

## Fair:

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AgriScience, also had advice for job seekers. He said he recommends people to accept help from other people.

"We want to help them in the best way that we can," he said.

He said he spoke with former Shearer's workers, and he felt good he could be of assistance to them in finding work.

There were a few job postings on the Corteva table at the job fair. They were for a maintenance coordinator, a field research intern and a production technician.

The production technician job comes with a \$1,500 sign on bonus, starting wages of \$20 per hour and benefits. Estrada said this job or others at Corteva would be good for recently displaced Shearer's employees.

Another company representative, Tom Clouse, also was looking for workers. Supervisor of operations for Williams, an energy company, Clouse said he was happy to speak with the former Shearer's workers.

These employees, he said, have a lot of good experience, including work with programmable logic controllers.

"We can use that," he said. "That's why we're here," a coworker said.

Perry Lamprey, who also was representing Williams at the job fair, said he was pleased with the people he had met from Shearer's, and he was hopeful of being part of a solution to put people in jobs.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Elsa Enriquez, a human resources employee for Walmart Distribution



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

People gather around a booth for Lamb Weston during a job fair Wednesday, March 16, 2022, at the Hermiston Community Center in Hermiston.

Center, Hermiston. She said she met one former Shearer's employee whose story stuck with her.

Enriquez said the woman she met was older and did not speak English. She was successful at Shearer's, and she was worried she would not be able to find another job, Enriquez said. Though Walmart did not hire the woman on the spot, Enriquez said she did give her information about applying for a job.

It is possible, she said, that Walmart will hire her and other people like her.

"It was devastating what happened to them, and I think there are things we can do for them," Enriquez said. "I feel good about that."

Representing the Port

of Morrow, Kimberly Rill, workforce training specialist, was at the job fair to tell people about jobs at several local companies. She passed out job posts from companies including Boardman Foods, Amazon, Tillamook and Threemile Canyon Farms.

"It's a sad situation," she said, "but I think there are a lot of opportunities for people."

She added she had spoken to many people, including Shearer's employees. The Port of Morrow, she said, was happy to be part of the many groups helping out.

Becky Self, Inter-Con Security recruiter, agreed. She said the Shearer's workers have gone through something that was "really

devastating." Her husband, she said, was a volunteer at the site of the fire, and she could attest to the awful situation they were facing.

Now meeting with the former employees, she said she was glad to be assisting. As Shearer's, she said, is offering people six weeks of severance, it is good for them to be out looking for jobs and thinking long term.

Inter-Con, she said, has 20 positions it is trying to fill, and she could see Shearer's workers doing well as security officers.

Sammantha Hoisington, of Oregon Department of Corrections, was trying to attract people to be corrections officers. She told people that they could start as offi-

cers for Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, Pendleton, then shift over to maintenance if they were interested.

This might be a good direction for Shearer's employees, she said. Requirements for a corrections officer include being 21 years old, passing a background check, having a high school diploma and possessing a driver's license. She said that if, after being with EOCI for a while, officers could shift over to a position within the prison that might be more suitable to their skill sets.

Meanwhile, Becky Cherry, human resources recruiter for Community Counseling Solutions, was at the fair looking for

people who could work as peer support. She said her company is growing and could fill 40 openings, and she was happy to tell former Shearer's employees of opportunities.

Even Blue Mountain Community College, which was promoting its educational programs at the job fair, had jobs to fill. Tammy Krawczyk, dean, workforce development, regional education and strategic partnership, was looking for candidates for a number of jobs. Those jobs included financial aid advisor, athletic trainer and a program assistant at Two Rivers Correctional Institution, Umatilla.

She said she met several people at the job fair and was happy to be part of it.

### Chamber employees call the job fair a success

Hoxie, the chamber director behind the fair, said she remembers the day of the fire. She could see it from her office. She looked out and reported having felt ill.

Her feelings changed, however, when she started hearing from employers. As the smoke still rose from Shearer's, her phone started ringing, she said. People wanted to help. That is when her office teamed up with the city of Hermiston to set the job fair into motion.

"We knew we had to do something," she said.

At the end of the event, while many people were packing up, another chamber employee stated her feelings about the job fair.

"This event makes me proud to be part of this community," Ami Little, chamber personal relations director, said. "When someone here is hurting, we help."

## Funds:

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"Pretty much what the numbers were, that's how it ended up," Lonai said.

But counties now have seven days to count ballots with Election Day postmarks as they come in. Lonai said that's not a good look.

"Why are your numbers changing?" Well, that's because ballots are trickling in," he said.

On top of that, he said, there are times when ballots lack a postmark, such as when two envelopes stick together in machinery. To help counter that, however, is a fluorescent postmark on the back of envelopes of a time stamp showing when it went through Portland, where it was sorted, Lonai said, and those postmarks require a special scanner to read.

Umatilla County has two of those, he said, and will test them soon. Smaller counties may lack those scanners and are running into hurdles getting them. The upshot of the county clerks association, he said, is county elections offices can help one another.

"We don't think we're going to need them that much," he said, "but we're probably going to share them with some of the other counties that didn't get them because of supply chain issues."

But on rare occasions, envelopes come out missing a regular postmark and the fluorescent postmark, he said, and elections offices then have to contact voters to verify a ballot.

"Theoretically, there should not be many of these situations," Lonai said, and the seven-day window after an election is for counties to handle these matters.

Lonai also said election officials have to ensure these kind of scenarios do not get in the way of another important job part of their job — protecting voter confidentiality.

That someone votes is public record in Oregon, but how someone votes is not. Lonai explained the new law could allow someone to pull the voter rolls, see when the last few ballots came in and figure out how someone voted.



