

EAST OREGONIAN

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WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT

More money needed

Sen. Jeff Merkley wants \$1 billion to make forests less vulnerable

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley said last week he will lobby the Biden administration to spend at least \$1 billion more per year for logging, prescribed burning and other work to make federal forests in Oregon and elsewhere less vulnerable to wildfires during a future when climate change is likely to heighten that threat.



Merkley

“Forests are the heart of Oregon’s identity,” Merkley, a Democrat, said during an online press conference Thursday, May 27. “We have got to do a lot to restore our forests, to make much more substantial investments in forest management.”

Merkley said he hopes to push his campaign for more aggressive forest management from his position as chairman of the Senate Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Subcommittee, which he has held since February.

Merkley convened an appropriations hearing on May 26 where he advocated for the federal government to boost spending on forest management.

Vicki Christiansen, chief of the U.S. Forest Service, the federal agency that manages much of the public forests in Northeastern Oregon, testified before the subcommittee.

Merkley said one of his chief goals is to double federal spending, from \$40 million to \$80 million, for “collaborative” projects on national forests.

Those are projects that Merkley said are designed to bring together traditional “rivals,” such as environmental groups and timber industry representatives, to work together to promote solutions that both support.

Merkley said that in the 2018 federal farm bill he included authorization to double spending on forest collaboratives — which he described as the “antidote to the timber wars.”

But the next step — indeed, the vital step — is to actually include that money in the Forest Service’s budget.

During the May 26 hearing before the subcommittee, Merkley

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OREGON LEGISLATURE

Two Pendleton-centric bills greenlighted

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature is clearing the way for the city of Pendleton to enact two new policies that require a change in state law.

On May 18, the Legislature passed House Bill 2160, a bill that will allow the city to expand its urban growth boundary for affordable housing projects. A week later, lawmakers followed up by

passing Senate Bill 315, which will give the city the authority to block disclosure of all public records relating to the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range if they create a competitive disadvantage.

State Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, who was a chief sponsor on both bills along with state Rep.



Corbett



Levy



Hansell

with lawmakers and other interested parties before and during the legislative session to address any concerns.

Legislature OKs Pendleton expansion bill

Second time was the charm for Pendleton’s urban growth bill, which seemed slated for passage in 2020 before the Republican walk-outs over cap-and-trade legislation

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Sunlight silhouettes a Pendleton High School graduate Saturday, May 29, 2021, as he prepares to enter the Pendleton Round-Up Arena for graduation. More than 170 Pendleton High seniors and their families celebrated the commencement at the Round-Up Grounds.

MOVING ON

Pendleton High grads ‘overcome adversity’ of turbulent times

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — They endured the monotony of online classes. They spent months stuck at home, away from friends, teachers and coaches. And when they returned to school, things weren’t quite how they used to

be, with masks, social distancing and off-kilter schedules to curb the spread of COVID-19. Many struggled through the uncertain year.

But on Saturday, May 29, a windless, clear and warm day in Pendleton, they moved their tassels from right to left. After an undoubtedly turbulent end to their high school learning, the Pendleton High School Class of 2021 was moving on.

More than 170 students received their diplomas at the school’s commencement at

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Spectators fill the stands Saturday, May 29, 2021, at the Pendleton Round-Up Arena as more than 170 Pendleton High School graduates and their families celebrate commencement.

Veterans, families turn out for Memorial Day services

By JADE MCDOWELL AND ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — As the sound of the Taps bugle call echoed across the Hermiston Cemetery on Memorial Day, more than 600 American flags waved gently behind the crowd standing in silent attention.

The flags aren’t mere decoration — anyone who knows where to look can find the name on each flag of an area veteran who has died.

“My dad’s flag is out here someplace,” David Marks said after the memorial ceremony finished. “My uncle’s flag is out here. I’ve been in town long enough to know a lot of the people on the flags, if I can find them.”

Marks, an Army veteran himself,



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

A member of VFW Post 1123 salutes during the national anthem Monday, May 31, 2021, at a Memorial Day service at the Hermiston Cemetery.

said he enjoyed the service at the cemetery the morning of Monday, May 31. The event included patriotic songs from Hermiston High School’s choir and band programs, and several ceremonial honors for veterans, including the reading of names of local veterans who died since the American Legion and VFW last held the ceremony in 2019 (it was canceled in 2020 due to COVID-19).

Pastor Dean Hackett of Living Faith Church, an Air Force veteran, spoke at the event, telling the story of Charles Plumb.

Plumb was a “top gun” naval pilot who completed 74 combat missions over Vietnam from the USS Kitty Hawk. On his 75th mission, his plane was hit by a surface-to-air missile and he

ejected, parachuting into enemy territory. He was captured and spent six years as a prisoner of war, tortured and beaten.

After he was freed, Hackett said, a man approached him at a restaurant one day and exclaimed, “You’re Charlie Plumb!” Plumb didn’t recognize the man, who proceeded to tell him that he had packed his parachute.

Hackett said Plumb later said he laid awake that night, thinking about the man who saved his life by packing his parachute correctly, wondering how many times he had passed him on the ship and not bothered to say hello, because he was a fighter pilot and the man was “just” a sailor.

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