

Walla Walla ag-focused tech company wins award

By KATY NESBITT
For the East Oregonian

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — Harvust, a Walla Walla agriculture-focused tech company, attracted national attention when its owners were recognized as the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 2021 Entrepreneur of the Year — an honor that came with a \$50,000 prize.

The annual Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge is a business competition with a mission to identify startups creating the most meaningful impact on the ag industry, Riley Clubb, Harvust co-owner, said.

“We were not looking for competitions when this came across our inbox,” Clubb said, “but we have a good working relationship with the Washington Bureau and applying helped us tell our story.”

Harvust is a smartphone safety and communications software application designed for farms. Clubb said the pandemic accelerated the need for their app that can be used by farm workers remotely. From their phone, they can watch training videos or receive messages and communicate with supervisors from a safe distance.

His partner, James Hall,



Clubb

Hall

said the Harvust app was a good fit for a competition that looked for startups helping the agriculture industry deal with COVID-19.

“We got to thinking about the competition and it seemed we were a natural fit,” Hall said.

The partners are using their cash prize to reach out to farmers beyond the Walla Walla Valley and market their app.

“We are looking to build real relationships with each state and introduce ourselves to farm bureaus across the country,” Hall said.

The networking has already begun — Clubb said California farmers have already reached out and they have shared their technology with Oregonians as well.

Hall said he and Clubb want to grow their burgeoning business, but they expect the growth will be slow as they bone up on each state’s individual laws.

Hall said, “We want to make sure we are conducting business that is compliant and



Harvust/Contributed Photo

Farm workers can use the Harvust app to watch training videos and receive messages from supervisors from the safety of the field, as opposed to group meetings.

in line with rules and regs of each state.”

Clubb said to qualify for the competition applicants could not have previously raised capital through professional investors.

“We are growing out of a rural place,” he said. “We aren’t a Silicon Valley startup.”

Hall said the prize money will allow Harvust to hire staff to help them reach out to farmers across the country, making an impact on rural economies.

“There are certain categories of employers who find Harvust useful,” he said, “Typically, farms with 50 or

so employees who are hiring their first human resources staffer or their current human resource staff (are) overwhelmed.”

Hall described the Harvust app as a “forced multiplier.”

“It allows one person to do the work of two,” he said.

