

# Hot rods: 'This is the funnest car I've ever had'

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thing went," Seaholm said. "We couldn't be happier with the way that the town received us and how everything went smoothly and there was no trouble with anything."

For some, HotRod-A-Rama was a day trip starting at 3 a.m., while others, including Wilkinson and his friends, one day wasn't enough. Attendees were welcomed with multiple days of events, from a "meat and greet" and drive-in movie on July 29 to a swap meet that had old classics filling the streets July 30.

Pendleton on July 31 barricaded off Main Street so that, if selected by invitation, attendees could show their cars and line up among the downtown's historical red brick buildings.

"It's not about coming and getting a trophy like a lot of shows," Seaholm said, adding that it's mostly the people who make the event special.

"They're really, really great people," he said.

For Joe Debattista and Bill Ganahl of South City Rod & Custom in Hayward, California, the renowned show was well worth the trek. They drove three of their cars, a '40 Ford convertible, a '40 Willys Tech American and a '57 Chevy 150, well in excess of 700 miles from the Bay Area.

"It's restarting an old show, that was a good show," Ganahl said. "We wanted to come out and support it."

With quarantine and COVID-19 keeping car shows closed down for much of the last year and a half, this was the first opportunity for many, like Ganahl, to get back on the hot rod circuit that had raised him.

Ganahl, whose father was the former editor of Hot Rod



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Show attendees admire an all-steel 1940 Willys at HotRod-A-Rama in Pendleton on Saturday, July 31, 2021.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Jimmy Jeffries poses for a portrait Saturday, July 31, 2021, in his latest project car "Phat Betty" at HotRod-A-Rama in Pendleton.

Magazine, had grown up around cars and hot rods but had never intended to start South City Rod & Custom.

"I actually went to college and studied English literature, got a master's degree in English literature, and then decided to be a grease monkey instead," he said.

Debattista, meanwhile, also went to college and worked a government job

before getting tired of the rat race and followed his love of cars.

"Now I get to do something I love," Debattista said.

For some, car shows are an opportunity to show off their pride and passion, while for others it is a time to let loose and have fun. In the parking lot of Heritage Station Museum, Jimmy Jeffries parked his beat-up,

spray-painted and tiki-inspired 1951 Chevy Styleline.

With the top removed and a bamboo umbrella shading a manikin in the back seat, Jeffries' car stood out among the muscle cars and low-riding hot rods. Jeffries, who started adding knickknacks to the car with his wife, such as an ooga horn and a "do not touch" button that sprayed water at people, just wanted to release some pressure and not worry about having the nicest car.

"We just have so much fun," he said. "This is the funnest car I've ever had."

"There's great camaraderie," said Wilkinson, who drove to Pendleton with Jeffries from Puyallup. "We're just sitting all over here just having a good time meeting new people."

The revival of the HotRod-A-Rama was such a good time, in fact, that Dale Seaholm said the event would return next year and be even bigger and better.

"We will be back," Seaholm said.

# Rivers:

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ted by 2,500 Oregonians, according to Wyden's office.

But commissioners worry the proposal — which widens protective stream buffers from a quarter-mile to a half-mile on both sides — will lead to greater restrictions for timber harvest, livestock grazing and outdoor recreation that power the region's economy.

"I think it's a way to push people off the land," said Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts. "I think that's where we're headed."

With the increased buffers, the River Democracy Act encompasses approximately 3 million acres. That's an area about the size of Connecticut.

## Bill draws local support and opposition

Don Russell, the chair of the Morrow County Board of Commissioners, said he didn't know how many miles of local waterways the bill could affect, but he was concerned about the bill effects on the region.

Echoing commissioners in Northeastern Oregon, Russell said the bill was applied too broadly, not just targeting active rivers and creeks, but also dry gulches that only flow after heavy rainfall and creeks that only flow seasonally. While his colleagues argued the River Democracy Act would be harmful to irrigators, recreators and timber interests, Russell said adding a layer of environmental protection to river areas also could exacerbate wildfire risk as fire seasons continue to become more severe across the state.

