

Pendleton airport to receive almost \$5M from FAA to reconfigure runway

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton is receiving almost \$5 million in federal funds to reconfigure a runway.

The \$4.96 million is part of the \$17.5 million in grants from the Federal Aviation Administration's Airport Improvement Program for crucial safety improvements to runways in small airports in Oregon, U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley announced Monday, July 25.

In addition to the airport in Pendleton, the Corvallis Municipal Airport is receiving \$2.79 million to reconstruct runway and update lighting and the Crater Lake/Klamath Regional Airport is getting \$9.75 million for runway reconstruct.

"Small airports' reliable air service in rural areas is crucial for Oregonians and our state's economy," Wyden said. "I am gratified to see these dollars go toward improving critical runway infrastructure that is often taken for granted when flying. Investing in airport infrastructure lays the ground-



East Oregonian, File

Rollers compact the asphalt of the primary runway in April 2020 at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton. Oregon U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley announced Monday, July 25, 2022, that the Pendleton airport is receiving almost \$5 million in federal grant funds to reconfigure a runway.

work for airports in Corvallis, Pendleton and Klamath Falls to continue to support jobs, our state's economic growth and tourism."

"Regional airports are vital in connecting rural communities to economic opportunities across the state and beyond," Merkley said. "This funding for airports in Corvallis, Pendleton and Klamath Falls will help to improve the critical infrastructure that we rely on when flying that is critical for businesses in those communities to thrive. These

improvements will not only support the airport, but local economies of these cities and Oregon as a whole."

Steve Chrisman, Pendleton economic development director and interim airport manager, in the announcement said the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport was thankful to receive the grant funding for mitigation of a hot spot area on Runway 29.

"The airport has been experiencing unprecedented growth for the last several years, which requires safe and

structurally sound runways and taxiways," according to Chrisman. "Sens. Wyden and Merkley have been stalwart supporters of the airport and the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial System Range, and this funding will help alleviate a long-standing problem for airfield users."

The city proposed an airport project to relocate Runway 29's threshold, build new taxi lanes and rehabilitate aprons in March. The engineer's cost estimate was \$4.5 to \$5.5 million.

"We put together the proposal with the FAA," Chrisman said, "and added it to the capital improvement plan list."

The Airport Improvement Program grant is funding upcoming projects, he added.

"This was in the works for quite some time," Chrisman said. "It's a dangerous intersection. Now the grant is awarded, but it was on the list already."

Projects on the capital improvement project list receive grants on a five-year plan, he said.

"Our priority for the next round of funding is to extend the wildlife fence," Chrisman concluded.



Dawn Jeffers/Contributed Photo

Elmer Jeffers celebrates his 100th birthday on April 16, 2021 in Pilot Rock. Jeffers, now 101, is getting married Saturday, July 30, 2022, in Pilot Rock.

101-year-old Pilot Rock man weds on Saturday

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — Elmer Jeffers and Jerrie Gammond of Pilot Rock are to wed Saturday, July 30, at 2 p.m. in the Life Church, 222 S.W. Third St.

Jeffers turned 101 in April.

"We met at the coffee shop," Jeffers recalled. "We started talking, had a good time, then courted for about a year and a half. She's a very fine lady."

The newlyweds plan a short honeymoon, he said.

"We don't even know where we're going yet," Jeffers said. "Some people financed it, and we look forward to it, wherever we may go together."

This will be Jeffers' third marriage.

"I've outlived two wives," he said. "The Lord has been good to me."

Jeffers was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa, and lived there for 12 years. He served in the Navy during World War II, and settled in California after the global conflict ended. There, he was in the meat business for 35 years. Jeffers retired at 62, and moved to Pilot Rock 12 years ago.

Jeffers had 12 siblings.

"Just three of the 13 are left now," he said, "a brother

in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and a sister in California. We've been blessed."

With his first wife, Jeffers had seven children.

"Only the youngest daughter and eldest son still survive," he said. "She lives in California, and my son is in Tacoma."

Jeffers is the great uncle of Harley Jeffers, who, with his wife Dawn Jeffers, are pastors at the Pilot Rock Life Church. A reception follows the wedding at the Pilot Rock Community Center, 285 N.W. Cedar Place.

"Elmer lives alone, at least for now, drives and shops for himself," Dawn Jeffers said. "It might take a few rings for him to answer the phone."

Gammond has lived in Pilot Rock since 1951.

"I was born in Idaho, and met my husband there," she said. "We had two daughters and a son. He passed away in 2017, and Oromel (her husband) in 2019."

Oromel Gammond, named for an uncle, went by "Buster."

