

Eastern Oregon University continues to focus on fieldhouse

By KALEB LAY
The Observer

LA GRANDE — With upgrades to their stadium and track complete, Eastern Oregon University continues to focus on the construction of the \$9 million fieldhouse on the south side of campus.

The previous project cost more than \$2.5 million to complete. Work on installing the new turf surface at Community Stadium has been complete for several years, which Tim Seydel, Eastern’s vice president for university advancement, said gave the field an added dimension of versatility.

“We knew for years that, if we could get a turf field, we could use it not just for football for the high school and the college, but we could use it for soccer for the high school and the college, and those are men’s and women’s teams so there’s four more teams you can get on there,” Seydel said.

While the stadium and track upgrades have been, in a word, underutilized this season due to the COVID-19 pandemic making play more unsafe than usual and public health measures restricting high-contact sports, Community Stadium’s use has been sparse in 2020.

But the completion of



Heavy machinery sits beside a large leveled lot next door to Eastern Oregon University’s Community Stadium on Monday, Dec. 7, 2020, where work is underway to build a new fieldhouse that will supplement the university’s sporting programs.

the upgrades to the stadium free up resources for Eastern’s other projects, namely the big addition to EOU’s sports infrastructure — the fieldhouse.

“The fieldhouse, construction for that is underway right now,” Seydel said.

“You can see it over on the south end of campus, and that is going to be really a multipurpose facility.”

The fieldhouse will be a large indoor space containing a partial track and a large turf surface where teams can practice during

the months when outdoor practice becomes difficult due to weather. The space also may be used for university events, such as camps, and will house Eastern’s Health and Human Performance and Outdoor Adventure program.

“I’d love to be able to see it even be used for community access, for folks to be able to get some exercise in there,” Seydel said, “but that’s going to be a whole other step. We’re going to get the facility built first.”

Seydel said the funds

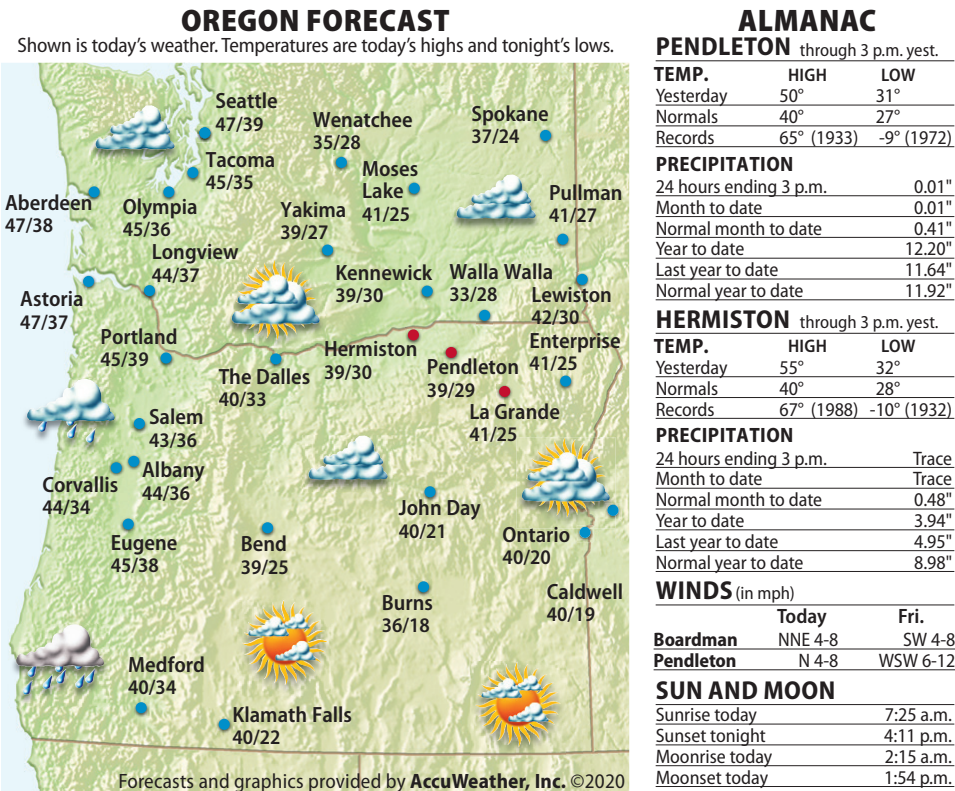
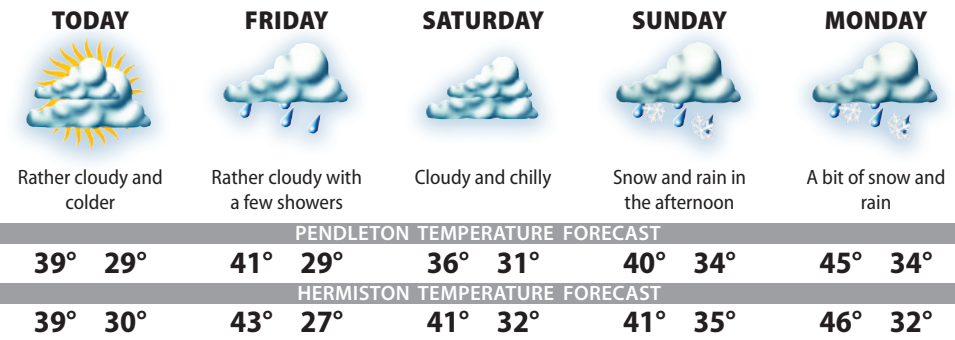
from building the roughly \$9 million facility would be staying in the community. Mike Becker General Contractor, Inc., of La Grande is handling the construction of the fieldhouse, he said, and holding events in the facility would bring revenue to the rest of the community.