"I think it just adds to the fuel load down in the forest," he said.

Russell said he was just speaking for himself but Morrow County commissioners may consider a resolution opposing the bill after the regional meeting with Wyden and Merkley's representatives.

In Umatilla County, the bill would include segments of the Umatilla and Walla Walla rivers and Meacham Creek. George Murdock, the chair of the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners, did not respond to a request for comment as of press time.

Although local commissioners are voicing opposition to the bill, not every Eastern Oregon resident is against the legislation. Andrea Malmberg, a Union County rancher, spoke at a June Senate National Parks Subcommittee hearing, where she said the bill could lead to collaboration with ranchers and the federal government on forest management and protect water used for irrigation.

"My irrigation water, even though I'm obviously on private land, comes from upstream," she told the subcommittee. "Being able to protect those headwaters is protecting my private water rights."

Wyden has presented the River Democracy Act as a move away from top-down legislation, gathering input from across Oregon to create the bill, including suggestions from residents of Umatilla and Union counties. Wyden told the subcommittee that most of the letters he's received about the bill

have been positive.

## 'We weren't asked'

Before introducing the bill in February, Wyden sent two letters to the Association of Oregon Counties seeking input, though Roberts said she and her colleagues never saw any correspondence until it was too late.

"We can't find any commissioner, other than the one who might have received the letter in the first place, who knew about this," she said. "None of us had ever heard of it."

The bill would add 404 miles of wild and scenic rivers in Wallowa County. Despite repeated requests, Roberts said neither Wyden or Merkley have provided commissioners with detailed maps of the waterways.

Commissioners instead hired Anderson Perry & Associates, a consulting and engineering firm based in La Grande, to do mapping earlier this year. The company found the half-mile buffer restrictions may apply to 240,000 acres of public land and 16,000 acres of private land in Wallowa County.

In their resolution, commissioners stated most of these designations are not actually labeled as "rivers" because they are not free-flowing and do not carry water year-round.

The American Forest Resources Institute, a timber industry group, issued the same complaint in its analysis of the bill, finding 15% of waterways nominated for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic River System are labeled as "rivers" statewide.

Environmental groups and Wyden have pushed back, saying small and ephemeral streams are not only allowed under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act but are critical for protection.

In a previous statement, Wyden said 1.7 million Oregonians receive drinking water from public systems that rely at least in part on intermittent, ephemeral or headwater streams.

Land management agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, would have six years to write a comprehensive plan for the newly designated stream corridors, working with the state and local governments.

Specifically, the bill aims to mitigate wildfire risk in the riparian areas that hasn't been prioritized until now.

Even with that assurance, Roberts said concerns remain. She said the agencies themselves admit they are short-staffed and ill-equipped to handle the additional workload.

Wallowa County in an April 13 letter to Wyden said wild and scenic river buffers could eliminate mechanical harvest of timber and forest thinning, "or at least make it extremely difficult and controversial."

The bill also states it would not affect existing grazing permits, but ranchers worry it could require them to build miles of new fences, increase stubble height requirements and exclude reopening closed or vacant grazing allotments.

Roberts said commissioners asked for the Aug. 10 meeting.

"I just think it's important that the general public understands there may be segments of this that we have no issues with," Roberts said. "But we weren't asked. We were told."

# Dairy:

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Since Cody Easterday is no longer listed as the dairy's operator, ODA required Cole Easterday to submit a new CAFO permit application subject to the agency's review.

The new application is similar to the old. It calls for 28,300 total animals, including 9,700 mature dairy cows, 8,600 dairy heifers and 10,000 non-dairy cattle.

Liquid manure will be stored in open-air lagoons for up to 111 days each year, with a capacity of 86.8 million gallons, and solid manure will be kept year-round on an impervious soil pad.

