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## OHS seeks \$800,000 to help Boardman residents

Commissioner Jim Doherty pushes back on claims about what the state is doing

By PHIL WRIGHT  
*East Oregonian*

**BOARDMAN** — Boardman residents needing better water filters and more well testing due to nitrate contamination could get state help this fall.

The Oregon Health Authority plans to ask the Legislature's Emergency Board in September for \$800,000 to help address the water crisis in northern Morrow County.

Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty, however, sought a bigger contribution from the state.

Doherty on Aug. 11 sent a letter to Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, to ask the governor and Emergency Board for \$4 million in the Oregon Health Authority or Oregon Department of Environmental Quality budgets to "implement an in-depth and culturally relevant community outreach, education and communications strategy to address immediate, short term and ongoing public health efforts in the Lower Columbia Basin as a result of high and extremely high nitrate levels in domestic wells."

Doherty said since he made that request, Smith reported Gov. Kate Brown requested \$800,000 for well water monitoring and better filters.

### The need for better filters

Erica Heartquist is the communication officer for OHA's Public Health Division. She explained Morrow County and its partners have distributed point-of-use water filters — that is, systems that attach to a drinking water tap in the home — that don't filter out enough nitrates.

"Post-installation testing of several systems by Morrow County found that all systems reduced nitrates, but some did not reduce levels below the Environmental Protection Agency health advisory level of 10 milligrams per liter of water," according to Heartquist. "Such systems may also reduce other common domestic well water contaminants, such as bacteria and lead. OHA's request to the legislative Emergency Board will be for point-of-use water filtration systems that are specifically certified to reduce nitrates to levels at or below 10 mg/l."

See Boardman, Page A6

# ON THE GREEN, IN THE GREEN



Isabella Crowley/The Observer

Wildhorse CEO says Epson Tour event will have wide-ranging positive effects

**Left:** Wildhorse Resort and Casino CEO Gary George stands outside the clubhouse at Wildhorse Golf Course in Mission on Aug. 11, 2022. George was instrumental in helping Wildhorse land a spot on the Epson Tour, which starts Monday, Aug. 29.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

**Jim White, of Pendleton, tees off March 31, 2022, at the Wildhorse Golf Course, which Sept. 2-4 hosts the Wildhorse Ladies Classic, the 17th stop on the Epson Tour's 2022 schedule, welcoming professional female golfers from all over the United States and more than 30 countries.**

By ISABELLA CROWLEY  
*The Observer*

**M**ISSION — Wildhorse Golf Course expects to draw more than 2,000 people to the Pendleton area at the end of August for a weeklong golf tournament that culminates with the first Ladies Professional Golf Association qualifying tournament in Oregon.

The Wildhorse Ladies Classic, an Epson Tour event, will be Sept. 2-4 at Wildhorse Golf Course. According to Gary George, CEO of Wildhorse Resort & Casino, the golf course will host a stop on the tour for two years with the option for a third.

"This is the inaugural event, so we're pretty excited about it," he said.

Following the attempted robbery turned shootout on Aug. 17, the Umatilla Tribal Police Department informed Wildhorse that there is no on-going threat to the resort,

casino or community.

"To our knowledge, there are no specific threats directed toward the Epson Tour or specific players, but WRC Security will be prepared to deal with any situation," George said.

According to George, there already was an Epson Tour Security Preparedness plan in place for the tournament to mitigate a number of potential threats.

Wildhorse security, tribal police and emergency medical service will be onsite for the entire week of the tournament.

### Driving the economy and international media exposure

There are 132 contestants competing in the Epson Tour during the stop in Umatilla County. Each contestant is supported by an entourage of three to five individuals, which means the tournament is bringing upwards of 600 people to the Pendleton area just with players, staff support and family members.

George said he believes a lot of people from the surrounding area will make the day trip or weekend trip to enjoy the tournament, further increasing the number of people.

The economics will not be limited to Wildhorse Resort & Casino, but will spill over to local business, George said. Tournament organizers put together a fact sheet for players with hotels, restaurants and other stores.

See Epson Tour, Page A6



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