

# Police find no bones at Finley Creek Jane Doe site

By **DICK MASON**  
*The Observer*

ELGIN — The Finley Creek Jane Doe case, which has taken many twists and turns during the past four decades, took a pivot in the wrong direction. But investigators, including Oregon State Police, are refusing to give up.

Oregon State Police recently led an excavation project at a site near Finley Creek, 18 miles north of La Grande, where the remains of an unidentified woman were found in August 1978.

The work was conducted Aug. 16-17 by the OSP Forensics Service Division, the State Medical Examiner's Office forensic anthropologist, OSP's major crimes detectives and members of the Union County Search and Rescue team. The excavation was in response to recent work of the Finley Creek Jane Doe Task Force, which is investigating the unidentified remains of the woman found in 1978. The task force brought cadaver dogs to the site, and the dogs showed interest.

Union County Search and Rescue conducted a grid search of approximately 3 acres around the original burial site and the recent locations where the dogs showed interest. The team found more than 50 bones. The State Medical Examiner's forensic anthropologist



Oregon State Police/Contributed Photo

**Excavation work is done Aug. 16-17, 2022, in the Finley Creek area by state forensic personnel in response to recent interest shown by cadaver dogs brought in by the Finley Creek Jane Doe Task Force involving the unidentified remains of the woman found in 1978.**

examined each bone, but none were of human origin, OSP reported in a press release.

Forensic scientists and detectives conducted excavations at the two points of interest from the cadaver dogs. They also excavated the original burial site.

"Unfortunately, nothing of evidentiary value was discovered during the operation," the press release stated. State police said the

agency and other law enforcement partners will continue to stay in contact with all interested parties in hopes of successfully resolving the identity of the Finley Creek Jane Doe and bringing closure to her family.

Melinda Jederberg, of La Grande, founded the Finley Creek Jane Doe Task Force in 2019. She said she appreciates the hard work OSP did at the site and said it has helped the investigation move forward.

Jeberberg said she hopes state police can follow up its excavation work with deeper digging at the two sites where the two cadaver dogs alerted handlers earlier that they smelled human bones underground. Jeberberg said that after 44 years, human bones at the site may be deeper than the depth excavated.

Investigators believe bones of the Finley Creek Jane Doe may remain near the burial site because

when her skeletal remains were found in 1978 an arm was missing, said Suzanne Timms of Walla Walla, who is assisting with the search as a volunteer. Timms is certain the Finley Creek Jane Doe is her mother, Patricia "Patty" Otto, of Lewiston, Idaho, who has been missing since Aug. 31, 1976.

Timms also said she wants state police to dig deeper at the two sites.

"Cadaver dogs are right 95% of the time," Timms said, adding dogs can smell human bones at least 13 feet deep.

Timms said if bones cannot be found at the Finley Creek site that dental records could be used to prove that her mother was the person buried there. She said a forensic dentist has examined photos taken of the Finley Creek Jane Doe's teeth in 1978 and they match the X-rays of her mother's teeth her dentist in Lewiston had.

"He is convinced that they are from the same person," Timms said.

Timms first suspected the Finley Creek Jane Doe was her mother in 2021 when she saw an image created by a forensic artist, Anthony Redgrave, the operator of Redgrave Research Forensic Services. Redgrave, who is from Massachusetts, was assisting the task force, and the image he created — based

on photos of the skeletal remains found in 1978 — resembled Timms' mother. The bones are believed to have been cremated by the state after they were found, Timms said.

Other details have contributed to Timms' belief the Finley Creek Jane Doe is her mother. The remains were found with a white shirt and red pants, which is what Patty Otto was last seen wearing before she disappeared in 1976.

Timms said she believes her father murdered her mother in Lewiston and buried her in a shallow grave at Finley Creek.

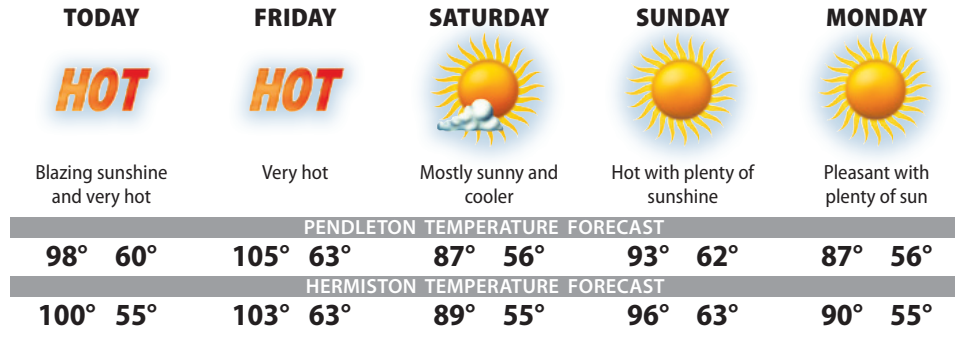
OSP's autopsy records for the Finley Creek Jane Doe, however, do not match those of Patty Otto.

