

Heavy traffic expected for Memorial Day weekend

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Experts at AAA are predicting the second-highest number of Memorial Day travelers on record this year. The automobile club is estimating 43 million Americans will be traveling next weekend, a 3.6 percent increase over 2018. More than 37 million of them will

be traveling by car. Average gas prices on Tuesday were recorded at \$2.86, according to a AAA news release. “Americans are eagerly anticipating the start of summer, and expensive gas prices won’t keep them home this Memorial Day weekend,” Paula Twidale, vice president AAA Travel, said in a statement. “Consumer spending

remains strong, helped by solid job and income growth. Families continue to prioritize spending their disposable incomes on travel, and near-record numbers of them are looking forward to doing just that for Memorial Day.” Based on the company’s travel bookings, the most popular destination of the weekend will be Orlando, Florida, followed by New

York, Las Vegas, Honolulu and Anaheim, California. One of the main services AAA provides to its members is roadside assistance. The auto club estimates it will rescue about 353,000 motorists over Memorial Day weekend. AAA recommends drivers take their vehicle to a trusted service provider to check the tires, brakes,

fluid levels and other potential sources of trouble before heading out on a long trip. Drivers should be prepared for emergencies by keeping snacks, water, flashlight, cell phone charger, batteries, first aid kit and a basic toolkit in their car. Travelers should also factor in heavier traffic and longer drive times over the holiday weekend, along with

busier hotels and restaurants. Air travelers should budget more time than usual to get through security lines. Law enforcement agencies will be providing extra patrols to catch speeders and impaired or distracted drivers throughout the state. Oregon drivers can use www.tripcheck.com to check road conditions and closures throughout the state.

Wallowa community solar project gets on the launch pad

Project expected to bring 2,970 solar panels to 5-acre solar power farm

By **ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP**
EO Media Group

Two thousand, nine hundred and seventy. That’s the number of solar panels planned for Fleet Development’s upcoming 5-acre community solar power farm just south of downtown Wallowa. Construction of the 860 KW power-generating facility, first planned for this fall, is now slated for summer 2020. At public hearings in February, local residents expressed concerns that the panels could be a reflective, unnatural eyesore that compromised the beauty of a prized, scenic hillside. In deference to those concerns, Ryan Sheehy, Fleet’s CEO, is working with local landscapers to design plantings that will screen the panels

from view. “It will just be a treed pasture that is quietly pumping out power for Wallowa County,” he said. Sheehy grew up in Wallowa as a third generation Wallowa Countian. After a 20-year career in the U.S. Marine Corps, he bought his family home. While working with Viridian Property Management in Enterprise, he realized that there was an opportunity to connect multi-family affordable housing with solar power. In 2018, he partnered with Doug Chrisman to start Fleet Development. They chose the Green Hill site in Wallowa because it was convenient to a Pacific Power substation, where the energy from the solar panels will flow into the grid. It didn’t hurt that Sheehy had gone to high school with the property owner. Fleet Development’s solar facility will produce power for low-income, multi-family housing units in Wallowa County and beyond through community solar power sub-



EO Media Group/Ellen Morris Bishop
Ryan Sheehy stands next to solar panels similar to those that his company, Fleet Development, will erect next year as part of a Community Solar panel farm outside Wallowa. The new solar farm will cover about 5 acres and provide a total of 860 KW of power. They will rotate to follow the sun, maximizing solar energy during each day. Landscaping will ensure that they will not be visible to Wallowa residents.

scriptions. No housing will be built on Green Hill. “The power from these panels will go to tenants in multifamily housing maybe in Enterprise or somewhere else,” Sheehy said. “Tenants can opt into solar power on their electric bill. It doesn’t

mean the energy in their wires will come from this facility, but it very likely will.” The community solar option is new in Oregon, established by Senate Bill 1547, passed in 2016. The bill’s dual intent was to elim-

inate coal generating power plants and establish renewable energy as Oregon’s dominant power source. The bill stipulates that 10% of the total generating capacity of community solar projects be made available to low-income residential customers. “Up until now,” Sheehy said, “the only people who could afford to put solar power on their roofs have been in higher income brackets. So the tax incentive program has only been helping wealthier people. If you are a tenant and you want to use solar power, you’ve never been able to because you don’t own the roof, community solar is a great way for the rest of us to use solar power.” While the multi-family units won’t be directly plugged into rooftop solar panels, residents can sign up for solar power on their Pacific Power electric bill, Sheehy noted. The advantages include both green power and lowering costs. “Solar power costs are dropping as panels become

more efficient and easier to produce,” he said. New technologies include panels that generate power from front and back, new materials such as the iron-rich mineral perovskite solar cells that generate 20% more power, and technologies that capitalize on the heat generated in solar panels to produce even more electricity. “We see no need to raise rates. Once the system is paid off we will be able to actually lower costs,” he said. Fleet Development’s lease on the Green Hill property may last for up to 20 years. By then, there may be newer and even more efficient green energy sources. If and when the project ends, it can be completely removed and recycled, Sheehy said. “We are farming solar power. But there will be no permanent change to the site,” he said. “When we are done, we can take it down, recycle everything, and no one will know it was there.”

BRIEFLY

Pacific Power to host customer workshop for Pendleton area

PENDLETON — As part of the rollout of smart meters in Eastern Oregon, Pacific Power is hosting a customer workshop to share information about the upgrade and help customers learn about new account features that can help them save more energy and money in the coming months. The workshop is scheduled for 5-6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Prodigal Son Brewery and Pub, 230 S.E. Court Ave., in Pendleton.

