

Loso Hall renovation work nearing completion

Bonds paid for the \$5.5 million renovation that began in July

By **DICK MASON**
La Grande Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University's Loso Hall has been closed to the public since mid-March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the university later reopens the 31-year-old building, community residents will find a renovated structure with technology adding a touch of theater magic — and a place where people with mobility issues will enjoy new freedom.

Both will show the evidence of \$5.5 million of renovation work to the performing arts building, which began in July 2020 and is nearing its final act.

"Most of the work will be completed by April," said Jon Fowler, project superintendent for Kirby Nagelhout Construction, the general contractor for the Loso Hall remodeling, which is funded by the sale of state bonds.

Many of the renovations focus on boosting accessibility to Loso Hall's two theaters — McKenzie and Schwarz.



Alex Wittwer/La Grande Observer

Brody Kincade, a contractor with Kirby Nagelhout Construction, removes protective paper covering the carpet on Feb. 23, 2021, at Loso Hall during the ongoing renovation of the building on the campus of Eastern Oregon University.

McKenzie Theatre will have an elevator the physically challenged can take to the upper level of its first tier of seating. This will give people who normally only get to see performances at stage level a chance to view productions from a higher perspective, Fowler said.

Those with mobility issues will be able to watch performances at one of six sites that accommodate wheelchair users and their companions.

Creating space for viewing sites within the theater's regular seating area was a heavy-weight task.

"We had to remove 40,000 pounds of concrete," Fowler said.

Another McKenzie accessibility addition involved the installation of wide pathways leading to the stage at the two first-floor side entrances. The wider paths make it easier for people with mobility issues to get to the stage.

At Schwarz Theatre, accessibility also is getting a dramatic boost, where the stage now is level with the floor. Previously the seating area was sloped and above the stage.

Renovation work in Schwarz also includes the addition of a motorized turntable stage that can rotate to alter sets during performances.

"It will make it possible to change scenes quickly," said

EOU theater professor Mike Heather.

The turntable can allow actors to appear to trek long distances as sets representing different regions circle past.

Heather said he believes Schwarz Theatre may be the only one in Eastern Oregon with a turntable stage. Such turntables are normally only in theaters in much larger areas.

Other renovation work includes the installation of cameras and viewing screens for people to see productions throughout Loso Hall. For example, if a performance at McKenzie Theatre is sold out, people will be able to view it live on a large screen in Schwarz Theatre.

Operating the lighting and curtains at McKenzie Theatre also will be easier because of technological upgrades. Previously, all the theater's curtains had to be lowered and raised by hand, a challenging process because of their weight. Now, this can be done electronically with the push of a button, Fowler said, in just 24 seconds.

And new heat sensors mean curtains drop automatically in case of a fire, preventing it from spreading.

Other electronic upgrades will make it easier to alter sound and lighting during productions. Making this

possible has involved the installation of an extensive amount of new wiring in protective pipes.

"We added miles and miles of conduit," Fowler said.

Keeping the conduit out of sight while maintaining the integrity of Loso Hall was an enormous challenge. Fowler called it the hardest part of the renovation process and said determining how to best install the wiring kept him up at night.

Upgrading Loso Hall's aging infrastructure, including its heating, cooling and ventilation systems, also has been part of the renovation project.

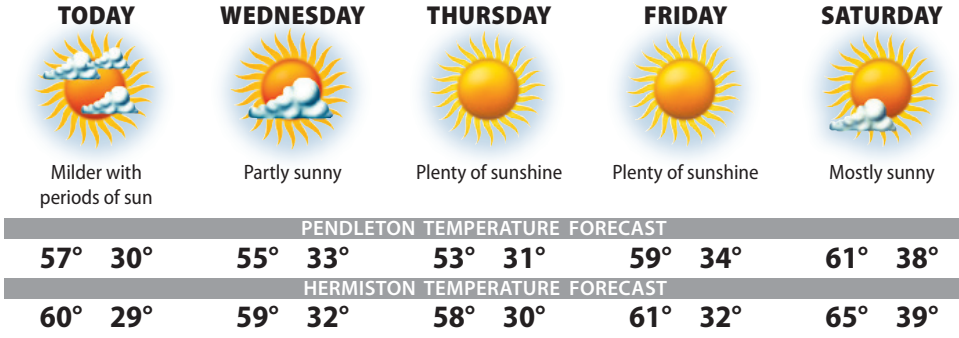
Much of the remodeling has been accomplished while classes were in session at EOU. David Moore, EOU's capital projects manager, credited Nagelhout Construction with doing a good job of working in an unobtrusive manner that did not have an effect on classes during fall and winter terms.