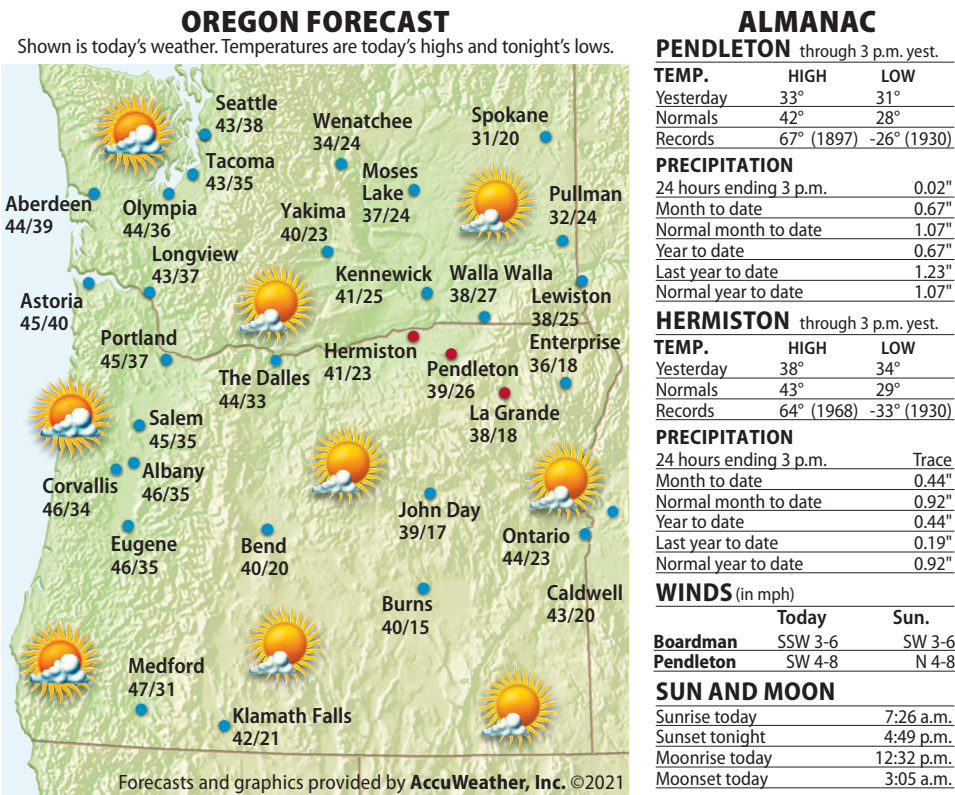
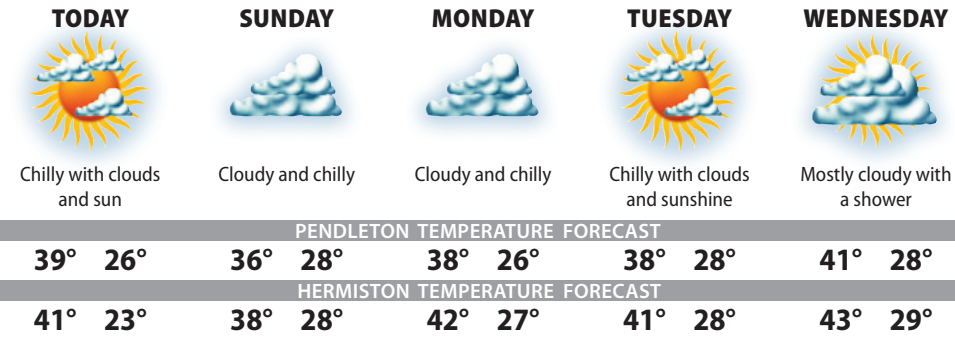
Harvust handles all new on-farm rules, regulations and paperwork requirements. It allows managers to communicate, share information and provide safety training through messages and videos viewable on a handheld device. This distanced learning and communication tool is especially useful when workers are under COVID-19 restrictions that Hall said aren’t going away. He said the app was also useful to employers in helping them alert workers to the hazards of poor air quality during last summer’s wildfires.

“There was a whole new set of rules regarding smoke and air quality,” Hall said. “Farmers will be able to comply and make sure their workforce is safe.”

Hall said the app is a human resource tool like Quickbooks is for accountants — an easy-to-use program that allows farm workers to fill out their hiring paperwork, read and sign off on policies and procedures, and attend training — all from their phone.

Harvust distributes training information in several ways — via messages in the worker’s preferred language, or as an audio translation so those who struggle with literacy are not left behind.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