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group, File

A stack of ballots sits in the Union County Clerk's Office, La Grande, as workers count the ballots for the special election on May 18, 2021. County election offices in 2022 will get additional money to replace old election equipment and buy postal barcode scanners to comply with a recent law requiring that ballots postmarked on Election Day be counted.

"So that's why we don't count one ballot at a time," he said.

In Umatilla County, he said, the elections office will run challenged and last-minute ballots all together to obscure how someone voted.

"This is our first time for this, so we'll see what happens here in May," Lonai said.

The association's vice president, Multnomah County elections director Tim Scott, said he expects more money to go to counties that lacked funding to upgrade equipment.

Union County Clerk Robin Church said it is too early to comment on the funds her office will reportedly receive.

"I have no comment until we actually receive the money," she said. "Then a decision will be made as to how the money is to be spent for elections."

Church added that what the money is spent on will depend on the state rules that apply to it.

Multnomah County, the state's largest, got grants in 2020 to automate more of its system and replaced its ballot tabulators just a few years ago, so it's in good shape for the upcoming primary and general elections, Scott said.

"Some counties were able to get a significant portion of grant funding to do things like upgrade their tally systems or buy a high-speed mail sorter, and other counties just weren't able to," he said. "It's really just trying to take a holistic look at the counties and seeing who needs what, and then from there trying to address those

deficiencies."

The secretary of state's office will get \$370,000 to spend on public service announcements, tracking and responding to election misinformation and statewide ballot tracking, which legislative budget analysts said were cheaper if provided by the state than by individual counties.

Another \$470,000 will be held for emergencies, with any remaining money split equally among counties at the end of the two-year budget cycle in June 2023.

### 'Options are wide'

This is the first year in which ballots will be counted as long as they're postmarked by Election Day and arrive at election offices within the next week. Previously, mailed ballots had to be received by clerks by Election Day, meaning they typically had to be mailed several days earlier. Counties that have already conducted elections this year found that the change in election policy means more work and a longer wait for final results.

A Jan. 18 recall election for two school board members in Yamhill County was the first to allow ballots postmarked by Election Day. About 500 ballots arrived during the week after the election, and county election office employees had to look for postmarks on each envelope to establish the date they were mailed.

Yamhill County Clerk Brian Van Bergen estimated verifying postmarks will take about a half day of work for an employee during the first

few days after an election. Yamhill County hasn't been using machines to check for postmarks.

That's on top of the other work that must be done before a ballot can be counted. Election workers also check voters' signatures against voter registration records and contact voters if the signature is missing or doesn't match.

About 14,500 people voted in the January recall election, less than a quarter of the roughly 59,500 who voted in Yamhill County in the general election in November 2020.

If the rate of postmarked ballots stays consistent in November, Yamhill County could have more than 2,000 ballots arrive after Election Day. Multnomah County, which had nearly 470,000 voters in its last election, could have to process more than 16,000 late-arriving ballots.

Van Bergen said he's waiting for more information about how much money counties can receive and how they can use it. The county's election building, built in 1935, needs well over \$100,000 in accessibility and security improvements, he said.

For one thing, the front doors to the building are accessible only by concrete steps. There's a ramp to the back door, but that's where ballots are brought in. Either building a ramp in the front or adding security measures in the back could improve accessibility for voters who can't easily navigate steps, he said.

The county also has technological security concerns, he said, though he didn't want to describe those.

"I know the options are wide, that they're not terribly focused on a particular type of improvement," Van Bergen said. "But what I don't know is if we are going to see \$10 or \$10,000."

Crook County Clerk Cheryl Seely said she's waiting to see how the primary goes and what effect post-marked ballots will have.

"We'll kind of have to see after one election how that works out," she said. "We may find there is a need for a lot more of something, I don't know yet. It's kind of a hard one for me to project."

— The EO Media Group contributed to this report.

## Sams:

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Since his swearing in, Sams has advocated for tribal co-management of federal lands. During his tour, he noted the Fort Vancouver park works closely with local tribes, making it one of many examples in the Pacific Northwest where state and federal agencies successfully collaborate with sovereign nations.

"We have a really great opportunity to bring in traditional ecological knowledge, set up cooperative agreements and even do some co-management, especially on the flora and fauna," Sams said.

Sams is Cayuse and Walla Walla. He's enrolled with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Eastern Oregon, where he grew up. He has a long history of civic leadership in state and tribal government; he recently served as Gov. Kate Brown's appointee to the Pacific Northwest Power and Conservation Council, and was previously the executive director for the Confederated Tribe of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Sams said Native co-management is fundamental to restoring lands to their healthier, pre-colonial conditions, because tribes have a deep understanding of native plants and animal species.

"It's a symbiotic relationship, and I think it's important that we figure out how we co-manage those together to ensure those species not just

survive, but they actually thrive on the landscape," Sams said.

Last week Sams testified in support of Native co-management at a House Natural Resources Committee hearing. He cited four parks that are currently co-managed by tribal governments: Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Glacier Bay National Park, Grand Portage National Monument and Big Cypress National Preserve.

Some policymakers at the hearing said they were worried that tribal co-management would interfere with domestic oil production. Sams said that shouldn't be a concern.

"We don't deal with a lot of oil and gas leasing, and that's not within the realm of the National Park Service," Sams told OPB. "I understood their concerns that they're bringing forward, but it's not necessarily a co-management issue as it relates to what we do with parks and people."

The rehabilitation work at Fort Vancouver is one of about 120 national parks projects that received Outdoors Act funding last year. The project will rehabilitate the fort's 33,000 square-foot double-infantry barracks, which were constructed in 1907.

Park staff said construction will focus on making the building more accessible and energy efficient, while preserving many of its historic features, like its covered porches and pressed-tin ceilings. Some maintenance costs will be leveraged by leasing rooms as office space. Construction is slated to end next spring.