"We never received any complaints from professors," he said.

The capital projects manager said many on campus and in the community are eager to see the Loso Hall upgrades.

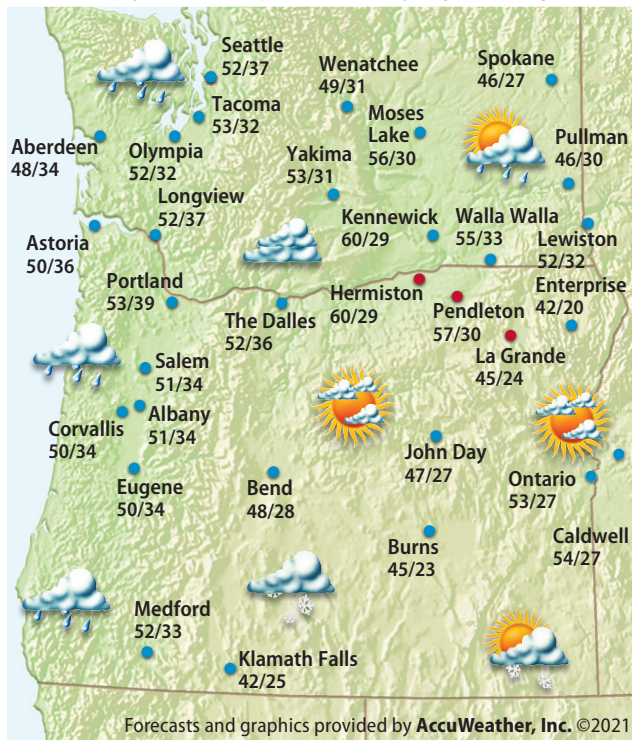
"There is some excitement building for sure," Moore said.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	43°	32°
Normals	53°	34°
Records	73° (2004)	18° (1897)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.04"
Normal month to date 0.29"
Year to date 3.06"
Last year to date 4.32"
Normal year to date 2.80"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	49°	32°
Normals	55°	32°
Records	72° (2005)	15° (1931)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.04"
Normal month to date 0.26"
Year to date 1.12"
Last year to date 0.38"
Normal year to date 2.50"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Wed.
Boardman	E 3-6	WSW 4-8
Pendleton	S 6-12	W 6-12

SUN AND MOON
Sunrise today 6:19 a.m.
Sunset tonight 5:53 p.m.
Moonrise today 4:54 a.m.
Moonset today 1:50 p.m.