Timms said she believes the discrepancy is due to an error made by the OSP's medical examiner while doing examinations of the skeletal remains of two Jane Does in his office at about the same time in 1978. She said she suspects he assigned his reports to the wrong remains, because his report for the second Jane Doe matches her mother's autopsy photos and dental records.

Timms applauds the work the state police is now doing on the case, especially that of Sgt. Sean Belding.

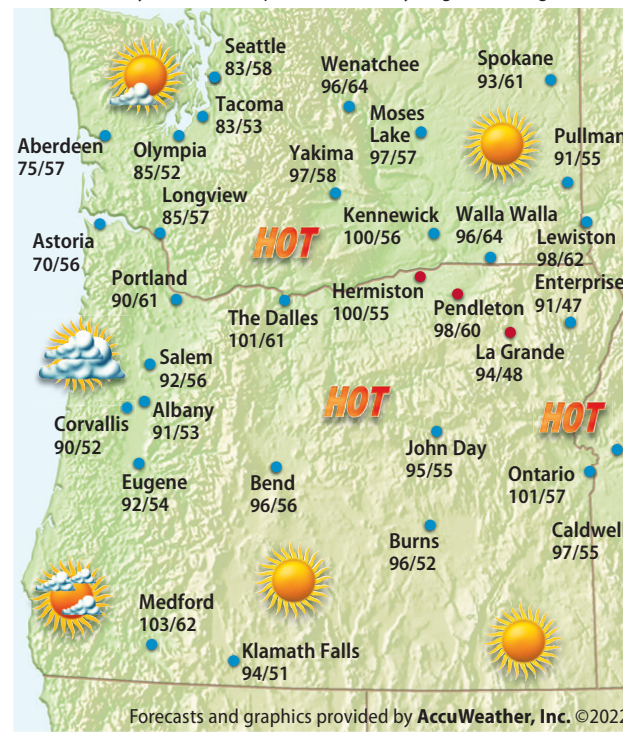
"He wants to get this right," she said. "I have faith in him."

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

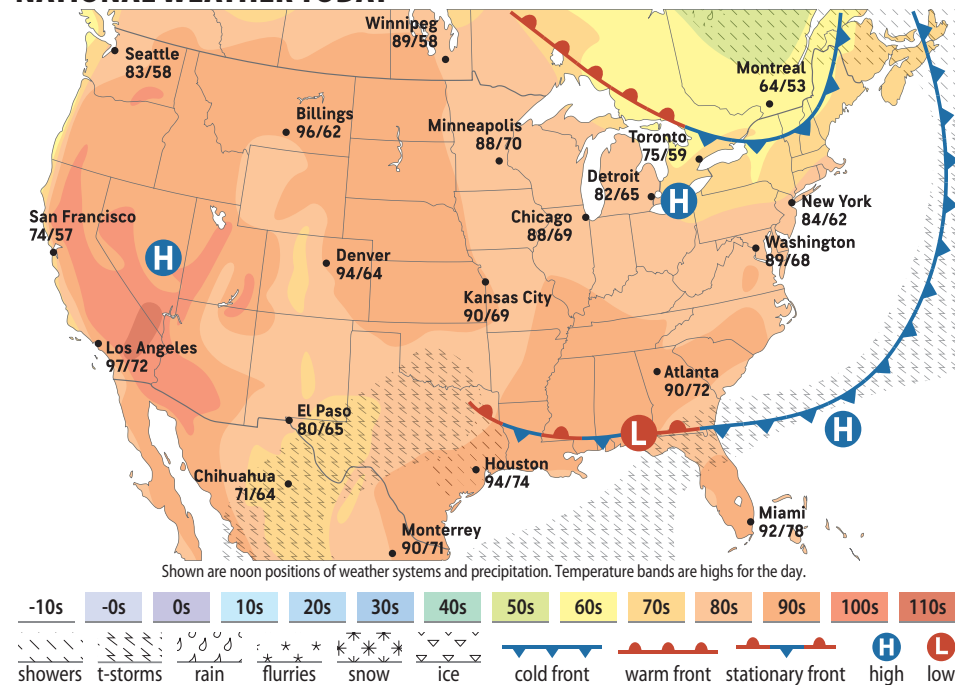
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. Wed.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Wednesday	98°	63°
Normals	85°	55°
Records	101° (1967)	30° (1907)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.04"	
Normal month to date	0.34"	
Year to date	11.17"	
Last year to date	4.35"	
Normal year to date	8.65"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. Wed.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Wednesday	95°	59°
Normals	87°	53°
Records	101° (1967)	38° (1964)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.04"	
Normal month to date	0.17"	
Year to date	7.52"	
Last year to date	2.46"	
Normal year to date	5.31"	
WINDS (in mph)		
Today	Fri.	
Boardman	SW 6-12	NE 4-8
Pendleton	W 6-12	NNE 6-12
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	6:16 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	7:33 p.m.	
Moonrise today	12:08 p.m.	
Moonset today	10:00 p.m.	