The dairy also plans to recycle manure and processed wastewater to grow crops on 5,390 acres of farmland, mixed at agronomic rates to avoid ground-

water contamination.

## Nitrate concerns

However, the state agriculture department has issued a water quality advisory for the property after tests showed soil nitrate levels could potentially migrate into the groundwater.

As part of the original purchase agreement, Cody Easterday agreed to clean up the property under ODA supervision. Under the Velde's ownership, Lost Valley Farm had racked up 200-plus violations of its CAFO permit related to manure and wastewater management.

One condition of the cleanup permit includes ongoing soil testing to monitor for nitrates, which at elevated levels can impact human health.

The proposed dairy is within the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area, which the Oregon

Department of Environmental Quality designated in 1990 for having elevated levels of groundwater nitrates.

While no animals are allowed on site, Cody Easterday had been growing potatoes and other vegetables at the dairy while awaiting the outcome of his CAFO permit application, according to the state ag department.

The agency stated in a news release that it issues water quality advisories "when there is a risk of violating permit conditions, and is a proactive notification to alert the owner-operator that steps must be taken to prevent violations."

Another condition of the dairy cleanup requires the Easterdays to monitor each of 11 groundwater wells every quarter.

During the most recent round of testing, the agriculture department reported one of the wells exceeded the allowed level of nitrates.

"ODA is advising the operator on how to reduce nitrate levels," the agency stated, adding regulators will now require monthly well tests and reduced applications of nitrogen fertilizer and irrigation water on crop circles closest to the affected well.

Cole Easterday did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

A coalition of environmental groups continues to oppose the project, and urged the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Gov. Kate Brown to reject the Easterday permit.

"No matter who the applicant is," coalition organizer Kristina Beggen said, "Easterday Dairy will produce dangerous methane emissions, hijack scarce groundwater resources, and pollute the air and water of frontline communities already struggling with the impacts of the pandemic."

# Outbreak:

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pandemic began.

"It's a very unfortunate situation," said event co-manager Doug Corey. "Hopefully everybody will improve and get well. It would be an interesting number to know how many were vaccinated and not vaccinated."

Corey noted he consulted with county and city officials prior to the festival and obtained all necessary permits. He said he believes the event followed all pandemic guidelines from the state and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Event organizers also capped ticket sales at 12,000 people to downsize, he added.

Fiumara said he appreciated the reduction, adding "there could have been more than 20,000" people.

Corey said he has been in close contact with state health officials now that the investigation is underway. State, county and tribal officials are working together to identify

other cases from attendees, the state said.

## Concerns for upcoming events

The outbreak and the ensuing investigation does not bode well for upcoming events in Umatilla County, including the Umatilla County Fair and the Pendleton Round-Up, Fiumara said.

The fair, scheduled Aug. 11-14, typically draws thousands of people. Fiumara said he expects cases to rise because of the fair, but he would not formally recommend against the event being held because of the backlash that would ensue.

"I think if you're trying to reduce cases, I think canceling fair would be a way to do that," Fiumara said. "And I think it would be an effective way to prevent additional spread. That being said, I'm not sure all the fallout from cancelling it would be worthwhile. I think there would be a lot of push-back."

State and county health officials agree the best way to ensure outbreaks don't result from large summer events is

by getting more people vaccinated against COVID-19.

"Outbreaks like these will continue to occur if vaccination rates don't increase," said Rudy Owens, a spokesperson for OHA.

Less than 40% of Umatilla County residents are vaccinated against the virus, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Fiumara said Gov. Kate Brown's office reached out to

the county last week, asking how officials planned to curb the county's skyrocketing infection rates. He noted the last time Brown's office made that move was a week before the state shut down Umatilla County.

"The state is watching things very closely," he said.

Umatilla County has reported 9,586 COVID-19 cases since the pandemic began, according to county health data.



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