

Morrow, Umatilla counties top producers in grains, cattle, vegetables

By KATY NESBITT
For the East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Mor-row and Umatilla counties were ranked as two of the top agricultural counties in Oregon, ranking first and second in grain crops, veg-etables and cattle, accord-ing to the 2017 National Agricultural Statistics Service.

As of 2017, Umatilla County had 8% of its land-mass in agriculture produc-tion with a total of 108,555 acres of irrigated cropland. It ranked first in the state in the categories of grains, oilseeds, dry beans and dry peas, with sales of more than \$103.9 million, and sales in excess of \$111.3 million in vegetables, mel-



EO file photo
Cattle graze in irrigated farm land in Echo on May 5, 2017. Morrow and Umatilla County were ranked as two of the top agricultural counties in Oregon.

ons, potatoes and sweet potatoes.
Cattle and calves, pri-marily raised for beef,

topped the livestock list for Umatilla County with a total inventory of 56,415, ranking third in the state.

Total cattle sales for 2017 was over \$73 million.

Morrow County is farmed with 111,486 irri-gated crop acres — or 10% — of land. It is second in the state for both grains, oilseeds, dry beans and dry peas, with 2017 sales total-ing more than \$66.2 mil-lion, as well as vegetables, melons, potatoes and sweet potatoes, totaling over \$97.3 million.

Morrow County raises the most cattle in the state with 149,340 cattle and calves inventoried in 2017 and sales over \$234.1 mil-lion. Most of Morrow County’s cattle are dairy herds, and it is the highest milk-producing county in the state.

Eastern Oregon agricul-

ture production bucked the state averages that ranked greenhouse and nursery products as the leading agricultural commodities, but are in step with cat-tle and calf production, the state’s No. 2 commodity.

Hay value was slightly up across Oregon. Umatilla County raised 33,826 acres of hay and forage, totaling more than \$40.1 million in sales, and 38,113 acres in Morrow County yielded \$25.3 million in hay and forage sales.

In 2017, Umatilla County had 1,724 farms, with 1.3 million acres in production and an average size of 784 acres. Total market value of all farm products sold was \$375.6 million. Most farms are small — 661 of them

are between 1 and 9 acres — and 716 of the county’s farms bring in less than \$2,500 per year. The 73 top-producing farms bring in sales between \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Morrow County has 375 farms with 1.1 million acres in production. The average farm size is 3,003 acres and the total market value of products sold in 2017 was \$596.4 million.

There is a big concern about America’s aging farm work force.

In Umatilla County, 221 farmers are under the age of 35, 1,778 between 36 and 64 and 1,083 over the age of 65. In Morrow County, there are 33 farmers under the age of 35, 429 between 36 and 64 and 241 65 and older.

WORC ride program sees use

On-Demand Ride Cooperative sells 180 tickets in first month of operation

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — A new program providing Umatilla County residents transpor-tation to work sold 180 tick-ets in its first month.

The West-End Workforce On-Demand Ride Cooper-ative, or WORC for short, began Oct. 1. It is a collab-oration between the cities of Hermiston, Umatilla and Stanfield and provides sub-sidized vouchers for taxi rides to residents in those three cities’ ZIP codes to get to work.

Hermiston City Manager Byron Smith described it as a pilot program designed to help residents get work and local employers fill positions.

“This helps workers who struggle to find reliable transportation and makes sure businesses stay fully staffed and able to oper-ate efficiently,” he said in a news release. “Through taxi programs and bus routes, we’re making sure every-body can get to where they need to be.”

The program is paid for by the state payroll tax for transportation. Resi-dents who bring in proof of employment can purchase cards stamped with the address of their workplace, to use as payment for rides to and from that address.

Prices vary depending on whether the card is good for transportation within a certain city/ZIP code or between cities, but a Herm-iston-to-Hermiston card is \$2.50 per ride, with the state payroll tax funds picking up the other 65% of the cost.

Rides are provided by Hermiston Taxi Company,

which also provides rides for a similar voucher pro-gram for senior and dis-abled residents that has been in place for several years. Smith said the city hopes people will mix and match the taxi programs with the HART, a free public bus ser-vice in Hermiston that runs from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

“For example, a teenager who doesn’t have a license but works an evening fast food shift could take the bus to work in the afternoon and then use a WORC taxi ticket to get home later at night,” he said. “This maximizes use of the taxi program rather than adding addi-tional bus routes late into the evening when there are fewer riders.”

Anyone interested in WORC tickets can purchase them in sets of 10 at Herm-iston City Hall, 180 N.E. Sec-ond St. They must provide proof of employment.

Fall colors in Umatilla County



Courtesy photo
Barbara Morehead of Pilot Rock took this fall scene just outside the small town of Ukiah. Fall-like weather will remain in the Pendleton area this week with temperatures in the mid-50s to low 60s, according to the National Weather Service.

BRIEFLY

Statewide trail grant advisory committee seeks volunteers to fill vacancies

SALEM — The Oregon Parks and Rec-reation Department is seeking volunteers for three positions on the Recreation Trails Program Grants Advisory Committee. The upcoming vacancies include biking

representative, off-highway vehicle repre-sentative and accessibility representative.

The 10-member committee typically meets once or twice per year to evaluate grant proposals for statewide trail projects. Mem-bers serve three-year terms and success-ful candidates will begin their terms Jan. 1. Members are eligible to serve a second term.

The interest form deadline is Nov. 30.

— EO Media Group

EOU online enrollment climbs

By JESSICA POLLARD
East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — On par with national trends — which saw more than 350,000 stu-dents enroll in online courses in 2017, according to the National Center for Data Sta-tistics — online enrollment at Eastern Oregon University is on the rise.

A press release from the La Grande-based university said that the school’s online undergraduate student head-count is up 7% this fall from last year. In total, the univer-sity currently has 3,067 total undergraduates and nearly 1,250 of those are studying online or off-campus.

“We pride ourselves on being a university of access, and online classes we see as an equity issue. A lot of people are geographically left out if they’re not near a university,” said David Vande Pol, executive direc-tor of regional outreach and innovation.

The university said that by 2029, it hopes to enroll 5,000 full-time equivalent students online and 2,500 on campus.

But while overall head-count from last year is up 3%, that full-time equiva-

lent number has decreased by 38 students from this time last year. It currently sits at 2,133.

Vande Pol and Vice President for University Advancement Tim Seydel both think this has to do with a rise in the number of working students.

“In the online verti-cal of potential students, the vast majority are work-ing adults,” Vande Pol said. “When they’re ready to go back to school, they’re shopping.”

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center recently released a data report that showed 36 million adults in the United States have received some college credit, but never completed school.

That group is a target in a new era of recruitment, which involves increasing outreach to students inter-ested in EOU’s 17 under-graduate and two gradu-ate online degree programs, Vande Pol said.

“We’re absolutely com-mitted to increasing that number of programs,” he said.

The university hired an online recruiter last year, and is using a data-focused approach to reach as many potential pupils as possible, Vande Pol said.

The university also saw an uptick in returning stu-dents, up to 77% from a pre-vious high of 72% in 2016. The freshman cohort is also “slightly larger” than last year’s, according to school. Nearly 90% of those stu-dents, who are Oregon res-idents, graduated from rural high schools.

Seydel anticipates that the addition of baseball and women’s lacrosse programs, which are expected to start competing in spring 2021, could spark regional interest and boost enrollment.

“Adding sports, isn’t just about adding sports,” Seydel said. “It provides scholar-ship opportunities and adds more activity to campus.”

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