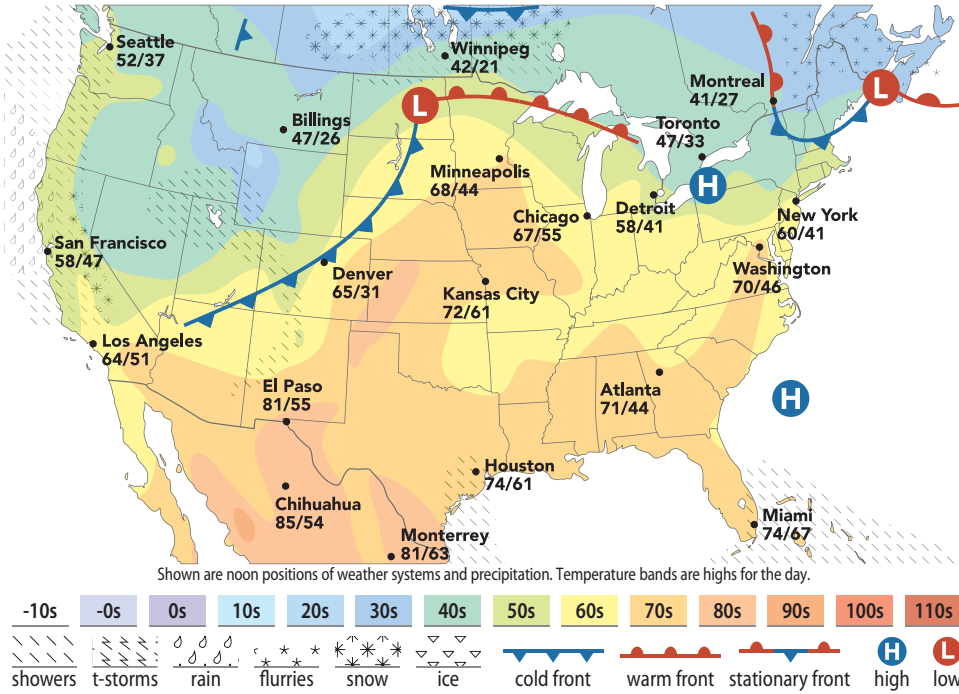
MOON PHASES

	New	First	Full	Last
	Mar 13	Mar 21	Mar 28	Apr 4

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 86° in Phoenix, Ariz. Low -18° in Saranac Lake, N.Y.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Eastern Oregon tourism gets a boost

La Grande Observer

PORTLAND — The Oregon Tourism Commission, which does business as Travel Oregon, awarded \$913,000 to 34 projects across the state. More than \$125,000 went to five projects in Eastern Oregon.

The grants are for "the development, enhancement and stewardship of key visitor experiences that are COVID-19 appropriate," according to the press release from Travel Oregon, "will aid in economic recovery, enhance local livability and provide access to a diversity of explorers through the Destination Ready program."

Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon, in the release stated the projects are crucial in ensuring visitors and Oregonians have access to safe and enjoyable experiences as the commission rebuilds Oregon's tourism economy while navigating the pandemic.

In Eastern Oregon, the following are the amounts, recipients and purpose of the awards:

- \$21,711 to the Greater Hells Canyon Council to help with mapping and trail maintenance operations for The Blue Mountains Trail, a 556-mile thru-hiking experience through Northeast Oregon.
- \$20,000 to the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association for land stewardship and maintenance efforts to prepare Eastern Oregon's most visited public lands for the coming season, including the Wallowa Whitman National Forest, The Owyhee Region, The Steens Mountain Wilderness and the Alvord Desert.
- \$24,500 to the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association for updates to six Eastern Oregon Farm Trail brochures with distribution, and creation of a new on-the-ground kiosk.
- \$25,000 to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to make infrastructure and accessibility improvements to establish Marr Pond as the only Americans With Disabilities Act accessible fishing facility in Wallowa County.
- \$35,000 to the city of John Day to create a community "pit stop" with food truck stalls, improved parking and new public restrooms.

IN BRIEF

Couple accused of stealing truck from state police compound in Baker City

BAKER CITY — Oregon State Police arrested a Yakima, Washington, couple on Wednesday, March 3, on multiple charges, including the theft last month of a truck containing drugs and stolen property that had been kept as evidence at the OSP compound in Baker City.

The two are accused of trying to destroy the vehicle after driving it through the locked fence at the OSP compound and continuing to the residential area of Baker City, where they allegedly set fire to the truck early on Feb. 22.

Mark Timmy Caoile, 44, and Carole Daniel DeRoche, 45, who identified herself to police as Caoile's fiancée, were arraigned on Thursday, March 4, in Baker County Circuit Court by visiting Judge Daniel J. Hill, who serves Umatilla and Morrow counties, on charges related to the investigation.

Caoile is accused of six crimes: first-degree criminal mischief, unauthorized use of

a motor vehicle and second-degree arson, all Class C felonies; tampering with physical evidence and unlawful possession of a cannabinoid extract, both Class A misdemeanors; and second-degree criminal trespassing, a Class C misdemeanor.

Hill ordered Caoile held in lieu of \$61,500 bail, to be released upon posting 10% (\$6,150).

DeRoche was charged with four crimes: unauthorized use of a vehicle, a Class C felony; and the Class A misdemeanors of possession of a burglary tool or theft device (two counts) and tampering with physical evidence.

Hill ordered DeRoche held in lieu of \$25,000 bail, to be released upon posting 10% (\$2,500).

Michael Spaulding, chief deputy district attorney for Baker County, said the case is still under review and will be presented to a grand jury this week for consideration of other charges.

Caoile and DeRoche are scheduled to return to court at 1 p.m. on Thursday, March 11, for a probable cause preliminary hearing, court records state.

—EO Media Group

CORRECTIONS: 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.

In the Page A5 public safety report, published Tuesday, March 2, 2021, Oregon State Police referred information to the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office to consider charging Avery Bell with driving under the influence of intoxicants. State police also referred information to the district attorney to consider charging Jaden Lee Bell, 20, with hindering prosecution.

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