Smart meter installations are currently taking place in the region through July and are part of a statewide rollout of 590,000 new meters, which began in January 2018 and continues through 2019. “Pacific Power has a 100-year history of serving local communities by powering our customers’ lives both at home and at work. We are upholding that commitment by upgrading our metering technology and helping our customers learn how the improvements we are making now will support them better in the future,” said Lori Wyman Pacific Power’s regional business manager for Eastern Oregon. “This event is an opportunity for customers to try out new tools, which will offer greater

insights into their energy usage and see how the new meters will help us deliver faster more responsive service.” The workshop will begin with a presentation by Pacific Power, followed by an opportunity for customers to talk one-on-one with Pacific Power staff, gather information, and see demonstrations. Information on energy efficiency and renewable energy options will also be available. The event is free to attend; appetizers and drinks will be provided.

Funland Park Reconstruction Committee seeking applications

The city of Hermiston is accepting applications for the Funland Park Reconstruction Committee. The temporary committee will help steer the process of designing and rebuilding the Funland playground at Butte Park, which burned down last week. It will be comprised of eight to nine members and will hold its first meeting in July. Applications can be found online at hermiston.or.us/volunteer or at city hall, 180 N.E. Second St. Applications can be turned into city recorder Lilly Alarcon-Strong at city hall or by email at lalarcon-strong@hermiston.or.us. The deadline is June 11.

Officials keeping eye on forest roads, local reservoirs and streams

East Oregonian
Wet weather with more in the forecast has local officials keeping a wary eye on reservoirs, streams and roads and trails in the region. The Bureau of Reclamation, in coordination with the National Weather Service, is closely monitoring weather conditions that inform reservoir operations at McKay Dam and Reservoir. The Bureau of Reclamation increased releases Thursday to 500 cubic feet per second out of McKay Dam. These releases were coordinated with the downstream community with the intent of creating more storage space to accommodate incoming flows and to manage flood risk. The facility is operating as expected, and the dam is safe, officials with the Bureau of Reclamation said. Releases increased throughout Friday to 1,200 cfs by mid-afternoon in an effort to save space in the reservoir. As additional precipitation enters the system over the weekend,

officials said flows may need to be adjusted. Reclamation will continue to work closely with Umatilla County and city of Pendleton as conditions develop. According to a city press release, the city of Pendleton is not expecting creek water to reach residences near the creek, although some flooding could occur in basements and yards. Reclamation officials are advising the public to be aware of the potential danger associated with McKay Creek flows. The water is cold and can be deep and fast in various locations. Extreme caution should be used near the river banks. “We take our responsibility to safely operate our facility seriously, and are

committed to remaining open and transparent,” said Umatilla Field Office Manager Sean Kimbrel. “We are in close coordination with Umatilla County, the city of Pendleton, and the National Weather Service.” Officials with the Umatilla National Forest are urging caution when traveling on the forest, as roads and trails could be impacted by washouts or obstructions, such as rocks or boulders. The Umatilla National Forest’s most immediate areas of concern include the Grande Ronde, Umatilla and Walla Walla rivers on the Walla Walla Ranger District and the North Fork John Day River on the North Fork John

Day Ranger District. The National Weather Service is forecasting for continued concentrations of rainfall through Saturday. Umatilla National Forest officials urge forest visitors to plan ahead and contact their local ranger district prior to starting their trip. Some forest roads are still not accessible due to mud, snow or snow drifts. In addition, traveling on thawing, saturated and muddy roads can result in resource damage and serious safety concerns, especially if visitors are unprepared.

LIVE
MUSIC
9:00 PM

SATURDAY, MAY 18

Tyler Brooks & Emily Muller-Cary

8 S.E. COURT, PENDLETON • 541.278.1100

HAMLEY
SALOON



David Jensen

Wallowa Lake Lodge Opens Friday May 24!

Experience One of the Great Historic Lodges of the American West.

Camas Dining Room Under New Management!



60060 Wallowa Lake Highway
Wallowa Lake, Oregon
541-432-9821 • wallowalake.com

The firm of **Grable Hantke Law Group, LLC,** offers a wealth of experience in a variety of specialties, as well as knowledgeable and dedicated staff. Our firm is committed to providing personal attention to each client.

We specialize in all aspects of family law.
Our areas of practice include:
dissolutions, legal separation, modifications, custody, parenting time, adoption, paternity, restraining orders, stalking orders, spousal support and child support. We also specialize in probate, estates, wills, guardianships and conservatorships.

<http://www.grablelaw.com>
tel: 541.276.1851 • fax: 541.276.3146
**334 Southeast Second Street • P.O. Box 1760
Pendleton, Oregon 97801**



WILDHORSE
RESORT & CASINO

5/17 - 5/19

Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie
Showing Wednesday at 12PM
THE ENFORCER

John Wick: Chapter 3
Parabellum (R)
1:20p* 4:10p 7:00p 9:50p

A Dog's Journey (PG)
11:40a* 2:00p* 4:30p 6:50p 9:20p

Pokemon Detective Pikachu (PG)
2:10p* 4:40p 7:10p
ED 11:50a* 9:40p

Avengers: Endgame (PG13)
12:00p* 3:40p* 7:20p 10:30p

The Hustle (PG13)
11:40a* 1:50p* 4:00p 6:10p 8:20p

* Matinee Pricing
wildhorseresort.com • 541-966-1850
Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216



WILDHORSE
RESORT & CASINO

5/20

Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie
Showing Wednesday at 12PM
THE ENFORCER

John Wick: Chapter 3
Parabellum (R)
4:10p 7:00p 9:50p

A Dog's Journey (PG)
4:30p 6:50p 9:20p

Pokemon Detective Pikachu (PG)
4:40p 7:10p
ED 9:40p

Avengers: Endgame (PG13)
3:40p* 7:20p 10:30p

The Hustle (PG13)
4:00p 6:10p 8:20p

* Matinee Pricing
wildhorseresort.com • 541-966-1850
Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216