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THE WEEK
IN PHOTOS
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EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Chuck Sams poses for a portrait on Friday, March 12, 2021. Recently appointed to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, Gov. Kate Brown has also recommended him to serve as National Parks Service director.

OUT OF THE BLUE

Chuck Sams takes job on regional council while up for job in Biden administration

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

MISSION — A longtime administrator with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation has been tapped for a job with broad influence over regional energy and environmental conservation. But an even bigger job could be in store for him.

The CTUIR announced on Monday, March 8, that Chuck Sams was leaving his role as the interim executive director of the Tribes to fill a seat on the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. Gov. Kate Brown appointed him to the council, but she's also backing him for another appointment: a job in the Biden administration as the director of the National Parks Service.

A surprising nomination

According to Sams, 50, the offer for his latest job came out of the blue.

A few weeks ago, Sams was playing soccer with his young daughter when his phone rang. He didn't recognize the number so he let it go to voicemail. When he played the message, his daughter recognized the governor's voice.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Chuck Sams, then the communications director for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, gives local high school athletes some insight on tribal history and beliefs in 2018.

"You might want to give her a call back, Dad," she told her father.

When he connected with Brown and she offered him a seat on the council, he was surprised. The pair had talked about appointments to other bodies in the past, but the Northwest Power and Conservation Council wasn't one of them.

But for Sams, the offer had appeal.

Between stints in tribal government, Sams was the director for several energy and environmentally focused nonprofits, including the Columbia Slough Watershed Council, the Earth Conservation Corps and the Commu-

nity Energy Project.

Sams, an enrolled member of the CTUIR, climbed the ladder in tribal government after returning home in 2012, culminating in a second stint as interim executive director when Ted Wright resigned in late 2020. Despite the opportunity, Sams quickly told the CTUIR Board of Trustees that he would not consider the job on a permanent basis.

Sams said he was already starting to think about other opportunities outside tribal government, including a return to

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Family not guilty of violating 'stay home' resolution

Tribal civil hearing sparked by First Foods celebration in 2020

By WIL PHINNEY
For the East Oregonian

MISSION — Seventeen people cited for violating COVID-19 social gathering restrictions during a 2020 Easter day feast were found not guilty on Tuesday, March 9, by Associate Tribal Judge Dave Gallaher.

The ruling followed a 90-minute civil hearing in Tribal Court last week on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

The "stay home" resolution had been issued in March 2020 by the Board of Trustees (BOT) for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). Violation of the resolution carried a potential sentence of a year

in jail or a maximum fine of \$5,000. However, the 17 were cited as a civil matter rather than arrested on criminal charges, so jail would not have been ordered, and a fine would be substantially less than \$5,000, Tribal Prosecutor Kyle Daley told the court before any testimony was taken.

Toby Patrick, a CTUIR member, hosted a First Foods celebration on April 26, 2020, with more than two dozen family members at his home on the reservation.

First Foods include water, salmon, deer and elk, roots and berries.

Patrick, who was represented by Robert Klahn, and his longtime partner, Julia Johnson, a Warm Springs tribal member, appeared in Tribal Court while the others appeared telephonically.

Gallaher's ruling hinged on the question of whether Patrick's family feast was an

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County speeds up bridge building

Officials said Thorn Hollow Bridge could be demolished as early as this year

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County residents could see the Thorn Hollow Bridge on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation replaced much sooner than previously anticipated, as county and state officials have made new plans to immediately begin demolishing and rebuilding the flood-damaged roadway.

Officials in a press conference on Wednesday, March 10, said that, if all goes well, what's left of the bridge could be demolished as early as this year, with hopes that construction will follow soon thereafter.

The bridge, which was

damaged and rendered impassable in the aftermath of the Umatilla River flooding in February 2020, sits nearest to the town of Adams. The bridge is part of local school bus routes and is a main access point to Highway 11. The closest alternate river crossing sits about 5 miles west, officials said in the press conference.

Previous schedules suggested that the bridge would take up to seven years to fix. Costs are estimated at around \$5 million. But with the new plans, officials say that demolition could begin as soon as possible, and construction could begin in 2023, four years earlier than once thought.

"Don't tell me these guys didn't work hard," Umatilla County Commissioner Dan Dorran said of officials who worked on the new plans. "These guys did not push

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Restaurant a dream come true

New pho eatery, Haven Pho, 10 years in the making for owner

By BEN LONERGAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — When the Pendleton Quiznos went out of business last year, Lam Ha saw the space as the perfect location for a restaurant dream more than a decade in the making.

Ha's dream came true earlier this month when he opened Haven Pho, a Vietnamese restaurant in place of the former sandwich shop



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Lam Ha adds broth to a pho dish while preparing orders at his restaurant, Haven Pho, on Thursday, March 4, 2021.

location at 204 S.W. 20th St. in Pendleton.

"I planned this like 10 years ago," he said.

Ha, who came to the United States from Vietnam roughly 20 years ago, developed a love for restaurants

while working at his sister's Vietnamese restaurant in Arlington, Texas, and set out on a journey to own one of his own.

Despite his interest in restaurants, Ha has owned and operated nail salons since he moved to the region more than a decade ago, and ran a nail shop in Walla Walla, Washington, before opening Pendleton Nails across the parking lot from his new restaurant about a decade ago.

When a location opened up near his nail salon, Ha said he moved quickly to secure the spot and began renovating the space in September 2020. Ha chose

to name the new restaurant after his 5-year-old son, Haven.

"I looked for a spot, but some were too big or too small," he said. "Because this place is close to the nail shop, I can go back and forth."

Ha said he has wanted to open a Vietnamese restaurant in Pendleton for the better part of the last 10 years because he wanted to bring Vietnamese food and culture to the people of Pendleton.

"I want to open up Vietnamese food so the local people can try different things," he said.

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