

# Spending bill: Most provisions have to do with organic agriculture programs

Continued from Page A1

ture. That's a win all-around for both the rural economy and a sustainable future.

Patrick Thiel, who operates Prairie Creek Farm near Joseph and Lostine, is one of the few fully organic commercial farmers in the county. He said none of the ag spending increases directly affects him.

"It sounds like the government's maintaining programs they already have in place," he said.

Thiel said he is pleased to see added funding for the Organic Transition Program, which helps conventional

farmers with some of the costs in switching to organic. Although the \$6 million is small by comparison to other programs, he still called it "very significant" given the high cost and high risk of transitioning from conventional to organic farming.

"That part of the spending gives farmers the tools to make it," he said.

The only real help Thiel has received from federal programs so far is a cost-share reimbursement for organic certification fees. But even that is limited. This past year, he received \$550 of a possible \$750 from the feds.

Mostly it's the large-scale organic industry and research at state universities that benefit organic growers that seem to receive the bulk of federal assistance.

Other organic and sustainable growers in the county welcome the thought, but, like Thiel, are skeptical of receiving any direct support.

Kurt Melville grows small grains on the no-till Cornerstone Farms near Joseph. He said they have one parcel of 25 to 40 acres that's been pasture for 30 years that they've considered farming organic.

"If there's funding avail-

able to do more research and trials, we'll continue to look into it," Melville said when told of the funding bill becoming law. He said added funding may or may not help develop herbicides and pesticides that can mesh with organic practices.

"It's like throwing money at renewable energies like wind and solar," he said. "If the government comes along and says here's money to test this out, I think that's a good thing."

Self-described hobby farmer Wendy McCullough raises 27 meat goats and hay on her 20-acre Sally B. Farms next to some of Mel-

ville's land. She said she uses organic methods but her operation is not certified.

She said she wasn't aware of the ag component in the recent spending bill. But her main concern over the funding going to organic agriculture is big ag getting a share.

She has no plan to transition to organic, so she's not interested in much of the funding.

"I don't believe in it," she said. "It's fine for small companies, but when big ag gets involved, it's wrong for all of us."

Bob Stangel, one of the owners of the Stangel Bison

Ranch, said he's not so sure any of the funding in the recently approved spending package would pertain to his operation.

"We practice sustainable agriculture," Stangel said. "There's also the new buzzword, 'regenerative' agriculture where, if done properly, livestock keep the land healthy."

Other agricultural and rural provisions in the 2020 spending bill include support for production of CBD oil as well as hemp, improvement of water conservation and use by irrigation districts, rural housing, and rural business development.

# Top stories: Headline news includes dam reconstruction, suspicious barrels

Continued from Page A1

occupy the same footprint as the existing structure. But it will be stouter. Importantly, it will include a fish ladder, allowing the eventual reintroduction of sockeye salmon to Wallowa Lake. The dam is being designed by McMillen Jacobs Associates of Boise, Idaho. The firm expects to begin initial reconstruction in August, with project completion slated for June 2021.

Hopes that a trail along the Wallowa Union Railroad Authority (WURRA) right-of-way for hikers, cyclists and others might happen someday were dashed this year. In late February, the Wallowa County Planning Commission turned down the application of the Joseph Branch Rails with Trails (JBRWT) project. The decision was appealed to the Wallowa County Commissioners, but in July, before they could make a decision, the group withdrew its application for a trail along the WURRA right-of-way between Joseph and Enterprise. The reason: After Commissioner John Hillcock recused himself due to a conflict of interest, JBRWT thought that the remaining two commissioners would produce a tie in votes, which would effectively deny the application.

In April, a long-planned restoration of the Wallowa River through Wallowa Lake State Park received a green light and \$1.1 million in funding. The project is planned to return the river to its original braided pattern. The changes will help alleviate flooding of some properties and also provide improved spawning habitat for kokanee and eventually, sockeye. Portions of the park will receive new landscaping and new paths. The construction began late in the fall of 2019 and is anticipated to continue in the fall and winter 2020.

In May, Wallowa County's first recreational marijuana dispensary opened in Joseph. The owner, Getty Pollard, is a 13-year resident of Wallowa County.

