



U.S. Forest Service/Contributed Photo

Yellow morel mushrooms are edible and were found in the Umatilla National Forest in 2017.

Forest officials welcome fungi foragers for this year's pickings

By CHLOE LEVALLEY
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

PENDLETON — Mushroom hunting season is underway as the snow recedes in the Blue Mountains and fungi return to the forest floor, the U.S. Forest Service announced earlier this month.

Hunters gathering mushrooms for personal consumption in the Umatilla National Forest need no permit to harvest or transport less than 1 gallon in Oregon or 5 gallons in Washington. A permit is required for people who harvest to sell.

Commercial pickers, who plan to camp in the forest, will also need an industrial camping permit.

Many forest roads are still not accessible due to mud and snow, and traveling on wet mountain roads and terrain can be dangerous and cause resource damage, which can be illegal, according to a release.

"We do still have quite a bit of snow," Public Affairs Officer Darcy Weseman said.

Forest officials advise hunters to check and make sure they know the conditions and road status before heading out.

Some common edible mushrooms found in the Umatilla National Forest include blonde or white morels, fall bolete, blue chanterelle, sheep polypore mushroom and white chanterelle, Weseman said.

"Many wild mushroom varieties are poisonous," the release stated.

Forest officials encourage people to use plant guidebooks or contact their local county extension offices for more information about mushroom varieties.

"When in doubt, throw it out," Weseman said. "With all wild mushrooms, people should not eat or touch them unless they are certain of the identification."

MORE INFORMATION

When picking mushrooms, follow these guidelines:

- Use a knife to cut mushrooms at their base to reduce disturbance to the soil and help mushrooms continue growing in that location.
- Carry mushrooms in a net bag to preserve them and allow spores to spread for future production.
- Give wildlife plenty of space and leave newborns alone.
- Practice "leave no trace" ethics, and take all trash home.
- Commercial mushroom picking is prohibited in wilderness, research, or any closed areas.

For more details, fees and conditions, go to ubne.ws/2qarplG.

City anticipating \$3.6M in stimulus

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Hermiston City Council is holding off on firm decisions about how to spend the \$3.6 million the city anticipates from the American Rescue Plan, but city staff and councilors discussed a list of ideas during their Monday, April 26, meeting.

The latest federal stimulus package, designed to speed recovery from the pandemic, includes direct payments to cities and counties to help make up for lost revenue and spur local recovery programs. City Manager Byron Smith said the city expects to get \$3.6 million — half this summer, and half in summer 2022.

The city has lost about \$800,000 in revenue from the pandemic, mostly from the early shutdown of the aquatic center in summer 2020 and loss of rental fees at city-owned venues, including park shelters and the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center. City Finance Director Mark Krawczyk said department heads have done a "yeoman's job" of only spending on "mission critical" items to try to make up for it, but the losses have still cost the city. In September and October of 2020, the city's general fund dipped below the minimum reserve level set by the council.

"I'm not ready to say we're gonna be back to normal by the end of the fiscal year or even going into the first part

of fiscal 2022 in July, but the signs say, I think, we have bottomed out on our revenue (losses)," Krawczyk said.

Smith told the council he would recommend a part of the ARP funds go into stabilizing the city's general fund to make sure the balance doesn't go below the minimum reserve again.

Another top recommendation by staff was to work with Community Action Program of East Central Oregon to seed a permanent fund to help people pay their utility bills if they are struggling financially. Smith said when the city provided funds to CAPECO last year, using CARES Act dollars, the regional nonprofit did a good job of providing thorough reports to the city on who received help.

"I was very pleased with how it went," he said.

Smith also suggested setting aside some money to assist businesses that were hardest hit by pandemic restrictions.

Beyond that, he said, there are a number of economic development or livability projects the city could put some money into. They could launch the second phase of improvements to the South Hermiston Industrial Park, for example, or start early on a planned project to pave and extend Gettman Road to Highway 395, providing another alternate route across town. The money could also be put toward building another water tank, increasing broadband access

or starting on the West Trails Project that west Umatilla County cities have been planning to stretch along the Umatilla River from the Columbia River to Echo.

