

Round-Up breaks ground



Workers tear up the asphalt parking lot at the former Albertsons site in Pendleton on Tuesday afternoon in preparation for the construction of the Pendleton Round-Up's new multi-use building at the site.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Remains in Columbia River could solve old case

License plate associated with missing person came from Prosser, Washington

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The discovery of a pickup containing skeletal remains in the Columbia River near Hermiston could solve a missing person case 26 years old.

According to a news release from the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, a couple recreationally scuba diving on Oct. 17 in the Columbia River at the Hat Rock State Park boat launch reported discovering a submerged Ford Ranger pickup with Washington license plates. The vehicle was in approximately 20 feet of water just past the end of the docks.

Dispatchers checked the license plate and found the vehicle was associated with a missing person case from the police department in Prosser, Washington, going back 26 years.

Maynard Koen, who was born in 1911, according to the sheriff's office, went missing in August 1993.

The sheriff's office arranged for Columbia



Photo contributed by Umatilla County Sheriff's Office

Members of the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office and Columbia Basin Dive Rescue of Richland, Wash., check out the Ford Ranger they helped recover Saturday from the Columbia River at Hat Rock State Park near Hermiston. The pickup and the remains inside could solve a missing person case dating back to 1993.

Basin Dive Rescue of Richland, Washington, and D & R Towing, Hermiston, to assist in recovering the pickup. The sheriff's office, the volunteer dive agency and tow company met Saturday at 10:30 a.m. at the site to begin the recovery.

Sheriff's office marine deputies assisted with any boating traffic or other

river-based needs. After approximately two hours, the team removed the pickup from the river and hauled it to the sheriff's office for further investigation.

"Based on the condition of the vehicle and the information available, it appears likely that this vehicle was submerged in this location at or around the time Mr.

Koen was reported missing," according to the sheriff's office. "Further investigation of the interior of the vehicle revealed skeletal remains and a driver's license issued to Mr. Koen."

The sheriff's office also stated the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office will handle positive identification of the remains.

BRIEFLY

New state water manager takes office in Pendleton

PENDLETON — A new state water boss is coming to town.

The Oregon Water Resources Department announced the hiring of Chris Kowitz as the North Central Region manager. He will work out of the office at 116 S.E. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. Kowitz replaces Mike Ladd, who retired this year after 44 years with the department.

"I look forward to introducing myself to the community and collaborating on water supply solutions," Kowitz said in the announcement.

He will oversee the work of field staff who measure and distribute water and inspect wells in the Umatilla, Lower John Day, Lower Deschutes and Hood River basins, which primarily span Umatilla, Gilliam, Sherman, Wasco, and Hood River counties. Kowitz held positions as a water

resources coordinator and water management and conservation analyst with the department and also worked for the Oregon Department of Transportation. Kowitz graduated from Western Washington University with a bachelor's degree in environmental science.

Ivan Gall, Water Resources field services division administrator, said the position of region manager continues to evolve as the department manages water needs while preparing for future water challenges, and Kowitz "is well-equipped to take on such responsibility."

Kowitz is available via email at Chris.C.Kowitz@oregon.gov or phone at 541-278-5456.

Free classes this week on new tenant protection bill

PENDLETON — The Oregon Rental Housing Association announced free, two-hour classes this week in

Pendleton and La Grande on the state's new tenant protection bill.

Senate Bill 608 is a complex law that "substantially alters the relationship between tenants and landlords," according to the announcement from the association, and carries high penalties for landlord error while causing uncertainty for landlords and tenants.

The association's classes are free and include handouts for anyone who attends.

The Pendleton classes are Thursday, 3-5 p.m. and 6-8 p.m., at Roosters Country Kitchen, 1515 Southgate Place. The La Grande classes are Friday 2-4 p.m. and 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Senior Center, part of Community Connection, 1504 N. Albany St.

Registration is not necessary, but the association suggests coming early to secure seating. Also, all the classes are the same, so people only need to attend one of session. And while the classes have handouts, anyone attending

should bring their own writing tools and even a clipboard because there will not be tables.

ORHA Education, Inc. is a state association dedicated to training and educating owners about changes in laws, according to the organization's website.

Search and Rescue aids two trapped in snow

UMATILLA COUNTY — Umatilla County Search and Rescue helped two men who were trapped in the snow for most of the weekend.

The sheriff's office received a call shortly before 8:30 p.m. Saturday reporting that Reese Merriman, 25, of The Dalles, and Lane Richards, 25, of Hermiston, were stuck in heavy snow on Forest Service Road 3128 in an unheated Razor utility vehicle.

Their cellphone was nearly dead, and the depth of snow prevented the pair from



Umatilla National Forest Photo

Officials with the Umatilla National Forest said the forest has already received snow this fall, making for treacherous road conditions in higher elevations.

Umatilla National Forest cautions visitors about fall forest conditions

EO Media Group

PENDLETON — Local forest officials are urging hunters and forest visitors to use caution and plan ahead when making trips to the forest.

Officials with the Umatilla National Forest said the forest has already received snow this fall, making for treacherous road conditions in higher elevations.

Fall weather can be unpredictable and is a busy time of year on the Umatilla National Forest. Hunting is a primary activity during this time, increasing the number of visitors in the forest.

"We encourage forest users to responsibly enjoy their National Forest roads and trails, including planning ahead for a trip to the woods. Responsible use will not only avoid damage of the resources, but also ensure forest visitors have an enjoyable and safe experience," said Eric Watrud, Umatilla National Forest supervisor.

Prior to heading to the woods, Watrud encouraged the public to always contact the local district office, check the weather, have a planned route and ensure the area is accessible by knowing what closures or restrictions are in place. He also said whenever possible, travel in pairs, bring extra clothing, food and water, and make sure that someone knows where you are going. Watrud said it's important for others to know your planned route in the forest and when you will be returning.

Forest users should carry a map and not rely on cell-

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on current forest conditions, contact the Umatilla National Forest at (541) 278-3716 or visit its website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla>.

phones since many areas on the forest don't have service.

There has been prescribed burning activities this fall on the forest and visitors should be cautious when entering a recently burned area and be aware of increased hazards, particularly snags, which are recently burned or dead trees, Watrud said. Forest officials ask that visitors do not camp or hang out in a burned area.

"Dead or dying trees that remain standing after a fire are unstable, especially in high winds," Watrud said. "Loose rocks and logs can be present in a burned area and are unpredictable, creating a falling hazard."

Additionally, burned vegetation can also contribute to landslides, mudslides and erosion when rain occurs. The ground in a burned area can also be unstable, due to burned-out roots beneath the surface. After soils and vegetation have been charred, rainfall that would normally be absorbed could run off extremely quickly.

"The Umatilla National Forest wants all forest visitors to have a positive and safe experience while recreating on their public lands," Watrud said.

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