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Ag groups: Oregon pesticide data ‘intentionally biased’

Sampling focused on sites right after spring rains, was not random

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon regulators have come under fire from agriculture and forestry advocates for

allegedly misrepresenting information about pesticides in waterways to the public.

A new online “data viewer” displays information about pesticide detected in 12 river basins by the state’s Department of Environmental Quality and Department of Agriculture.

The state government promoted the interactive tool as helping

“Oregonians who want to know what pesticides are in their local streams,” but several natural resource organizations say that’s an inaccurate characterization of the data.

“We dug into what the tool is showing and how it is being presented, and it is so misleading,” said Mary Anne Cooper, vice president of government affairs for the

Oregon Farm Bureau. “It has a high likelihood of being used against producers on the ground.”

The tool invites data to be taken “out of context” and “will surely result in unjustified concerns over water quality,” according to the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Association of Nurseries, Oregon Forest Industries Council and Oregonians for Food and

Shelter agribusiness group.

“The presentation is almost what we’d expect from activist groups,” Cooper said.

The problem is not that the data is incorrect or that it’s being disclosed, since the information always has been publicly available, she said.

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UMATILLA COUNTY

Boosting regional water supply

Consultant hired for project to bring Columbia River water to irrigators

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

ECHO — Umatilla County has hired a consultant on the \$17 million project to take more water from the Columbia River to help local farmers while providing a ready water source for economic and environmental benefits.

Westland Irrigation District Manager Curtis Engbretson said the Ordinance Regional Water Supply and Aquifer Restoration Project will be “a big benefit to the district and the community as a whole.”

Umatilla County and Westland Irrigation District are co-sponsoring the project, with funding and technical support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resource Conservation Service. Farmers Conservation Alliance is assisting the NRCS with the planning process.

“We would use the Columbia River water in the summer, when there would be no water in an open ditch,” Engbretson explained. “We wouldn’t have to rely on McKay Reservoir.”

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners at its Aug. 17 meeting approved contracting with Michael Bergstrom of AgriNorthwest, Kennewick, as a consultant on the pipeline project. John Shafer, board chair, said it became apparent that hiring an irrigation system consultant would be beneficial.

“We don’t want to get too far over our skis on this project,” he explained. “We want somebody with the necessary background to look out for the best interest of the county.”

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HERMISTON



Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

Cathy Wamsley’s husband Thomas cuts the ceremonial ribbon Thursday, Aug. 25, 2022, at the Cathy Wamsley Early Learning Center at Umatilla-Morrow Head Start in Hermiston. Thomas was accompanied by his son, Brady, and daughter, Brooke, at the grand opening. Cathy Wamsley died Nov. 23, 2021, in Hermiston at the age of 73.

Carrying on a legacy

Early learning center opens in honor of Cathy Wamsley

By MARCO GRAMACHO
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Cathy Wamsley Early Learning Center opened Thursday, Aug. 25, with a ribbon-cutting at Umatilla-Morrow Head Start in Hermiston with special guests Cathy Wamsley’s husband Thomas; son, Brady, and daughter, Brooke.

The center is receiving 70 preschool children from ages 0 to 5, and has soft opens on Sept. 1 and 2 with two groups of classes (0-3 years old and 3-5 years old) each day. The facility opens in its full capacity Sept. 6 after Labor Day.

“The center is funded with federal and state funds benefiting working families in the region with no costs for them,” explained Aaron Treadwell, Umatilla-Morrow Head Start executive director. He occupies the position Cathy Wamsley served between 1986 and 2014. Treadwell worked with Wamsley for 20 years.

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Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

Several dozen people gather Thursday, Aug. 25, 2022, for the opening ceremony of the Cathy Wamsley Early Learning Center at Umatilla-Morrow Head Start in Hermiston. The facility is dedicated to Wamsley, who invested more than three decades serving and supporting children and families across Eastern Oregon.

‘Close to normal’

Schools ready with updated coronavirus guidelines

By DAKOTA CASTETS-DIDIER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The pandemic made attending public schools complicated, but the 2022 fall term is bringing a return to the norm for Oregon schools.

Last week, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued new guidelines for schools that loosened previous guidance, and allowed school districts across America to take the lead on how to manage coronavirus within their schools.

“For the most part it’s what

we finished with last year,” Jake Bacon, assistant superintendent of the Hermiston School District explained, illustrating how the district plans to use much of the same techniques they employed last fall going forward.

“This is as close to a normal school year as we’ve seen,” he said.

Pendleton School District Director of Special Programs Julie Smith explained that screenings, which have been standard procedure since before the pandemic, will continue when students don’t feel well. The district also will continue to make accommodations through the online learning platform Google Classroom for students should they fall ill and miss class.

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Mackenzie Whaley/East Oregonian

Pendleton High School English teacher Michael Bittorf talks on Thursday, Aug. 25, 2022, about the new school year and being able to “work one-on-one live with the kids, brick and mortar, building relationships with students,” which he adds is important to him and other teachers. “If they don’t feel a connection to you, a lot of times they don’t feel a connection to the subject,” he said.



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