In June, the EPA agreed to remove barrels labeled as containing the toxic herbicide 24-D or 2,4,5T from Wallowa Lake. The barrels were discovered and documented by the Blue Mountain Divers SCUBA team of William Lambert and Lisa Anderson. The report



Photos by Ellen Morris Bishop  
A member of the hazardous materials crew watches as a rusted barrel is lifted from its containment "overpack" for inspection and testing June 15.

of possible toxics contaminating Wallowa Lake, just offshore from the marina, caused widespread alarm. EPA brought in a full hazardous materials recovery team, including a remotely operated vehicle to map the barrels' locations and HazMat, fully suited divers. The operation took about two weeks. The EPA took over a large swath of the marina parking area. In the end, the barrels initially photographed by the Blue Mountain Divers, were removed from the lake, along with 12 other suspicious barrels. All of them tested out as clean, and there was no trace of contamination.

In July, Andy McKee began serious renovations on the Litch Building in Enterprise, and also withdrew his application for a controversial 825-acre campground on Big Sheep Divide. Stein's Distillery doubled its production and the OK Theatre celebrated its centennial in fine fashion. Lest we forget, July also brought us Fiddle

Camp, the Fly-in, Tamkaliks and the 74th Chief Joseph Days.

The Granite Gulch fire and its successful management as a naturally ignited wildfire occupied the summer's news, as well. Sparked by lightning July 31, the fire was entirely within the Eagle Cap Wilderness, in the upper reaches of the Minam River watershed. Forest Service fire crews closely monitored the blaze and restricted the fire's spread somewhat with helicopter water drops and on-the ground control. It produced some visible smoke and notably "blew up" Aug. 20, but with encouragement from Forest Service crews as well as the weather, returned to more sedate behavior by the next evening. The fire covered about 6,000 acres, and was allowed to burn until fall rains quenched it.

Wallowa Memorial Hospital and other providers continued their growth and service to the community. In November, the hospi-



The Yanke property that is being purchased by campaign for the east Moraine, is 1,800 acres that offer superb views, excellent opportunities for recreation, and a productive working landscape.

tal raised nearly half of the funds needed to purchase a new 4x4 ambulance all in one night at the Healthy Futures dinner and auction. The hospital was also one of only four in Oregon to receive a five-star rating from Medicare/Medicaid, and is ranked in the top 100 of U.S. hospitals.

The Lostine River Corridor has remained in the news. In June 2018, an Oregon District Court found no merit in the lawsuit by Oregon Wild and the Greater Hells Canyon Council to

halt the Lostine Corridor Public Safety Project. The project would create open spaces along the narrow

road that leads to the Two Pan trailhead. In December, a 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals hearing on the appeal of this decision left both sides feeling optimistic. The appeal decision is expected in early 2020. Meanwhile, the USFS has successfully offered one timber sale in the corridor, which may be logged and thinned this winter. And the concern about a future fire in the canyon sparked Lostine River Road residents to establish a Fire Wise Community in August — the first in eastern Oregon.

As winter closes in around us, and a new year dawns, Wallowa County has much to look forward to in 2020.

**ATHLETE OF THE WEEK**

**CODY FENT**

This week's Athlete of the Week honor goes to EHS wrestler, Cody Fent. The Outlaws freshman, 15, suffered an injury during the Enterprise Kickoff tourney and finally re-entered the competition at Pomeroy, Wash. on Dec. 27-28. Wrestling at 132 pounds, Fent wrestled four matches, winning three by fall and losing one, on his way to a third place finish amongst 17 teams.

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**Wallowa BUSINESS**

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Success Story **D.Lind, PhotoArtisan Debbie Lind, owner**

"Kristy Athens has given me the confidence to pursue art as a business. She made me think about focusing on transactions rather than simply talking about my work."

Wallowa Business is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corp.

**OREGON STATE SNOWMOBILE ASSOCIATION**

**OSSA'S 48<sup>TH</sup> CONVENTION**

Hosted by Wallowa County Gamblers

**WCCSC Snowmobile Club**

## JANUARY 14-18, 2020 JOSEPH OREGON

### 2020 CONVENTION EVENTS SIGN UP FORM

**PLEASE CHECK OFF EVENTS YOU PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN**

**RETURN THIS WHOLE PAGE**

**2020 CONVENTION EVENTS**

\*SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WEATHER AND SNOW CONDITIONS PERMITTING\* ALL RIDES AND TRAININGS BEGIN AT SALT CREEK SUMMIT SNOWPARK