Seydel cited the increased revenue for local contractors, the potential for increased traffic at local restaurants and hospitality venues and an increase in quality of the campus environment as arguments that the fieldhouse was a good investment.

“There’s not a lot of projects that size in this area, so it’s great we’re able to work with local contractors and subcontractors to do a lot of the work for the fieldhouse,” Seydel said. “And again, a facility that size brings people to the community, helps bring enrollments to the university, which ultimately benefits the community, as well as having just a great university and campus environment.”

The project is in its infancy, and some issues, such as occupancy, still have to be ironed out before the fieldhouse can be widely used. However, it is certain to permanently improve the landscape of EOU sports in the long term.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

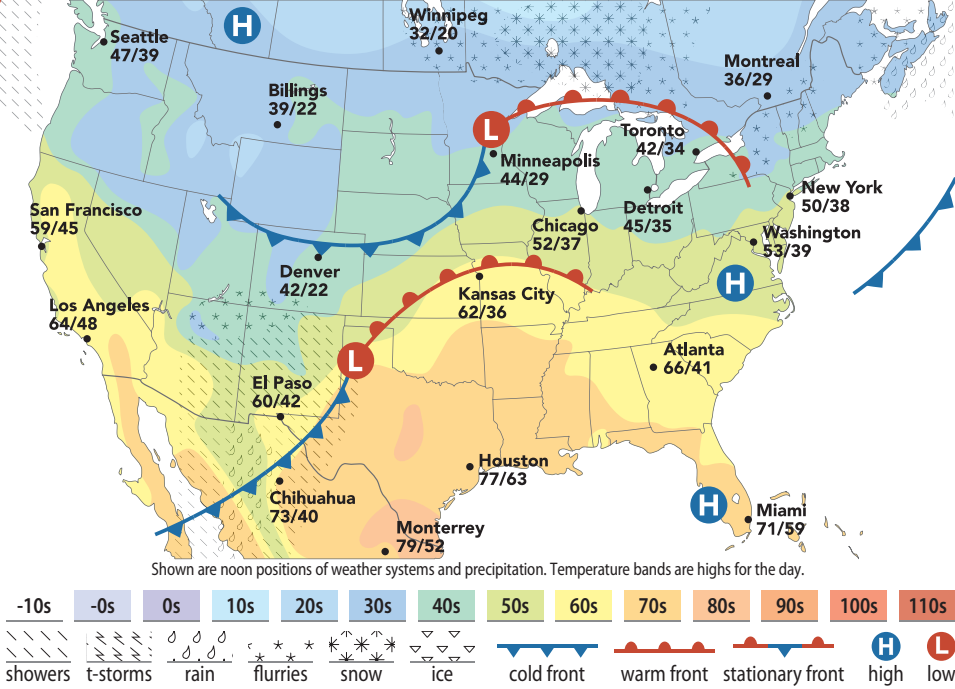


NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 86° in Kingsville, Texas Low -10° in Yellowstone N.P., Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



