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Wranglers herd cattle Saturday, April 30, 2022, for steer roping at the Pavilion on the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds during the annual Pendleton Cattle Barons Weekend.

Wyatt Teggens/East Oregonian

PENDLETON

UAS Range is busier than ever

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The manager of the Pendleton UAS Range reported the site is busier than ever.

“Despite the weather, as of the end of April, we’ve had 1,292 operations in 2022,” Darryl Abling said. “When we finally get spring and into summer, we’ll fly even more often.”

Last year, the range had around 7,000 operations. This year, Abling said he expects 15,000 to 20,000.

The test range has about 15 unmanned aerial system clients with semi-permanent leases and operating on a daily or weekly basis.

“We have several new clients whom I can’t talk about,” he stated. “We get new people all the time, and the 15 here are expanding their operations.”

Nondisclosure agreements bind Abling and the rest of the city from publicly disclosing specifics about the clients operating at the range.

The Pendleton UAS Range was awarded in 2013, but started off slowly. Air Force veteran Abling came to Pendleton in 2016, after 29 years with Northrop Grumman Corp., working on the B-2 stealth bomber in Southern California.

“I don’t want to go back,” he commented. “Even to visit.”

The range in 2016 had only 54 operations, but its use started to take off after Air Bus’ and the Navmar Applied Sciences Corporation’s programs arrived the next year.

Air Bus’ Vahana project was an all-electric, tilt-wing vehicle demonstrator. The only flyable Vahana in existence is in boxes at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, Pendleton. It spent two years in a San Francisco warehouse before returning to Pendleton. NASC’s ArcticShark developed a cold weather drone.

Some range clients include Amazon, Verizon Robotics, Cubic Corporation’s ISR Systems of San Diego and two Columbia Gorge companies, Insitu of Bingen, Washington, and Hood River’s Hood Tech Mechanical.

Started in a small garage in 1994, Insitu is now a subsidiary of Boeing. It makes the widely-used military ScanEagle drone and the Navy and Marine Corps’ larger RQ-21 Blackjack. Its neighbor, Hood Tech, produces the Flying Air Recovery System, which provides fixed-wing drones with vertical take-off and landing capability.

Hood Tech engineer Cory Roeseler said, “(Range staff) have been terrific. They do a nice job.”

He said his company has flown 700 times during the years on the range with a perfect safety record. Hood Tech is working on FLARES 3.0 at Pendleton, a system capable of handling larger and heavier drones.

“It’s a challenge to integrate unmanned and manned flights in the same air space,” he concluded. “They do it as well as anyone. Better in fact. We’ve been all over, from the Army’s Yuma Proving Ground to Florida and everywhere in between. Pendleton does it the best.”

Pendleton’s range belongs to the Pan-Pacific UAS Test Range Complex, one of seven official FAA test sites in the country. Managed by the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the PPUTRC spans seven climate zones, allowing UAS manufacturers and potential users to test their equipment in the Arctic, the tropics and in arid environments. It encompasses ranges in Hawaii, California, Oregon, Kansas and Mississippi. Besides Pendleton, UAS test ranges in Oregon are at Warm Springs and Tillamook.

The other six Federal Aviation Administration-approved ranges are in New York, Virginia, North Dakota, Texas, New Mexico and Nevada.

CATTLE BARONS ENDS WITH A BANG

Barbecue competition endures thunderstorm, horse auction was a hit

By WYATT TEGGINS
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Cattle Barons Weekend wrapped up its 14th year Saturday, April 30, with a solid horse auction and the barbecue competition sticking it out through a thunderstorm.

Now in its 14th year, all the proceeds of the nonprofit event showcasing Western heritage provide more than \$100,000 worth of college scholarships to regional students pursuing studies within agriculture. A large chunk of which stems from the auctions for working dogs and horses.

Auctions provide abundance of funds

Hopes were high going into this year’s working dog and horse auction, following the previous year when the top dog sold for an astonishing \$48,000, and two horses both sold separately for \$28,500. Auction manager Tygh Campbell explained the good-hearted spirit of the auction.

“Some people will bid on a dog or a horse with no prospect of actually owning it,” he said. “They do it to help get scholarship funds up.”

This year, the Pavilion on the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds had a deep hum as people gathered and discussed the lots for sale. Following the previews of the horses and dogs, the bidding war began as soon as the first horse hit the stadium. Within two minutes the steed sold for \$42,000 the top price at the event.



Wyatt Teggens/East Oregonian

Team Meatsweats celebrates Saturday, April 30, 2022, at the Pendleton Convention Center after winning the People’s Champion award in the Buckaroo Barbecue Challenge during Pendleton Cattle Barons Weekend.

Two other horses sold for more than \$30,000 causing an all-out fight for the remaining lots. Campbell after the auction said 16 out of 18 horses sold at an average of \$15,906, raising a considerable sum for future scholarships.

Although the working dog auction didn’t have the luck as years prior, several dogs broke the \$4,000 mark, with the top sale being \$7,500. The consensus among the breeders and trainers was for the well-being of Cattle Barons scholarship efforts. Several trainers said dogs of such pedigree usually would sell for nearly double at another auction, but it is in the spirit of

giving and helping others, so they are glad to take the pay cut.

Barbecue weathers a challenge

Contestants for this year’s Buckaroo Barbecue Challenge not only had to face rigorous judging of the Pacific Northwest Barbecue Association but endured the two-hour thunderstorm that hit the area.

The storm caused significant delays to contest judging and led to animosity building up between members of separate teams, causing a minor altercation that event staffing had to resolve.

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Milton-Freewater residents volunteer to ‘make a difference’

By MAX ERICKSON
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — Even a wet spring morning didn’t discourage volunteers here from contributing to Make a Difference Day on Saturday, April 30. Dozens of people helped clean and restore Main Street in the first of a two-day event.

The Milton-Freewater Downtown Alliance and the community’s Chamber of Commerce combined efforts to organize the event bringing residents together to restart these organizations’ goals post pandemic.

The Downtown Alliance, specifically, was created to boost economic activity in the community and to restore and beautify Milton-Freewater.

Dr. Norm Saager has been the



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

Local artist Sheila Lane helps Coyote Joe make a hand print on her mural Saturday morning, April 30, 2022, during the first day of the Make A Difference Weekend in Milton-Freewater.

organization’s president off and on for the past 12 years and frequently participates in the community development for Milton-Freewater.

The local dentist said events like Make a Difference Day are a step in the right direction for Milton-Freewater.

“We hope we can inspire a volunteerism boost,” he said. “We were moving in the right direction before COVID-19 hit, and now we are just starting to get back to where we were, and this is our first big step towards doing that.”

The weekend’s projects included installing new bike racks, converting whiskey barrels into flower planters and weeding the sidewalks on Main Street.

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