

McNary Heights Elementary students celebrate the Earth

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

McNary Dam was a laboratory of learning Thursday as students from McNary Heights Elementary School celebrated the Earth.

Officially, Earth Day was Monday, but the school held its annual celebration Thursday. Classes of students in matching T-shirts followed their teachers around the dam and its expansive park system, learning about different parts of the ecosystem.

Fifth-graders in purple shirts started off the day learning new vocabulary words as a scavenger hunt asked them to find monocots, dicots, serrated leaves, non-domesticated animals and more.

Each student had a checklist and a bag full of items that included a little packet of bird seed they could spread out for the birds. Their teacher pointed out all of the bags were paper, not plastic, because it was better for the environment.

Balie Wilson, a fifth-grader, said she was looking forward to spending the day looking at nature and learning more about how to take care of the Earth.

“People just throw their garbage around and stuff, and that’s not healthy for the Earth,” she said. “It goes in the ocean, and it can make the animals sick.”

Other classes were busy rotating through learning stations. Some of the stations were staffed by adults from organizations like the Army Corps of Engineers, and others were run by Umatilla High School

students.

Marisol Munoz, a high school junior, was helping teach about deforestation. She and her partner taught students that they could protect the world’s forests by recycling and reusing products, purchasing recycled products and gaining their own appreciation of nature.

Afterward she helped students plant seeds in take-home containers.

She said the station was a project for her biology class that she and a friend came up with after discussing how sad it was that so many animals around the world were losing their habitats to man-made development.

“We were like, ‘I guess we should teach them about that,’” she said.

At another station, students were given picture cards with animals on them and asked to divide up between “predators” and “prey” for a game that demonstrated how the two types of animal interact.

Later, students got to check out some real, live predators as Blue Mountain Wildlife brought in a barn owl, great horned owl and two hawks for a demonstration.

“That great big owl once fit into an egg just like this,” director Lynn Tompkins said, holding up an egg to show a group of kindergarteners.

Students were also able to check out the McNary Dam’s visitor center and observation areas, which teach about topics such as hydropower and salmon.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell
McNary Heights Elementary School students study which prey or predator they will be portraying in a game at the school’s annual Earth Day celebration Thursday at McNary Dam.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell
Umatilla High School student Marisol Munoz, center, helps McNary Heights Elementary School students plant seeds at an Earth Day celebration Thursday at McNary Dam.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell
McNary Heights Elementary School students search for different types of plants and animals during a scavenger hunt at the school’s annual Earth Day celebration Thursday at McNary Dam.

City proposes huge increase in airport budget

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

The city of Pendleton continues to push most of its economic development chips toward the airport and its unmanned aerial systems test range, and the city’s latest budget proposal reflects that.

The city’s proposed budget states for the 2019-20 fiscal year that the UAS range is “indisputably Pendleton’s highest priority,” and City Manager Robb Corbett called the airport fund “a good news story” in his budget message.

The airport is more than doubling its budget from \$5.1 million to \$12.5 million in 2019-20, although a majority of that increase is coming from a \$6.2 million Federal Aviation Administration grant to repave one of the airport runways.

The airport is expected to generate \$1.3 million in revenue from “charges for services,” a slight increase from the current budget, but not all of that revenue comes from the UAS range.

The city’s economic development fund is one of the few funds that saw a drop, falling from \$53,600 to \$38,550, a trend the budget attributes to the need to increase the airport fund.

While housing remains an area of focus, creating new jobs isn’t as much a priority.

“Regardless of public perception, available housing and available workforce remain a much bigger challenge to the City than the creation of jobs,” the budget states. “At present, open jobs are abundant and

often go unfilled.”

The city will invest much more in the UAS range in 2019-20 than it expects in return with the expectation that it will pay off in the future.

The city has budgeted \$3.8 million from the water fund and \$4 million from the sewer fund to help pay for the infrastructure to establish a UAS industrial park.

While the UAS range is the city’s top economic development priority, the Pendleton City Council’s top goal is fixing the city’s crumbling street system.

The council has challenged Corbett in recent months to redirect money toward road maintenance and he’s obliged by cutting various line items in the non-departmental budget, like halving the city’s contribution to the Pendleton Senior Center and Main Street flower baskets.

The budget states the city will have \$1.2 million for street maintenance in 2019-20, and adding money from federal grants means Pendleton will spend a total \$2.2 million on street construction projects.

One of those projects is slated to be the reconstruction of Southeast Byers Avenue, a frequently used road that runs by Washington Elementary School.

Other highlights in the budget include two new SUVs and body cameras for the police department.

The latter purchase requires an increase to the department’s materials and services budget because it will have to pay for the camera’s data storage fees.

Committee’s vaccine bill approval provokes backlash

By **AUBREY WIEBER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

It doesn’t raise taxes, regulate industry or control guns, but in some ways a proposal to remove non-medical exemptions for vaccines is the most controversial piece of legislation in the 2019 session.

