

# Minam Curve roadwork gears up

Tidewater Contractors and their subcontractors expect to begin work on the Minam Curve project around Aug. 6. The two-year project will realign the 25 mph hairpin turn at milepost 30. It has been a historical accident location. The realignment will move 1,500 feet of roadway and take some of it into the hill by as much as 300 feet. Slope stabilization is part of the project. Travelers can expect crews, trucks and equipment in the area with flaggers and pilot cars controlling traffic. Blasting to cut through the rock face is expected to begin late August or early September and continue at intervals through the summer and fall. Traffic delays throughout construction are expected to be less than 20 minutes long. Motorists are advised to factor in those delays when planning drives through the area. Tidewater was awarded the \$4.3 million contract earlier this year and has until fall 2019 to complete the work.

# LAND

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The celebration will also include symbolic gestures of return, prayer, music and storytelling. The property holds meaning for the Nez Perce Tribe because of the spiritual, environmental, ecological and historical significance of Wallowa Lake and the surrounding area, according to Greg Nelson, Director of Communications for the Methodist church. “Oregon-Idaho United Methodists’ relationship with the Nimi’ipuu (Nez Perce) homeland began in 1922 with the first event at Wallowa Lake followed by the purchase of the property in 1923,” Nelson said. As the years have passed the conference’s relationship with the Nez Perce has evolved as it was fostered by persons who served as pastors in the Joseph, Elgin and Enterprise congregations, as well as staff at the Wallowa Lake Camp. The Nez Perce Tribe, based in Lapwai, Idaho, has held two culture camps each summer for elementary and high school aged children since 2000.

“This annual interaction has gifted both the tribe and United Methodists with learning and understanding,” Nelson said. “Because of this, the relationship has deepened and, in the summer of 2016, a meaningful step was taken when the Nez Perce flag began being flown alongside the US flag at the camp. “We hope this is another step on our journey toward healing and peace between the church and the tribe,” said Rev. Todd Bartlett, Executive Director of Camp and Retreat Ministries for the Methodists. The Wallowa Lake Camp is owned and operated through the Oregon-Idaho Conference of The United Methodist Church and its Board of Camp and Retreat Ministries. The board operates six sites in the two states with a mission to create quality environments of Christian hospitality and learning. The sites serve religiously affiliated groups, schools and educational bodies, families, service organizations and other nonprofits. The Nez Perce Tribe is located on a 750,000 acres reservation. Seventeen million acres in what is now Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Montana made up the tribe’s original homeland.

# BIOMASS

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The company has done well in firewood sales due to its ability to reliably meet the needs of their grocery store customers primarily from Oregon and Washington. The firewood market allows them to use trees scorched by forest fires and small diameter logs larger mills do not want, making them a key player in forest restoration. “For the last two years, 50 percent of our volume through here has been post fire material,” Schmidt said. “We really got that niche market started because we were the first in the west to do certified pest free, so we’re not moving invasive species across the west.” And for retailers, no spiders in the groceries. IBS is also preparing to expand its market for posts and poles by using a new process that wraps the base of fir post and poles with Rotblock, a recycled drip irrigation material. That material gives the wood a life expectancy comparable to treated poles. Organic farms and vineyards are an important new market for the product, Schmidt said, because they do not want chemically treated material in the ground. “We are partnering with Rotblock to prewrap poles here,” Schmidt said. “We put in, for the second year in a row, for a Wood Innovation Grant through USDA to build an automated system for that.” One of the problems the business has faced is that most forestry sales are too large for small companies and therefore go to companies outside



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

**Nils Christoffersen of Wallowa Resources, U. S. Rep. Greg Walden and State Rep. Greg Barreto joined Commissioner Todd Nash and David and Jesse Schmidt of Integrated Biomass in Wallowa for a tour of the facility and a discussion of timber harvest and local lumber business opportunities July 26.**

of Wallowa County, Schmidt said. That means the jobs created are not available to Wallowa County residents — providing local workers with living wage jobs remains a primary goal for the company, Schmidt said. Another problem is that the wages IBS can reasonably offer are falling behind the cost of living. “We’re looking for ways we can offer those \$15 to \$20 an hour jobs,” Schmidt said. “Housing costs have doubled in Wallowa County in the nine years I’ve lived here ... and the \$13 per hour jobs we created are going unfilled. We’ve had five positions open for a year.” But the situation is improving. Smaller timber sale projects for smaller businesses are being required through the small business set-aside. Schmidt said his company was the only bidder on five recent small-diameter timber sales. New measures have been proposed included in Federal Farm Bill, according to Rep. Walden, including categorical exclusions at 6,000 acres, requirements for replanting after a fire and others. Another measure providing for up to 20-year stewardship contracts were recently approved in the 2019 Omnibus Spending Bill, Walden said. In addition, large mills are realizing that disposing of material they cannot use is important and are partnering with businesses like IBS. The company continues to look for capital from a variety of sources, pushing for more automation that will create higher-wage jobs. And they are readying themselves for partnerships with larger companies. “Our business model fits an important niche,” Schmidt said. “Every month we have communities from all across the west that want to come and look at what we’re doing because this is something that’s needed in other places.”

# WALDEN

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Joseph Days Parade July 28. She simply asked the candidate face-to-face. “A lot of folks have been asking whether we’re going to debate,” she said. “I think any candidate owes voters an opportunity to hear their

ideas side-by-side with the opposition.” She added that several organizations have contacted both candidates in order to arrange a debate. “From what we’ve heard, he hasn’t been responsive to those organizations, so I thought yesterday would be a great opportunity to ask him directly,” she said, during a July 29 exclusive interview with the Chieftain. A video of the event shows McLeod-Skinner walking to Walden’s vehicle and challenging him to the three debates. “I look forward to a schedule,” Walden replied. McLeod-Skinner then requested debates in southern, central and eastern Oregon or all 20 of the district’s counties. “I look forward to debating you,” Walden said. “We’ll figure out a schedule that works.” “Excellent,” Skinner-McLeod replied, just before Walden’s car pulled away. Later, McLeod told the Chieftain, “Hopefully, that’s a commitment on his part.”



## WALLOWA COUNTY FAIR

### “Cheers, Steers, and Volunteers”

August 4th - 11th, 2018

### Schedule Highlights

Sat. Aug. 4	9AM – 4-H Dog Show
Sun – Tues, Aug. 5-7	4-H Horse Show
Wed – Sat, Aug. 8-11	Come see the Open Class & 4-H Entries at Cloverleaf Hall
Wed – Aug. 8	2PM – 4-H/FFA Livestock Entries
Thur – Aug. 9	OSU BENNY BEAVER DAY
Thur – Fri – Aug. 9-10	4-H/FFA Livestock Show 7PM – 4-H/FFA Grand Champion Classes
Fri – Aug. 10	4PM – “Bessie Bingo”
Sat – Aug. 11	8AM – Small Animal Show 10AM – Pee Wee Showmanship 11AM – Games on the Grass & Balloon Scramble 6PM – 4-H/FFA LIVESTOCK SALE

Enjoy a meal at the 4-H Food Booth!

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ART BY  
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