

FFA chapters selling Christmas trees

Wallowa County Chieftain

Both the Joseph Charter School and Wallowa High School FFA chapters are offering just the tree you need to shelter your family's gifts.

JCS started selling their trees Dec. 5. Of their original 90-tree order, only 35 were left for the taking as of Tuesday afternoon.

Emma Hite, vice president of the JCS chapter, said you can contact her outside of school hours at 541-263-1808 to reserve a tree. Customers also can call the school office at 541-432-7311 to make an appointment to stop by the school and either Hite or chapter president Raymond Seal will help you find the perfect tree.

Tree prices are \$30-\$40, and tree species offered include Sub-Alpine Fir, Grand Fir and Con-Color Fir.

On Dec. 13, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., the Wallowa High School FFA chapter will sell Christmas trees from Paradise



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Joseph Charter school FFA member Kade Kilgore prepares to show off a tree to a prospective customer on Dec. 5, the opening day of tree sales. The chapter sold 55 of their 90 trees that day. The Wallowa High School FFA chapter is selling trees from their school parking lot on Dec. 13 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Tree farm out of Flora at the high school parking lot. FFA members are available to load

your tree. To reserve a tree, call the school at 541-886-2951. The

chapter offers Grand Fir and Sub-Alpine Fir trees priced at \$30-\$50 depending on size.

GOP wants probe of energy tax credit allegations

By Hillary Borrud
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A group of Republican state lawmakers are calling for a probe of allegations that employees at the Oregon Department of Energy and Department of Revenue violated state law on energy tax credits, engaged in favoritism and allowed some people to evade capital gains tax.

The lawmakers outlined the allegations in letters sent Monday to Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, the state's U.S. Attorney, the FBI, the IRS and Marion County District Attorney Walter Beglau.

The legislators who sent the letter were Sen. Doug Whitsett, R-Klamath Falls, Rep. Gail Whitsett, R-Klamath Falls, Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, Rep. Mark Johnson, R-Hood River and Rep. John Davis, R-Wilsonville.

"We hope to achieve a broad legal investigation of what may or may not have gone on," Whitsett said. "That was the purpose of sending the letter to six different law enforcement agencies and (carbon copying) the others so everybody knew they got it."

Lawmakers based their allegations on interviews with whistle blowers who were former or current employees of the Department of Energy and Department of Revenue.

The state issued the tax credits to owners of renewable energy and efficiency projects. Project owners could use the credits to offset their taxes, or sell them at a discount to raise capital. Those sales produced a capital gain for the purchaser.

Business energy tax credits issued between 2006 and 2014 could cost the state up to \$968.1 million in tax revenue, according to the Department of Energy. A majority of that cost — \$703.6 million — comes from tax credits that were sold to investors.

The companies and individuals who bought those credits could realize a total gain of \$209.4 million, which is the difference between the value



EO Media Group

A group of Republican lawmakers have asked state and federal officials to investigate allegations of irregularities in the implementation of Oregon's energy tax credit program.

of the tax credits and the price taxpayers paid to purchase them, according to analysis by the EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital Bureau.

The lawmakers wrote that "(business energy tax credits), as they were issued by the (Department of Energy), were hand delivered by a (Department of Energy) employee to a select buyer of those credits without an opportunity for others to bid." The same employee allowed the tax credit recipients to ignore state price regulations on the sales of the energy tax credits.

"The capital gain on the sale of the credits by the entity purchasing the credits was not appropriately reported to either the state or federal taxing authorities," lawmakers wrote. A state auditor who raised the is-

sue was told to "stand down," and the Department of Energy never issued 1099 tax forms to report the capital gains, according to the lawmakers.

The EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital Bureau reported many of the same issues in recent months.

For example, the bureau reported in August that the well-connected energy tax credit broker Blue Tree Strategies was able to get the Department of Energy to change the rules for energy tax credits. The bureau also reported in June that wealthy individuals and companies were able to avoid paying taxes on capital gains they realized by purchasing discounted energy tax credits, because auditors at the Department of Revenue were told by top officials in 2012 to

ignore the problems.

"It certainly appears that there was some favoritism going on," Sen. Doug Whitsett said Tuesday. "There certainly sounds like there may have been significant taxes foregone ... It certainly sounds as if there was one particular brokerage that was garnering great favoritism."

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Cannabis research task force appointed

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

SALEM — State officials have appointed 15 members to a new cannabis research task force charged with studying and recommending legislation on the development of the medical marijuana industry.

The body — officially called the Task Force on Researching the Medical and Public Health Properties of Cannabis — has yet to schedule its first meeting, said Susan Wickstrom, an Oregon Health Authority spokeswoman.

The agency was in the process of scheduling one at press time.

Legislation earlier this year established the task force to answer questions about the credibility of existing research on the medical properties of marijuana and to propose solutions to limitations on cannabis research.

The task force will examine the legal barriers to establishing research

laboratories and using institutional review boards to monitor and review research.

Lawmakers are also interested in the possibility of using state or private sector funds to pay for research and establishing a state-run research grow site.

The task force was due to deliver its first report and recommendations Dec. 15, but appointees were not announced until earlier this week.

Another set of report and recommendations is due Feb. 1.

Senate President Peter Courtney appointed a Senate representative, Sen. Chris Edwards, D-Eugene. The House representative, appointed by House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, is Rep. Carl Wilson, R-Grants Pass.

The governor appointed the other 13 members.

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Tina 541-263-0446

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Second Course: Fresh Oregon crab cocktail

Third Course: Cranberry candied pecan salad

Main Course: Prime rib with horseradish sauce; Yorkshire pudding; Roasted beets with lemon zest

Vegetarian Option
Lentil loaf; Yorkshire pudding; Roasted beets with lemon zest

Dessert: Saint Lucia buns; Dates with almond butter & coconut

Please RSVP • info@lakewallowalodge.com or 541-398-0305
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