"We look forward to a few more years of good marriage together," Elmer Jeffers said. "I've had an amazing life. My parents both lived to ripe old ages. My dad died at 98 and my mom at 95."

—EO Media group

EASTERN OREGON

National forests move to first phase of restrictions

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Due to increased fire danger and dry weather conditions, Phase A of the Public Use Restrictions for smoking, off-road travel and chainsaw use go into effect on the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests at 12:01 a.m. Thursday, July 28.

The Forest Service announced the restrictions in a press release. Phase A is the first level of wildfire-prevention restrictions, generally implemented when the fire danger is moderate to high. National forests phase in restrictions as conditions warrant. Restrictions under Phase A include:

- Using chainsaws only between the hours of 8 p.m. and 1 p.m., and a one-hour fire watch is required after saw operations cease. The restrictions require chainsaw operators to have an axe, shovel and fire extinguisher with them.
- Smoking is allowed only in enclosed vehicles, buildings or cleared areas.
- Vehicles only can travel on roads and trails that are



Umatilla National Forest/Contributed Photo

Smoke rises in July 2021 from the Elbow Creek Fire west of Troy on the Umatilla National Forest. The first phase of public use restrictions on the Umatilla National Forest goes into effect Thursday, July 28, 2022, due to increased fire danger and dry weather conditions.

clear of standing grass or other flammable material. Off-road or off-trail vehicle travel is not allowed, nor is vehicle travel on National Forest roads where berm, logs, boulders or

man-made barricades block or impede travel.

Forest officials also recommend the following campfire safety precautions:

Campfires should be in fire

pits surrounded by dirt, rock or commercial rings and in areas not conducive to rapid fire spread. All flammable material shall be cleared within a 3-foot radius from the edge of the pit and free of overhanging material. Use existing pits wherever possible.

Campfires must be attended at all times, and completely extinguished prior to leaving.

Anyone with a campfire should have a tool that can serve as a shovel and at least one gallon of water to completely extinguish the campfire.

The Forest Service stressed the public's awareness of the increasing fire danger and cooperation is essential to a safe fire season.

Closures may be in effect on state and private lands under the protection of the Oregon Department of Forestry in Northeastern and Central Oregon.

For more complete information, contact the Umatilla National Forest hotline at 877-958-9663, visit www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla or on Facebook go to www.facebook.com/UmatillaNF.

Suicide hotline number change will help those in need

By ANTONIO ARREDONDO
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The national suicide prevention hotline has changed its number. And for those throughout Umatilla and Morrow counties and the rest of the nation, access during mental health crises became much easier.

On July 16, the United States officially changed its suicide hotline number to 988. It replaces the former number, 800-273-8255, a number that will still stay online indefinitely. Local health providers said they are hopeful the shorter number will help.

"It just means for us that it's easier for us to direct people where to help," said Morgan Linder, Umatilla County Public Health Community Health supervisor. "For so long, the number was difficult to remember."

Federal Communications Commission reported its staff in conjunction with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the North American Numbering Council released a report in August 2019 recommending the use of 988 as the three-digit code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline launched in 2005 and in its first year received 46,000 calls. The Lifeline reported receiving almost 2.4 million crisis calls in 2020, including 48,574 from Oregon. Since the Lifeline's inception, it has received more than 23 million calls.

The FCC in July 2020 established a plan to implement the number by July 16, 2022, and in October 2020 the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act became law, solidifying 988 into statute as the new Lifeline and Veterans Crisis Line phone number.

The FCC has billed the three-digit number as a "direct connection to compassionate, accessible care and support for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress." The number also can be called if anyone is worried about a family member or friend.

With the longer number, 911 often was dialed in cases of a mental health emergency, prompting a police response. With a shorter number, the goal is getting those in need in contact faster with professionals prepared to deal with mental health situations.

Officials in Umatilla and Morrow Counties said they hope knowledge of the number will become widespread.

"We want to make it something people know about," Linder said. "Often people need to call, and it won't be the first place they reach out to."

According to the Oregon Health Authority, suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in the state. Suicide claimed the lives of 685 people in 2010 in Oregon, and in 2020, the number of fatalities was 835. Suicide was the 10th leading cause of death in 2020 in Umatilla County,

with 19 fatalities.

Linder recommended that anyone in the area who is struggling with mental health to call the number or get in contact with Community Counseling Solutions, which has eight locations throughout Umatilla and Morrow counties.

If you or a loved one is experiencing a mental health crisis, dial 988 or visit your local health provider for help.

—East Oregonian news editor Phil Wright contributed to this report.

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