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\$1.50

WILDFIRES

Local officials support fire map reversal

Map was part of \$220 million bill to prepare Oregon for worsening, climate change-fueled fires

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Oregon Department of Forestry's decision to pull back and revise its wildfire risk map was a wise move, according to local elected officials.

Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, said the rollout of the map and ensuing letters to property owners about fire risk was not handled well. This not only put the cart before the horse, he said, it raised the worries of lots of people.

The state forestry department yanked the wildfire risk map Thursday, Aug. 4, five weeks after publishing it. According to the Oregon Capital Chronicle, the move came after outcry from Republican state lawmakers and residents in southern and Eastern Oregon who said the roll out of the map was clumsy and led to people losing their property insurance or having premiums doubled. They said the Oregon Department of Forestry was ill-equipped to handle the impacts of the map in the middle of fire season.

"My phone was ringing off the hook, and the emails," Hansell said, after the state put the map online. Lawmakers were aware the state was working on the map, he said, but the process did not include public input that he was aware of.

The map was part of a \$220 million bill — Senate Bill 762 — that came from the 2021 legislative session as part of a state push to protect Oregonians against worsening, climate change-fueled wildfires.

The Oregon Department of Forestry and Oregon State University created the Oregon Wildfire Risk Explorer map. The searchable map showed the wildfire risk of 2 million tax lots across the state, categorizing them in five categories: no, low, moderate, high or

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Hansell



PENDLETON'S OWN

COMIC CON

ENTERS YEAR TWO



MEANWHILE ... COSPLAY, GAMES AND AN OREGON COMIC BOOK CREATOR HIGHLIGHT THIS YEAR'S EVENT

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Public Library opened its doors Saturday, Aug. 6, to what may be Eastern Oregon's only comic con.

While it was not big or splashy, the local event drew a few dozen youths and adults in its second year and even expanded upon the inauguration in 2021 with a vendor section. Comic cons are not just about comic books — though those were in abundance at the event — but rather a celebration of geek culture, genre fiction and the merger of the two. The library's modest event covered several bases, including a Magic the Gathering tournament and numerous participants in costumes.

John McBean and his daughter Patton McBean and Patton's friend Ana Rue dawned steampunk costumes for the event. McBean owns and operates the Athena Auto Parts store.

"A chain reaction happened on Facebook," Patton McBean said, explaining how they

learned about the comic con and decided to cosplay for it.

Rue said she has been doing cosplay for a while, but the McBeans said this was a first for them. And they all are fans of steampunk. John McBean said he didn't have to look far for some parts of his costume. The gas mask, for example, came from his time in the U.S. Army.

Nathan Smith also was new. He and his friend Rorey Kuemper had a table showcasing tabletop gaming.

"First time being a vendor anywhere," Smith said.

For the past four years he has owned and operated Pendleton Cell Repair at 341 S.E. Court Ave. But tabletop games are a big part of what the small shop does. Smith said Mondays and Fridays, 15-20 people fill the place for games of Magic the Gathering, and now there is Warhammer Wednesday, for the popular miniatures wargame Warhammer 40,000.

"It's starting to build up, just like my Magic the Gathering has," Smith said.

Across the room, College Community Theater was promoting its upcoming season and with an array of hats from costumes, so anyone could do a little cosplay right there.

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TOP: FROM LEFT, JOHN MCBEAN, HIS DAUGHTER PATTON MCBEAN AND PATTON'S FRIEND ANA RUE WEAR STEAMPUNK COSTUMES SATURDAY, AUG. 6, 2022, FOR THE PENDLETON PUBLIC LIBRARY COMIC CON. ABOVE: INDEPENDENT COMIC BOOK CREATOR BRANDON HAYES OF THE DALLES TALKS ABOUT HIS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS COMIC "THREADY: A BIPOLAR MASTERPIECE".

Projects abound to improve Umatilla

City funds work for new gateway entry, adopts thematic wayfinding signage and plans six murals

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

UMATILLA — Umatilla is in the midst of building, beautification and visitor signage improvements.

The city has contracted with Merje Design of Westchester, Pennsylvania, to improve wayfinding signage for visitors to the city's parks and other public areas. Six new murals are planned, as well.



City of Umatilla/Contributed Graphic

The city of Umatilla is working on the Umatilla Falls Gateway project to welcome visitors at the junction of Highways 395 and 730. The city expects work to begin in February or March of next year and have the work completed by June 2023.

"Also, a new entry, with water features, for the Umatilla Falls Gateway project at the junction of

Highways 395 and 730, will replace the about 10 year-old artwork," City Manager Dave Stockdale said. "The

old project art consisted of metal and fish."

Umatilla Falls Gateway entry project

This all-new water and rock gateway entry is to welcome residents and visitors with basalt rock features excavated from recent improvement projects. It further incorporates a traditional fountain design connoting the falls.

Attractive lighting showcasing programable changing colors for local celebrations at certain times of the year are planned. For the Fourth of July, red, white and blue are available; Christmas and New Year's holidays green and red;

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