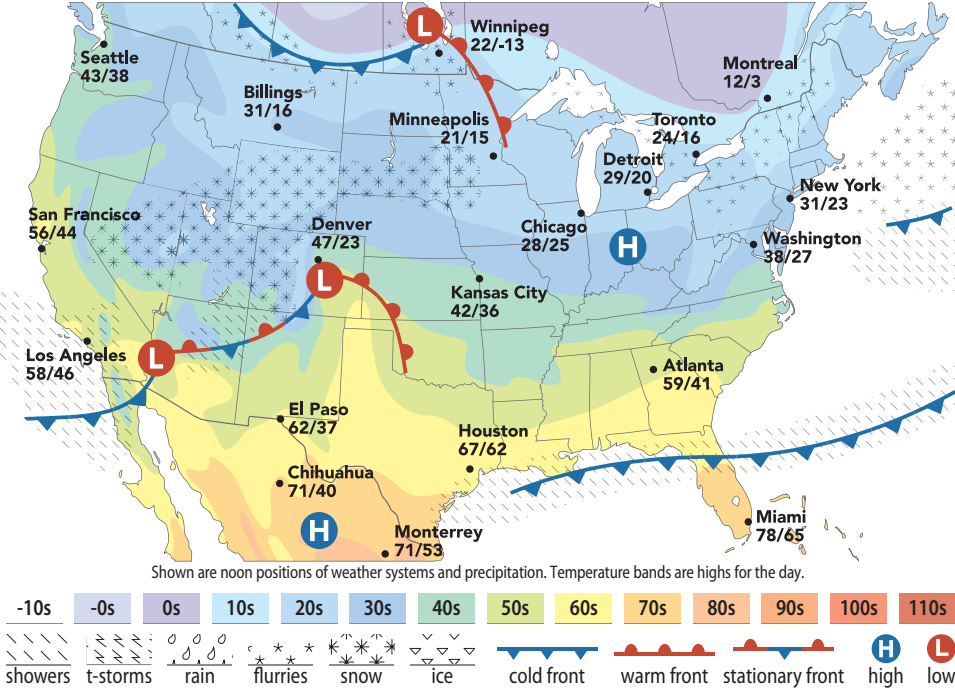


NATIONAL EXTREMES

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

High 84° in Zapata, Texas Low -20° in Kabetogama, Minn.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Umatilla National Forest selects a new deputy forest supervisor

Heidi McRoberts' new role will begin in March

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Umatilla National Forest will soon have a new deputy forest supervisor.

Heidi McRoberts will step into the new role, according to a press release, effective March 14. McRoberts currently serves as a fish biologist on the Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forest.

“The Umatilla is fortunate to have such a highly qualified individual who is so familiar with our communities and landscape join the Forest in this leadership role,” said Umatilla National Forest Supervisor Eric Watrud. “Her skills and background are an outstanding complement to the priority work the Forest has underway and the interests of the communities and partners that we serve.”

McRoberts brings a variety of experience to the

Umatilla National Forest, including a strong natural resources background and experience working with a variety of Tribal governments, County Commissioners, partners, public stakeholders, and several National Forests.

Since 2019, McRoberts has worked as a fish biologist on the Forest Plan Revision team for the Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forest, helping to develop and write the plan. This position also requires her to coordinate with other federal agencies and a variety of external stakeholders to understand differing interests and develop the plan components to meet multiple use needs.

Prior to this position, McRoberts spent 22 years working for the Nez Perce Tribe, including 10 years as deputy director for the Department of Fisheries



McRoberts

Resource Management/Watershed Division. During her time with the Nez Perce Tribe, McRoberts was responsible for leading a large and geographically dispersed department, managing a complex budget, and working with a variety of federal agencies, including 13 National Forests, Tribes, state and local government and private interest groups. She said the position provided extensive experience in collaboration and partnership development, and a thorough understanding of forest management.

McRoberts has a masters in fisheries resources from the University of Idaho and is currently working toward a doctorate in natural resources and society from the University of Idaho.

“I look forward to serving as the Umatilla National Forest’s Deputy Forest Supervisor,” McRoberts said. “I am eager to meet the forest staff and build relationships with the communities and our partners throughout the area in this new role.”

IN BRIEF

Man accused of using bear spray on journalists charged

SEATTLE — A Seattle man, who is accused of using bear spray on two photojournalists and threatening a newspaper reporter during the Jan. 6 protests started by former President Donald Trump’s supporters at the Washington state Capitol, has been charged.

Damon Huseman was charged on Jan. 11 with two counts of second-degree assault and one count of felony harassment. He is accused of spraying the faces of a freelance photographer and a video journalist with bear spray and incapacitating the men for hours, according to the charging documents.

Huseman is also accused in the charging

documents of lunging at a reporter in an attempt to grab her cellphone and threatening her and other journalists, at one point saying, “We’re going to shoot you (expletive) dead in the next year.”

Huseman was armed with an assault-style rifle, a handgun and a knife, the *Seattle Times* reported. His defense attorney, Danielle Walker, said the 26-year-old had the right to be armed and noted he was not accused of pointing or firing his weapons at anyone. Walker entered Huseman’s not guilty pleas on all three of his charges.

Huseman’s defense attorney also said her client had no criminal history and has lived in the Seattle area for about eight years.

— Associated Press

CORRECTION: In the Page A1 story “COVID-19 vaccinations continue at Yellowhawk,” published Tuesday, Jan. 19, the story misstated that Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center has received 2,050 vials of the COVID-19 vaccine in total and had 1,069 more vials in stock. The health center received 2,050 doses in total and has 1,069 doses in stock.

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