With all of those options, however, Smith recommended the council hold off on a decision. The American Rescue Plan has also provided a significant amount of money to various state and federal agencies that will likely be offering up the funds in the form of grants, he said, and grants usually require a local match. Smith said if the city doesn't rush to spend all of the funds immediately, it may be able to leverage some of those funds into a much larger grant.

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Umatilla School District offers summer activities

UMATILLA — Umatilla School District has opened registration for summer learning opportunities, including a six-week summer school.

Students in kindergarten through eighth grade can participate in a mix of traditional summer school and STEAM Camp (science, technology, engineering, art and math) from June 21 to July 29, Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Meals and busing are provided.

Superintendent Heidi Sipe said they will be emphasizing a "screen free summer school" experience, with plenty of hands-on learning, field trips and outdoor activities.

Child care for students from kindergarten through fifth grade is available from June 21 to July 29 from 3:30-7 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Fridays. It is also available Aug. 1-13 from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. Meals are provided.

High school students can participate in credit recovery classes throughout the summer and have an opportunity to apply for summer internships for credit, some of which are paid. High school students interested in applying for an internship should email williamss@umatillasd.org.

Summer learning opportunities are being funded by several grants, Sipe said, and there is room for all of the district's students who would like to participate.

Registration forms and more information can be found at umatilla.k12.or.us/live-feed#1477972.

Firewood permits available May 1

PENDLETON — Personal-use firewood cutting permits from the Umatilla National Forest will be on

LOCAL BRIEFING

sale Saturday, May 1, through Nov. 30.

Permits are \$5 per cord with a minimum purchase of four cords and yearly maximum of 12 per household.

Local vendors will sell firewood permits in four-cord packets with a \$2 fee per packet. Vendors include Walla Walla Ranger District, 1415 W. Rose St., Walla Walla, Washington, 509-522-6290; Pomeroy Ranger District, 71 W. Main St., Pomeroy, Washington, 509-843-1891; and the Supervisor's Office, 72510 Coyote Road, Pendleton, 541-278-3716.

Permit are also available directly from the Forest Service. For more information call 541-278-3716, email r6_umatilla_public_inquiries@fs.fed.us or visit ubne.ws/firewoodinfo.

Permits are not required for tribal members exercising Treaty rights, but they should be in possession of valid enrollment identification when cutting or transporting firewood.

Hermiston vaccine clinic to be held at Catholic church

HERMISTON — A vaccine clinic run by state health officials and several Eastern Oregon groups will be held at the Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church in Hermiston on Friday, April 30, and Saturday, May 1, according to the event's organizer.

The vaccines will be provided and administered by health officials with the Oregon Health Authority and the local Bi-Mart Pharmacy. Also running the event are Hermiston community members with New Horizons, Agape House and the Hermiston Hispanic Advisory Committee.

"We're making a super-human effort to reach out," said Jose Garcia, the founder of New Horizons and chair of the Hermiston Hispanic Advisory Committee who helped organize the clinic. "We'll see how this event is

going to turn out. We're just hopeful it's going to be a massive event."

Oregon Rural Action, a grassroots organization that aims to promote social justice, diversity and the environment in rural Oregon communities, will also be assisting with the clinic, providing personal protective equipment, sanitation and information about COVID-19, Garcia said.

People who wish to receive the vaccine are not required to have health insurance, according to an advertisement provided by Garcia.

Though the clinic is open to anybody who wants a vaccine, Garcia and other community members have been reaching out via Spanish radio shows and advertisements to encourage Hispanic and Latino residents throughout Eastern Oregon to get vaccinated.

Hermiston School District reopens Wellness Clinic

HERMISTON — The Hermiston School District and Good Shepherd Health Care System opened the Wellness Clinic at Hermiston High School on April 21.

Staffed by Good Shepherd Urgent Care medical providers, the clinic will be open to students, district staff and children of staff on Mondays from 8 a.m. to noon and Wednesdays from noon to 4 p.m. Services include diagnosis and treatment of illness, vaccines, routine checkups and sports physicals.

For students that are under 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian must sign a parental consent form and complete a medical history form and return it to the clinic before the student can receive care. If insurance is available, the clinic will bill the insurance company.

Call 541-667-6199 to schedule an appointment or walk in during hours of operation.

—EO Media Group and Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

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