DEQ fines Pendleton business \$7,200 for violations in La Grande

By PHIL WRIGHT
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A Pendleton business faces a state fine of \$7,200 for environmental violations in La Grande.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality recently reported issuing civil penalties in October against six businesses, including Sheldon Petroleum Services, 811 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, for failing to submit a work plan for failing to take corrective actions after it decommissioned a heating oil tank in La Grande.

Sheldon Petroleum Services in May 2019 decommissioned an underground storage tank at 1602 Walnut St., La Grande. Tests of groundwater at the site revealed oil was leaking from the tank.

Sheldon Petroleum was also fined \$16,800 in August for similar violations in Hood

River and The Dalles.

The company in July of that year reported it removed the tank and contaminated soil, but according to the DEQ’s “Notice of Civil Penalty Assessment and Order” of Oct. 27, 2020, those reports did not include receipts for the removal and disposal of the tank, piping or the soil.

The environment department rejected the reports and in August 2019 asked Sheldon Petroleum to submit a plan for additional work at the property. The company, however, told the state it was done working at the site.

The DEQ in December 2019, according to the enforcement notice, again informed Sheldon Petroleum it had rejected the July reports and asked for a work plan “to delineate the full extent and magnitude of soil and groundwater contamination at the property.” The company submitted a plan on Dec. 20, but the plan did not provide full details of

the work to deal with the contamination.

The DEQ in the notice detailed how it calculated the \$7,200 fine, which included the magnitude of the violation and the finding that Sheldon Petroleum Services “failed to take reasonable care to avoid a foreseeable risk of conduct constituting a violation.”

Lauren Wirtis, spokesperson for DEQ, explained Sheldon Petroleum has not appealed or paid the fine. The company had 20 calendar days from Oct. 29, when it received the notice, to request a hearing, which would be the first step in the appeals process. Wirtis said, “Those 20 days have lapsed.”

The six penalties in October totaled \$127,12, and ranged from \$412 for a Clean Fuels Program violation in Salem to a \$93,409 against DepCom Power Inc. of Salem for polluting wetlands and other waterways in Estacada.

IN BRIEF

Baker County Search and Rescue volunteers rescue couple stuck in snow

BAKER CITY — A Baker County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue team rescued two people on Monday, Dec. 7, after their vehicle got stuck in snow along the Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway between Granite and Anthony Lakes.

Sean Belknap, 28, and Shanda McDonald, 29, were on a 10-day road trip from San Diego, and they were using a scenic byway map as a guide, according to a press release from the sheriff’s office.

With the map they plotted a course from Granite to Anthony Lakes. Most of that roughly 23-mile section of the paved byway is not maintained during the winter, when several feet of snow can fall at higher elevations.

Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash said Belknap and McDonald had driven from Ukiah to the North Fork John Day River using the Blue Mountains Scenic Byway, which ends at its junction with the Elkhorn Drive byway.

They turned east on that road, which

climbs more than 2,000 feet to the Elkhorn Summit near Anthony Lakes. At 7,392 feet, it’s the second-highest point reached by a paved road in Oregon, surpassed only by the Rim Drive in Crater Lake National Park, which tops out around 7,900 feet.

The other route on Road 73 leads south about 9 miles to Granite. That section of the road loses elevation rather than ascending the Elkhorn Mountains.

Ash received a call from the Grant County Sheriff’s Office regarding a Toyota pickup truck that was stuck in the snow. That section of the byway is in Grant County.

Ash, along with three Search and Rescue volunteers, set up a command post at the Grande Ronde Sno-Park, near Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort. Volunteers traveling in side-by-side ATVs with tracks instead of tires drove about 6 miles to reach the vehicle.

Belknap and McDonald, after getting stuck in the four-wheel drive truck, had activated the emergency beacon on a tracking device they had, which alerted police to their location.

Neither was hurt, nor was their dog, Maisy. They were taken to a Baker City motel.

—EO Media Group

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