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 114° in Las Vegas, Nev. Low 33° in Yellowstone N.P., Wyo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## John Day looking to get out of the red

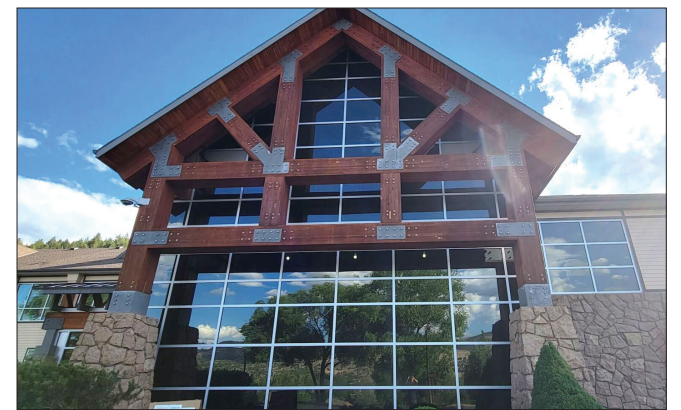
By **STEVEN MITCHELL**  
*Blue Mountain Eagle*

JOHN DAY — After the Blue Mountain Hospital District in John Day posted a \$1.4 million operating loss for the last fiscal year, the district's board of directors gave a glimpse into some of its strategies to address financial challenges during the board's meeting on Aug. 24.

From applying for more than \$4 million in federal pandemic relief money to tossing around the idea of maximizing the value of the district's real estate holdings to offset traveling fees the hospital pays expensive contract labor, the district is looking at various ways to get back in the black.

Last month, the Blue Mountain Hospital District applied for \$4.3 million in disaster relief funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, according to the district's chief financial officer, Eric Price.

The funding, Price said, would reimburse the hospital district for the additional



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

**Blue Mountain Hospital in John Day in July 2022 applied for \$4.3 million in disaster relief funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency after posting a loss of \$1.4 million in the last fiscal year.**

costs of operating safely and handling boosted patient loads during the COVID-19 pandemic from July 2021 to June 2022.

According to Price, the funding is intended to allow the hospital to be reimbursed for the "non-budgeted, extraordinary" costs the hospital has had to incur over the last year.

Those costs, he said, are associated with contract labor, COVID-19 screen-

ers at the front entrance of the hospital, the purchase of personal protective equipment and additional oxygen tanks, among other expenses.

Price said he is submitting application packets for the funding one quarter at a time and he anticipates that the hospital will receive its first funding award within the next two to three months.

He said last month's submission was for \$300,000.

## IN BRIEF

### Eastern Promise is now Early College Initiatives

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University's Eastern Promise program is getting a name change.

The decade-old dual credit and professional development program will be known as Early College Initiatives, according to a press release from the school.

With an eye for new avenues of success, Early College Initiatives will utilize the new Rural Post-Secondary Economic Development grant and Moonshot collaboration to provide more resources to dual-credit high school students. ECI is dedicated to creating a robust environment for students to learn,

teachers to be trained and opportunities to be realized at Eastern Oregon University.

To contact Early College Initiatives, parents, students, teachers and other partners can now email [eci@eou.edu](mailto:eci@eou.edu) or visit [eou.edu/early-college-initiatives](http://eou.edu/early-college-initiatives).

"The foundation that was laid a decade ago has allowed us to move forward with additional grant funding and a new commitment to our dual credit community," Kathleen Brown, associate director of Early College Initiatives, said. "ECI is excited to continue our partnerships and develop new ones that help all students in our region, no matter their educational location, realize their goals of a college education."

—EO Media Group

**CORRECTIONS:** The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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