House Bill 3063 has reliably turned up throngs of opposition in a way no others have. The \$100,000 the bill would cost to implement is its least controversial aspect. It’s created tense moments between constituents and lawmakers. In every public hearing since the bill was introduced, mothers opposing the bill have broken into tears.

If passed, HB 3063 would require children in public and private school to be fully vaccinated. Parents who don’t want to vaccinate their child could homeschool them or enroll them in an online school.

On Tuesday, the controversial bill pulled between 1,000 and 2,000 people, depending on who you ask, to a rally on the Capitol steps.

“I have not seen that at this Capitol,” said three-term Rep. Cedrick Hayden, R-Roseburg. “I have seen groups that are of one party affiliation, but the melting pot of the people there, politically, I haven’t seen.”

The bill is oddly bipartisan. There are bipartisan

sponsors, and lawmakers from both parties have testified against it.

Last week, Sen. Chuck Thomsen, R-Hood River, spoke on the Senate floor on consecutive days in support of the legislation. In an interview, Thomsen said his wife and daughter are passionately in favor of HB 3063. He is a sponsor of the bill.

Thomsen said “anti-vaxxers” pay advertising firms thousands of dollars to flood his and others’ email inboxes. Opponents show up at the Capitol demanding to be heard.

He has spoken out on the Senate floor to keep the issue on peoples’ minds and let other lawmakers know there are two sides to this debate.

‘Established science’

For decades, Americans put faith in vaccines as they eradicated horrific diseases like polio and smallpox. But a 1998 study in the medical journal The Lancet claimed to link childhood vaccinations with a host of maladies, including autism. Even though that study fueled the rise of vaccination skepticism, a January 2011 article in the British Medical Journal called the 1998 study “an elaborate fraud.” The Lancet retracted the article after British medical officials accused the authors of unethical behavior.

In today’s political climate, rife with government

distrust and flush with conspiracy theories, vaccines have become a target of vigorous dissent and grassroots anger. State Sen. Rob Wagner, D-Tualatin, said issues dealing with constitutional interpretation or perceived government overreach are always controversial, but aside from some gun-control legislation, he hasn’t seen an issue stir this much public emotion and fervor this session. He called the debate “exceedingly emotionally charged.”

“It’s established science,” Wagner said. “The medical provider community is solidly behind it and I do think that I am very proud to be a sponsor of the legislation.”

On Wednesday, April 24, the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health and Human Services passed HB 3063 out of committee on a party line vote.

The hearing room was packed. Witnesses spilled into the hallways and overflow rooms. They again talked about how important it is to pass or not pass the bill.

After repeatedly being told to not clap or cheer in past hearings, the crowd this time expressed agreement with testifiers by raising and fluttering their hand.

A school district administrator said the bill was “asinine.” A mother told the committee her child isn’t a “guinea pig” for them to inject with “toxic” chemicals.

Doctors testified about the rise infant patients they care for because they have contracted vaccine-preventable diseases due to the declining rate of vaccinations in Oregon, limiting the effectiveness of herd immunity where enough people are vaccinated that it protects immunocompromised people from vaccine-preventable diseases.

On Friday, the bill goes before the full Ways and Means committee, where co-chair Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward is one of its largest supporters.

Heated debates

It appears poised to find its way to the House floor.

Witnesses testifying in a handful of hearings during the past couple of months have said they felt this is an example of a tyrannical government and that lawmakers were being bought off by pharmaceutical companies. They have talked about injuries they believe their children have sustained from vaccines, and that the government would “forcibly inject” their children with “toxic chemicals.”

Doctors and public health officials have countered that, though in far lesser numbers, by saying vaccines are rigorously tested and the science behind them is strong.

Hours of debate, the rallies and the uncomfortable confrontations between lawmakers and constituents doesn’t appear to have moved the conversation.

Before Wednesday’s vote, Sen. Dallas Heard, R-Roseburg, said the legislation was being driven by the most corrupt people in the county — the pharmaceutical industry — and shows the lack of respect government has for its citizens.

“This is probably the toughest bill I’ve had to speak on in terms of keeping my emotions under control,” Heard said before voting against the bill.

After the gavel hit, signaling another hurdle cleared for the controversial bill, people attending the hearing started to lash out. Some sat and cried, others shouted at committee members. One group circled Heard to tell them how appreciative they were while others taunted lawmakers as they walked out, singing “election year” and “lawsuit.”

ELLSWORTH KELLY

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THROUGH MAY 3

A black and white photograph showing two men from behind, looking at a large painting on a wall. The man on the left is wearing a cap and the man on the right is wearing a hat.

A small image of the Pendleton Center for the Arts building, a modern structure with large windows.

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11:30a* 1:40p*
4:10p 6:40p 9:20p

Shazam! (PG13)
1:30p* 4:20p 7:10p 10:00p

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St. Anthony Provider Spotlight

A portrait of Dr. Lohith Reddy, MD, a man with dark hair and glasses, wearing an orange patterned shirt.

Lohith Reddy, MD

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