



East Oregonian, File

McNary Lock and Dam on the Columbia River near Umatilla is in line for upgrades totaling \$22.7 million thanks to the federal Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act.

# \$22.7 million in upgrades coming to McNary Dam

East Oregonian

UMATILLA — McNary Lock and Dam on the Columbia River near Umatilla is in line for almost \$23 million in improvements.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District, in a press release announced it has allocated approximately \$55 million for area dams. The federal Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act, which was signed into law in November 2021, provides funding for the projects.

The act allocated approximately \$17 billion in funding for Corps' infrastructure projects for fiscal years 2022-24.

Among the 2022 projects in the plan is \$22.7 million for work on McNary Lock and Dam, including replacing downstream gate gudgeon anchors, spillway hoists and gates, the acquisition and installation of a second derrick crane, dredging and surveys, rehabilitating levee drainage pump stations, upgrades to Hood Park's septic system and reconstruction of Third Street's road at the lock and dam.

Other projects are planned for Dworshak Dam, Lower Monumental Lock and Dam, Lower Granite Lock and Dam, Little Goose Lock and Dam and Lucky Peak Dam and Lake. There also are additional projects at waterways

in the region. The McNary project, however, is the largest of all the listed projects.

"This funding will allow us to complete critical projects the District has been striving to fund for several years," said Alan Feistner, Walla Walla District's deputy district engineer. "When completed, these funds will have helped us lower the risk of infrastructure failure and flooding, protect the environment, and improve efficiencies to serve the public. This is a great benefit for our communities and the Nation."

Additional funding from the infrastructure investments act be made available to the Walla Walla District in fiscal years 2023 and 2024.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Umatilla County COVID-19 fatalities top 200

UMATILLA COUNTY — Umatilla County's COVID-19 death toll has reached 201.

Umatilla County Public Health on Wednesday, Feb. 23, reported the 201st death is a 79-year-old man who tested positive for the disease Feb. 4 and died Feb. 17 at Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, Washington.

The county the day before reported the 200th death is a 71-year-old man who died Jan. 30 at Horizon Project Group Home, Pendleton. And last week, the county reported the 199 death with COVID-19 is a 65-year-old man who tested positive Feb. 6 and died Feb. 11 at St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla.

The county health department also reported as of Feb. 23 the total number of COVID-19 cases in Umatilla County was 22,153.

### M-F woman injured in crash

PASCO — A Milton-Freewater woman was injured in a crash Sunday afternoon in Walla Walla County, Washington.

Washington State Patrol

in a press release reported Celina Meza-Ibarra, 42, of Milton-Freewater, was driving a 2019 Nissan Altima west on Highway 12 about 10 miles east of Pasco when she lost control of her car. The Nissan then struck a 2007 Toyota Corolla.

Meza-Ibarra was injured, according to WPS, and an ambulance took her to Lourdes Medical Center, Pasco.

The driver of the Toyota, Christopher Olsen, 34, of Walla Walla, was not injured. He and Meza-Ibarra were wearing seat belts.

Washington State Patrol also reported charges are pending against Meza-Ibarra.

### 2 Umatilla residents on hook for negligent homicide

PENDLETON — Two Umatilla County residents face drug delivery and criminally negligent homicide charges in the death of a Pendleton man.

The Umatilla County District Attorney's Office has charged Jed Wayne Ball, 35, of Umatilla, and Misty Dawn Pollard, 44, of Pendleton for delivering fentanyl and causing the death of Dane Schell.

According to state court records, the district attorney's office has accused Ball and Pollard of providing the

narcotic and killing Schell on Aug. 24. A grand jury indicted the pair on Feb. 10. Pendleton police on Feb. 14 arrested the pair.

Circuit Judge Jon Lieualen on Feb. 15 set Pollard's bail at \$50,000 and Ball's bail at \$250,000. Ball remains in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, while Pollard no longer is in jail.

Pollard has a pretrial conference on March 1 and Ball has one on March 7, both at the Umatilla County Courthouse, Pendleton.

— EO Media Group

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# AARP volunteers offer tax help

By ERICK PETERSON  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Tax season is here, and once again the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program is helping locals with their 2021 tax forms.

"People are a little bit scared of the IRS," said Steve Frazier, who is helping with the program. "They want to do the right thing, but they get nervous. We're here to help them do the right thing."

In a regular day, he said, he and other volunteers will help around a dozen people.

On Tuesday, Feb. 22, he met with a couple of people who expressed gratitude for the help. He received their information, imputed data into his computer and asked them to return after for discussion. Frazier let the clients know their taxes would be sent to the IRS once they approved.

Their taxes would be completed within the same day as their appointment, he said.

Frazier said this is how most of his appointments occur — clients enter and their needs are met quickly. That is, however, if their taxes are simple. If a person's taxes are complicated, as when they involve a person's business, volunteers advise clients seek out tax services from paid professionals.

### Volunteering to help

A former fireman, Frazier said he does not have a deep background in accounting. But he has, he said, received training for the work he is doing on behalf of AARP.

Frazier, a Hermiston resident, said he started this work 12 years ago, after he retired. Helping people with their taxes, he said, was something he could do, and it was enjoyable.

According to Frazier, many volunteers come to this service the same way



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian

From left, Don Hefner, Joan Heihn, Uli Slankard and Steve Frazier review visitation records Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022. They are volunteers in Hermiston with the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program.

### APPOINTMENT REQUIRED

To receive help, people must make appointments from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Local sites are in Hermiston and Boardman. Volunteers are at New Hope Community Church, 1350 S. Highway 395, Hermiston (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays through April 13). The Boardman volunteers are at the Port of Morrow, 2 Marine Drive, Boardman (Mondays through April 11). Volunteers said people do not need to be AARP members or even seniors to receive help. Services are provided in English and Spanish. To register, call 541-612-1307. For more information, visit [www.aarp.org/money/taxes](http://www.aarp.org/money/taxes).

he did. They stumble upon it, discover it is something they are capable of doing and offer to lend a hand, he said. He added there are volunteers who have worked in banks, but none are professional accountants.

To get potential volunteers up to speed, AARP provides study materials to them in October. Then, there are training classes to understand the tax program being used. Also, there are tests volunteers need to pass to be certified by the IRS and AARP.

Still, Frazier said, it is not hard.

"If you learn where to put the information, the program does a lot of the work," Frazier said.

He added that deep knowledge of tax law is not required of volunteers.

Currently, there are nine local volunteers, serving Hermiston and Boardman.

"We used to have quite a bit more," he said.

In recent years, AARP even had a volunteer site in Pendleton. That site was closed, because of a reduced number of volunteers.

The volunteers who were in Hermiston, braving contact with others, expressed their happiness with the job. Don Hefner said he likes his work because the people are nice. Fellow volunteers Joan Heihn and Uli Slankard expressed the same sentiment.

Volunteers said COVID-19 likely is responsible for the reduced number of volunteers. People are trying to reduce their contact with the public, he said, so they are not volunteering when they might have otherwise.

"The folks who were doing it were just uncomfortable meeting with other folks," Frazier said of some volunteers.

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