



Capital Press Photo

At 297 miles, the Palouse River and Coulee City Railroad is the longest short-line freight rail system in Washington.

# Farmers celebrate \$5.6 million grant to rehab rail

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

A \$5.7 million federal grant will help rehabilitate an aging rail line used by farmers in Eastern Washington.

HighLine Grain Growers, Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative and Northwest Grain Growers plan to welcome the BUILD grant with a ceremony at 10 a.m. May 28 at the HighLine Grain Growers shuttle loading facility in Cheney, Wash.

At 297 miles, the Palouse River and Coulee City Railroad is the longest short-line freight rail system in Washington. It serves Grant, Lincoln, Adams, Spokane and Whitman counties.

Officials and members of Congress are slated to attend the ceremony.

Farmers and PCC Rail

Authority have worked with the state Department of Transportation to recover three rail lines that are at various stages of disrepair and neglect, said Paul Katovich, CEO of High-Line Grain Growers.

"If you slow the trains down enough, you can get across almost everything, but you lose a lot of the efficiency," Katovich said. "We're basically trying to make up for that lack of infrastructure investment over the past few decades and get caught back up."

According to the Washington State Department of Transportation, the condition of the system has continued to degrade over the last 10 years. Traffic doubled between 2007 and 2012, but operator revenue and state funding have not been sufficient to hold conditions at the level they

were in 2003.

A majority of the timber bridges on the system are within five to 15 years of the end of their useful design life. About 90 miles of rail on the system will likely need to be replaced in the next 10 to 20 years.

WSDOT estimated in 2015 the total cost of the project would be \$58 million.

Katovich expects the bulk of rehabilitation work under the federal grant to occur in 2020.

He said work will continue on the rest of the system.

He credits those involved in the process for working to protect and improve a system created by previous generations.

"We're here as stewards of this platform to make sure it's here for those generations that follow us," Katovich said.

# Oregon business group tries to overturn new \$1 billion tax for schools

By JEFF MAPES  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

An Oregon business group will attempt to overturn the new tax approved by the Legislature this month to provide an extra \$1 billion a year for schools.

Oregon Manufacturers and Commerce, a business lobby representing about 15 companies, needs to gather nearly 75,000 signatures from voters to put the issue on the November 2020 general election ballot. If the signature-gathering effort is successful, the tax created by House Bill 3427 will be held in abeyance until that election.

Gov. Kate Brown and Democratic leaders of the Legislature have long expected opponents to try to overturn the tax. One of the big questions is whether this group has the ability to mount a vigorous campaign.

The state's largest business lobby, Oregon Business and Industry, agreed to stay neu-

tral on the tax after winning several concessions.

Oregon Manufacturers and Commerce filed the ballot referral Thursday. Shaun Jillions, a lobbyist who heads the group, said before filing the measure that he was confident he could raise the money needed to qualify for the ballot and make the case for eliminating the tax.



Jillions

The plan approved by the Legislature places a 0.57% levy on sales by businesses with revenue of more than \$1 million a year. Unlike many a gross receipts tax, it does allow businesses to deduct a portion of their costs. The legislation also exempts sales of food, health care and gasoline.

Economists say the tax ultimately would be borne in some fashions by business owners, their workers and consumers.

"This impacts very, very small businesses. A million dollars in gross sales is not a large business at all," Jillions said.

He said he worries that many businesses will have difficulty passing on the tax.

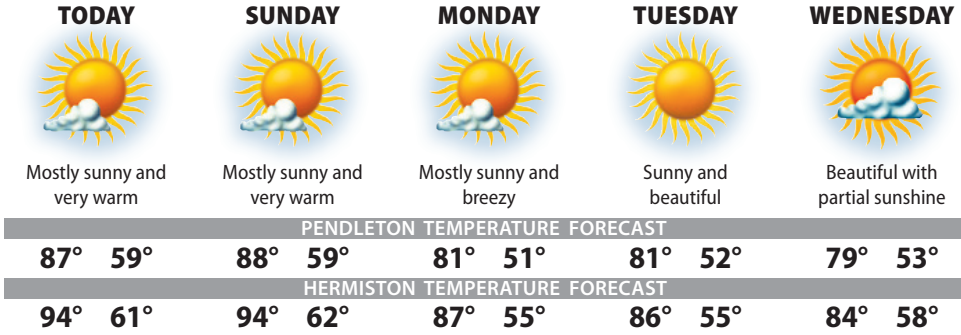
Our Oregon, an advocacy organization that represents unions and other liberal groups, denounced the attempt to overturn the tax in a written statement: "We stand ready to fiercely defend this unprecedented investment in Oregon students. Strong schools that create opportunities for every student — whether black, brown, or white — are not just a smart investment, they are an Oregon value."

If the tax is overturned by voters, legislators would face an additional budget hole because the revenue package also included a \$400 million-a-year cut in personal income taxes. The idea is to offset some of the burden of the gross receipts tax, which actually raises about \$1.4 million a year.

Preston Mann, a spokesman for the Oregon Manufacturers group, said their complaint was with the gross receipts tax, and that's the issue they want to take to voters.

