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Fine against Port of Morrow now tops \$2.1M

DEQ urges port to complete project to address nitrates, reduce penalty

East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has increased the penalty against the Port of Morrow from \$1.3 million

to a little more than \$2.1 million.

State environmental regulators levied the initial fines in January, accusing the port of excessively spreading nitrogen-rich wastewater as fertilizer on area farmland for years. DEQ announced in a statement Friday, June 17, the additional \$800,000 is “for additional violations involving over application of wastewater containing nitrogen to agricultural fields in the Lower Umatilla Basin, an area

with longstanding groundwater contamination.”

The Port of Morrow has been appealing the \$1.3 million in fines. Port Executive Director Lisa Mittelsdorf was not available June 17 for comment.

According to the statement from DEQ, the Port of Morrow is one of many sources contributing to nitrate contamination in northern Morrow and Umatilla counties — an area known as the Lower Umatilla Basin

Groundwater Management Area.

The primary source of contamination in the area, about 70%, is from fertilizer used on irrigated farmland, according to the management area’s action plan. Additional contributors are dairy and cattle farms (about 20%), food processing facilities, such as the port that reuse wastewater to irrigate fields (about 5%) and residential septic systems and other sources (about 5%).

The Port of Morrow collects

wastewater from food processors, storage facilities and data centers in its industrial park outside Boardman. The port has a DEQ water quality permit that allows it to use the nitrogen-rich wastewater for irrigation on nearby farms, but the permit includes limits on how much nitrogen the port can apply to the farmland and how much nitrate and moisture can be present in soil prior to applications.

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A family’s life changed in an instant

Local baby’s seizure launches medical nightmare that persists two years later

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Morrow County sheriff’s deputy Todd Siex stiffened as a call crackled over the radio in his police pickup. The dispatcher reported a baby was having a seizure at a Lexington residence.

Siex (pronounced “Six”) checked the location on his mobile computer and saw the address was his home, where he lived with his wife, Deona, grown daughter, Lindsey Hodges, and his 11-month-old granddaughter, Oakleigh. His stomach in a knot, he drove from Irrigon to Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Heppner to meet the ambulance carrying the little girl.

Earlier that morning, it had been a normal day inside the house. Until it wasn’t.

It was Dec. 8, 2019, and Deona prepared the home for the baby’s first Christmas. Oakleigh had come into the world as a seemingly normal, healthy baby girl on Dec. 28, and the family imagined a magical holiday with the child. Lindsey just returned home from her job as kitchen lead at Heppner Elementary School. Her mother cleared off the top of an armoire for decorations. Oakleigh stood in the playpen happily observing.

Then the baby toppled over and lay still. The women rushed to the playpen.

“She was face down and unresponsive,” Hodges said.

The initial stillness erupted into a seizure that would continue for more than an hour and launch a medical nightmare that persists two-and-a-half years later.

“We were all so scared, and it seemed like time was standing still,” Deona said. “Oakleigh was having a grand mal seizure and they could not get her to stop seizing.”

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PENDLETON

MOTO LODGE

READY FOR GUESTS TO MOTOR IN



Owners aim to have all 40 rooms ready in a week; 25 rooms booked next week for Jackalope Jamboree

By ANTONIO ARREDONDO
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — As guests flocked to the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new MotoLodge hotel near downtown Pendleton, there was one thing they all seemed to agree on: Things sure looked different.

The lot at 310 S.E. Dorion Ave. has seen a lot of logos outside its doors over the years, most of them belonging to cheaper hotels. The most recent tenant was the Knights Inn.

That’s all history now.

“It went from a huge eyesore to something beautiful,” said Stacey Candlish, a La Grande resident who traveled to Pendleton for the event Thursday, June 16.

Cascadia Hospitality bought the hotel in late 2021. The company’s \$1.3 million renovation



Photos by Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

TOP: MotoLodge owners David Mogg, right, and Jeremy Duncan cut the ceremonial ribbon Thursday evening, June 16, 2022, to open their boutique hotel in Pendleton. **ABOVE:** The MotoLodge sign is on display Thursday, June 16, 2022, at the Pendleton hotel. The new sign was part of a \$1.3 million renovation and rebranding to give new life to the site.

transformed a relic from times past into a new boutique hotel, the MotoLodge. The process was no easy one, either.

“We put in new beds, new carpets, new bathrooms, new everything,” hotel manager Abraham Barnett said. “Essentially, we got rid of everything except the bricks.”

Cascadia Hospitality owners Jeremy

Duncan, David Mogg and Nick Pearson spearheaded the renovation. While Pearson missed out on the ribbon-cutting, instead opting to attend his own bachelor party, the other two owners talked and showed off the rooms to the hundred or so guests who attended.

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