

# Wallowa Lake Dam reconstruction plans underway

New project will allow better fish passage

By **KATY NESBITT**  
For the EO Media Group

With \$16 million earmarked in Gov. Kate Brown's budget to rebuild the Wallowa Lake Dam, irrigators are preparing for its reconstruction in August 2020.

The Wallowa Lake Irrigation District owns the 100-year-old dam, long in need of repair to ensure safety for downstream communities. When news broke that the governor's budget included money for the dam, the district's board of directors hired McMillen Jacobs Associates of Boise to manage the project.

At a public meeting Jan. 16 in Joseph, Morton McMillen said his timeline is aggressive, but doable, putting shovel to dirt in 18 months and completing construction by the end of June 2021.

McMillen said, "We need to implement a schedule that ensures completion within



Katy Nesbitt/For the Capital Press

The Wallowa Lake Dam will be rebuilt if \$16 million in Gov. Kate Brown's proposed budget passes the legislature.

the state funding cycles."

The board has been getting ready for this moment. Dan Butterfield, the district's board president, said McMillen first drew a conceptual reconstruction design in 2002, but money was always an issue.

"Mort's been ready for a long time," Butterfield said.

"We got really close a couple times to getting funding and then it fell out."

Now that funding is on the horizon, McMillen said he is focusing on regulatory and permit issues and refining the conceptual design in order to choose the best alternative by July 1.

In February, McMillen

said he will present the work plan and schedule to the governor's office followed by meetings with the office of Oregon Dam Safety and local fisheries managers Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Nez Perce Tribe.

"We will have the pre-planning work complete

when the full budget is allocated," McMillen said.

That starts about a one-year clock for McMillen's team to prepare the final plans and specifications for the dam rehabilitation, including fish passage.

In August 2020 the lake will be drawn down and the dam demolished in September. McMillen said he is leaving the foundation of the existing dam because it has adhered to soil, creating a seal, and will build on top of it.

The concrete at the base is friction locked and we don't want to dig it up," McMillen said. "We will peel off the bad concrete and encapsulate the whole thing — and have a 100-year dam by doing that."

While additional funding may be sought to help pay for screening downstream diversions, McMillen said he anticipates he can achieve all of the rehabilitation goals with the \$16 million in governor's the budget.

The dam will be commissioned, complete with fish passage in 2021, McMillen said.

Fish passage opens the

possibility of reintroducing sockeye salmon to Wallowa Lake, a species long extinct from the Grande Ronde River system.

Jeff Heindel, project manager for McMillen Jacobs Associates, said the brood stock will likely come from Redfish Lake in Idaho where Snake River sockeye were reintroduced several years ago.

"It's a great system to reintroduce sockeye," Heindel said. "We know the forest health benefits of anadromous fish — our generation is already seeing the impacts of lakes without salmon carcasses."

Irrigators along five ditches benefit directly from diverted water from Wallowa Lake, but Aaron Maxwell of the Nez Perce Tribe asked if Wallowa River downstream water users were being taken into account.

Joe Dawson, the district's secretary, said a lower Wallowa River Valley irrigator, Dennis Henderson, requested that he and his neighbors be included in conversations about rebuilding the dam.



Photo contributed by Tamastslitk Cultural Institute

"Anatomy of Travel (Horse Curiosity)" by Phineas Barker was among the entries for the 2018 ArtWORKz Junior Art Show & Competition. Submissions for this year's event are due Jan. 30 at Tamastslitk Cultural Institute.

## Junior art show showcases youth talent

Exhibit submissions due Jan. 30

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**  
East Oregonian

All area artists ages 18 and under are invited to enter the 2019 ArtWORKz Junior Art Show & Competition at Tamastslitk Cultural Institute

In addition to showing their work in a professional gallery setting, participants will vie for prize awards, which will be presented during a public reception. Also, artists may offer their works for sale during the show. The artist will set their own price and Tamastslitk will collect a 30 percent

commission on artwork sold.

All art media forms are welcome, including digital computer-generated art and traditional tribal artforms. Past entries have included everything from sculptures, paintings and drawings to printmaking, photography and fiber art. Submissions may be an individual's work or the result of a collaborative effort. For group pieces, all artists are to be identified and must be under the age of 19.