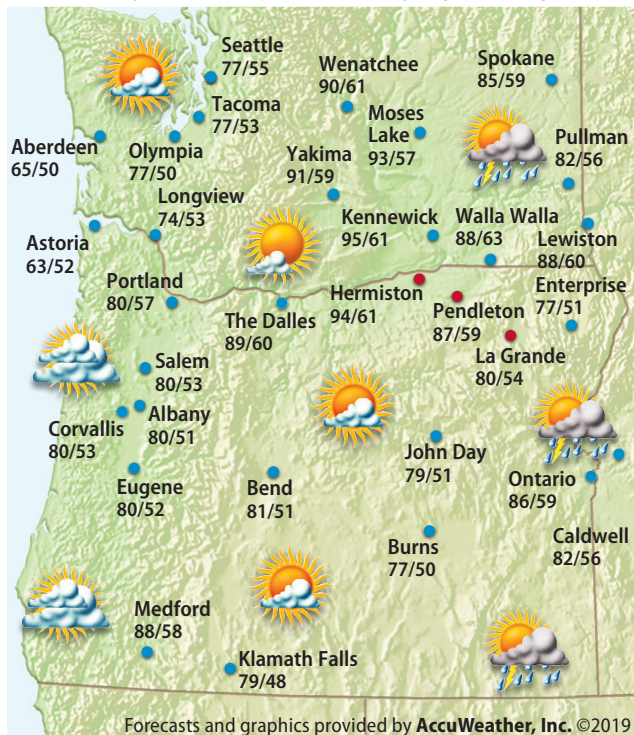
## Forecast for Pendleton Area

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## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

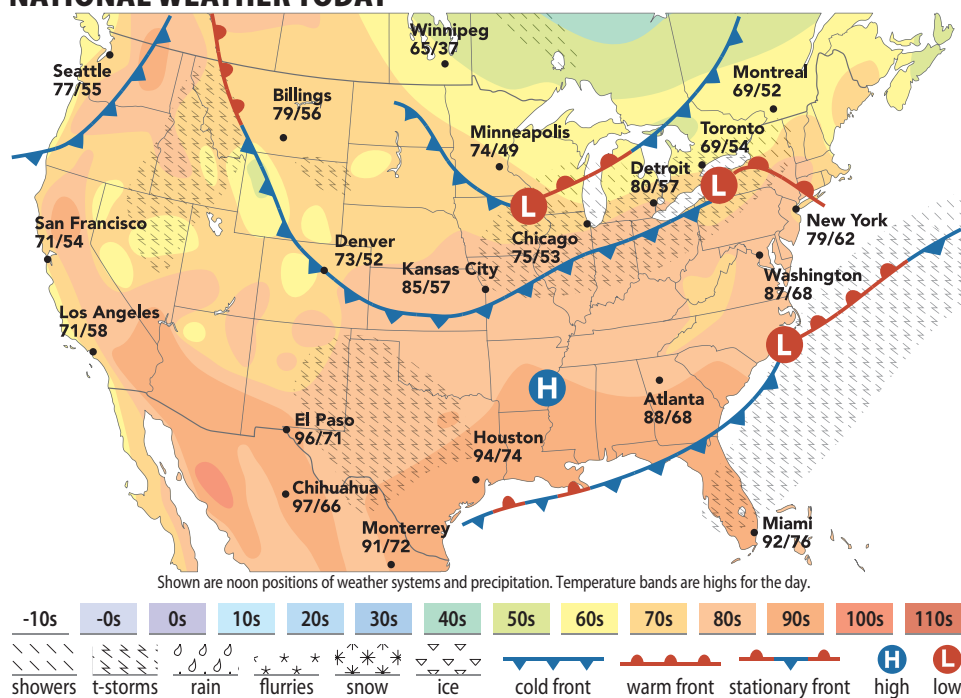
Table with weather almanac data for Pendleton and Hermiston, including temperature, precipitation, and wind records.

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 100° in Zapata, Texas Low 21° in Climax, Colo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## Former prison guard sentenced for sex abuse

KENNEWICK, Wash. (AP) — A former Oregon prison guard has been sentenced to 10 years in Washington state prison for sexually abusing a teenage girl.

The Tri-City Herald reports Roy "Dave" Farber was sentenced Thursday in Benton County Superior Court on charges of sexual exploitation of a minor, child molestation and communicating with a minor for immoral purposes.

Prosecutor Anita Petra says Farber used his connection to the girl's family to groom and manipulate the child for his own sexual gain.

## BRIEFLY

She says he gave the middle school student a cellphone and love letters and asked for nude pictures of her.

Farber will have three years of supervision following his release from prison.

He was fired from the Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla, Oregon after charges were filed against him last year.

## \$7,500 reward in killing of wolf

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — A conservation group is offering a \$7,500 reward for information that leads to a conviction in the death of a gray wolf in northeastern Washington state.

Conservation North-

west says the female wolf was illegally killed last weekend off Highway 20 near the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge, near the territory of the Dirty Shirt wolf pack.

Spokesman Chase Gunnell says regardless of how people feel about wolves, illegally killing them is never an acceptable action.

Through an agreement with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Conservation Northwest offers standing rewards for those who provide information that leads to a poaching conviction.

The wolf killed was wearing a tracking collar, and the body was recovered on May 27. Anyone with information should contact the state agency.

**CORRECTIONS:** The May 31 article "PERS eats into city budget" incorrectly stated the city would have 120 full-time employees in 2019-20. All positions in the city, including part-time employees, will add up to the equivalent of 120 employees.

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

Advertisement for Oregon Tradeswomen's Career Fair 2019 School Girls Day, 8th through 12th graders throughout Umatilla County Explored Jobs. Includes a graphic of a tradeswoman and a photo of students working.

Advertisement for sponsors of the Career Fair, including Eastern Oregon Business Source, Education Foundation of Pendleton, and the Trades Council.

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