$900,000 from its county road program to cover general operations, according to reporting by *The Oregonian*. Murdock said the association used the money for "programs and services with good intentions of restoring it, but that didn't happen."

The association on a Nov. 8 invoice to Umatilla County stated the AOC board of directors on Oct. 8 voted to bill counties a "one-time assessment" to replace the road funds "borrowed

See **AOC/8A**

## UMATILLA



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

The eastbound lanes of the Interstate 82 bridge at Umatilla won't open in 2018 as expected.

## Bridge won't reopen until spring or summer

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
*East Oregonian*

The Washington State Department of Transportation doesn't know exactly when the eastbound Interstate 82 bridge across the Columbia River will reopen, but it won't be in 2018.

The department had previously said construction on the bridge deck near Umatilla would finish in October, then pushed that timeline to December. But on Wednesday in

an email to the *East Oregonian*, spokeswoman Jackie Ramirez said the bridge that previously took drivers into Oregon will continue to be closed through the winter because crews cannot finish work on the bridge until the weather warms up again.

"Crews will finish pouring the concrete once the weather gets better and completion of the bridge will be in spring/summer of 2019," she said.

Ramirez said there was some "additional repair work" that cropped up unexpectedly

as contractors worked on replacing the bridge deck, and that extra work put them too far behind to finish up concrete overlay pours before cold weather set in.

A smaller crew will continue throughout the winter on repairs that can be completed in cold weather.

The eastbound bridge, built in 1955, had originally carried traffic to and from Oregon before a second westbound bridge was added

See **BRIDGE/8A**

## HERMISTON

## Hamm marks final Farm Fair with talk of spuds, the future

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
*East Oregonian*

At Wednesday's Hermiston Farm Fair, the conference room at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center was packed with growers and scientists listening to Phil Hamm talk about potatoes.

Hamm's presentation, "What I Would Do to Manage Diseases if I was a Potato Grower," was his last as an Oregon State University employee. The longtime plant pathologist and professor will retire in summer of

2019 after a nearly 30-year career with the college, and a nearly 45-year career studying plant diseases.

He kept the crowd involved during the half-hour seminar, covering the basics of four common potato diseases and how to avoid them.

"Potato Virus Y does two things," he said, letting his professorial side come out. "Someone tell me."

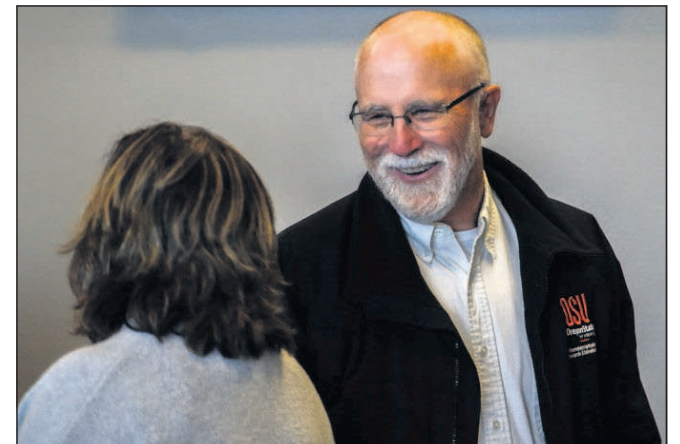
He noted that the virus, which reduces tuber yield and quality, is difficult to control, and is vectored — or spread — by aphids as well as seed-borne. His rec-

ommendation to growers: Produce PVY-free seed, and make sure the seed has been tested thoroughly.

After the presentation, Hamm tried to leave but got sidetracked about a dozen times in conversations with people who have known and worked with him for years.

"That's the sad part — this is what I'm going to miss when I finally retire," he said. "I had several growers testify in front of the Ways and Means committee, and I realized, they're not my stakeholders. They're

See **HAMM/8A**



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Phil Hamm, director of the Hermiston Agricultural Research & Extension Center, chats with another participant on Wednesday at the Hermiston Farm Fair. Hamm announced he will retire this summer.



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