Each artist may enter one piece into the show. There is no entry fee. Submissions are due by Wednesday, Jan. 30 at Tamastslitk.

The show runs Feb. 9 through March 30. Admis-

sion to the exhibit is free on the opening day. The artists' reception, which includes awards presentations, is Saturday, March 9 at 1 p.m.

Awards will include grand prizes, awards of excellence and awards of merit in each age category. In addition, honorable mentions will be presented at the judge's discretion. Staff from Tamastslitk will select the best emerging artist, and participants will vote for an artists' choice award.

Tamastslitk is located off Interstate 84 Exit 216, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino, Mission. The museum is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Regular admission is

\$10 for adults, \$9 for seniors, \$7 for students/youths and free for ages 5 and under.

For more information, including ArtWORKz entry forms, visit [www.tamastslitk.org](http://www.tamastslitk.org). For questions, contact Randy Melton, collections curator, at 541-429-7700 or [randall.melton@tamastslitk.org](mailto:randall.melton@tamastslitk.org).

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at [tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com](mailto:tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4539

### BRIEFLY

#### Display features zodiac prints

HERMISTON — The artwork of Denisia Leon is featured during the month of January at the Hermiston Public Library.

While attending Oregon State University, the 2014 Hermiston High School graduate fell in love with printmaking. She created a "zodiac series" by carving out the signs on a piece of linoleum and then using a press to print them. Most of the small prints featured in the exhibit are a result of Leon's senior show.

"My goal is to make art that I love and will always be proud of," she said.

The library is open Monday through Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Friday/Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. It's located at 235 E. Gladys Ave. For more information, call 541-567-2882 or visit [www.hermistonlibrary.us](http://www.hermistonlibrary.us).

#### IMAC serves monthly breakfast

IRRIGON — A hearty home-cooked meal is available during the Irrigon Multicultural Arts Center fundraising breakfast.

The event is Saturday from 7:30-10:30 a.m. at Stokes Landing Senior Center, 150 Columbia Lane, Irrigon. The cost is \$4.50 per person.

The group is dedicated to preserving Irrigon's 1921 school building and developing a regional art venue. For more information, call Peggy Price at 541-567-3806.

**HAPPY 50th ANNIVERSARY!**

**Harold & Sarah Bruce**  
Married January 24, 1969

## Local radio station powers up with new turbine

By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
East Oregonian

The community radio station KBLU now has a better turbine to power its signal.

The nonprofit operates from a small office on 413 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton, but relies on solar panels and a turbine to power its 50-foot-tall antenna atop a blustery hill south of Pilot Rock. Husband and wife Gary Betts and Virginia Blakelock founded the nonprofit Blue Mountain Community Radio Inc. to provide local radio. The couple, with the help of KBLU board member Karen Wagner, recently braved the slippery road along West Birch Creek and high winds to install an 11-blade fan on the turbine to improve performance.

"I opened my [pickup] door and I thought it was going to rip the door right off the hinges," Betts said. "It did bend them."

The gusts proved too much, so the trio packed it in and returned the following day. Betts said the weather was about to best them again, but they put their backs and shoulders and legs into hefting the turbine into place and securing it within guidelines.

"The three of us walked it up just pushing on it," he said. "We got it up — I couldn't believe it. ... It was whirring along and putting out the power like anything."

Betts and company had to wait weeks for the parts to upgrade the turbine. The upshot has been the reliability of the solar panels. They are on a 17-degree tilt penpen-

dicular to the sun to maximize power during the shorter days of winter. Betts also said the slope is enough that snow falls off the panels rather than piles on.

KBLU's upgrades are not finished. Betts said in the coming weeks they aim to install a more powerful transmitter. Soon enough, he said, the station's signal should reach into the "brick canyon" of Pendleton's downtown. Betts explained all the iron oxide in the red brick in many of Pendleton's historic buildings blocks weaker transmissions.

You can tune into KBLU at 90.5 FM and find a variety of programming, from local poets reading their work to old time radio shows to jazz, country and classical music. To find out more about KBLU, visit [www.kblu-fm.org/cgi/index.rb](http://www.kblu-fm.org/cgi/index.rb).

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