Sweatshirts and hats will be available for purchase

**- REGISTRATION COMPLETED WITH PAYMENT - PLEASE INCLUDE PRE PAYMENT/RESERVATION FOR TRAINING COURSES YOU WILL ATTEND**

**MAIL (WHOLE PAGE) TODAY WITH PAYMENT TO:**

Wallowa County Gamblers Snowmobile Club  
P.O. Box 255 Enterprise, OR 97828

**TO REGISTER FOR 2020 OSSA CONVENTION**

- ➔ THERE WILL BE BEGINNER TO ADVANCED GUIDED RIDES TUESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY.
- ➔ SOCIALIZING EVERY EVENING
- ➔ TOPPED OFF BY A DELICIOUS BANQUET SATURDAY EVENING.
- ➔ POKER NIGHT AFTER DINNER ON THURSDAY
- ➔ PIZZA NIGHT ON FRIDAY EVENING
- ➔ POKER RUN ON SATURDAY

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 14TH**

- 9 AM BEACON TRAINING \$10/PERSON (DONATION TO WAC)
- 10 AM BEGINNER RIDE- HELLS CANYON OVERLOOK
- 10 AM INTERMEDIATE RIDE
- 9 AM ADVANCED RIDE- FISH LAKE \*FULL AVALANCHE GEAR REQUIRED- BEACON, SHOVEL, PROBE AND RADIO
- 10 AM SNOWBIKE RIDER AND INTERESTED IN A SNOWBIKE ONLY RIDE
- 6 PM DINNER AT SUGAR TIME BAKERY- catered dinner

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15TH**

- COMPANION RESCUE TRAINING COURSE \$75/PERSON (DONATION TO WAC)
- 10 AM BEGINNER RIDE-MT HOWARD
- 10 AM INTERMEDIATE RIDE
- 9 AM ADVANCED RIDE-RUSSELL MNT \*FULL AVALANCHE GEAR REQUIRED- BEACON, SHOVEL, PROBE AND RADIO
- 10 AM SNOWBIKE RIDER AND INTERESTED IN A SNOWBIKE ONLY RIDE
- 6 PM DINNER AT EL BAJAO

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 16TH**

- 9 AM BEACON TRAINING \$10/PERSON (DONATION TO WAC)
- 10 AM BEGINNER RIDE-HARLE BUTTE
- 10 AM INTERMEDIATE RIDE
- 9 AM ADVANCED RIDE-SUGAR LOAF \*FULL AVALANCHE GEAR REQUIRED- BEACON, SHOVEL, PROBE AND RADIO
- 10 AM SNOWBIKE RIDER AND INTERESTED IN A SNOWBIKE ONLY RIDE
- 6 PM DINNER CATERED AT THE ELKS LODGE ENTERPRISE POKER - FOLLOWING DINNER

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 17TH**

- 8 AM-12 PM GENERAL MEETING LOCATION: EAGLE'S VIEW INN AND SUITES CONFERENCE ROOM
- 12 PM-1 PM CATERED LUNCH AVAILABLE IN CONFERENCE ROOM
- 1 PM-5 PM BOARD MEETING LOCATION: EAGLE'S VIEW INN AND SUITES CONFERENCE ROOM

**VENDORS ON MOUNTAIN AT SALT CREEK SUMMIT**

- 10:00AM-2:00PM
- 10 AM BEGINNER RIDE-JANE'S RIDGE
- 10 AM INTERMEDIATE RIDE
- 9 AM ADVANCED RIDE-BLACKHORSE \*FULL AVALANCHE GEAR REQUIRED- BEACON, SHOVEL, PROBE AND RADIO
- 10 AM SNOWBIKE RIDER AND INTEREST IN SNOWBIKE ONLY RIDE
- 6 PM DINNER AT C.OVERLEAF HALL- PIZZA provided by Sno-Cat vendors

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 18TH**

- 9 AM POKER RUN (65 MILE LOOP) SALT CREEK SUMMIT \$5/HAND (\$200 PURSE)
- 6 PM CONVENTION BANQUET DINNER AT 6 PM AT THE CLOVERLEAF HALL SILENT AUCTION AND RAFFLES PRIME RIB DINNER CATERED BY STUBBORN MULE \$36/PLATE CHICKEN CORDON ROUGE \$28/PLATE

\*Note: 2020 Convention events are subject to change due to weather and snow conditions. Also, our OSSA general membership meeting will be held on Friday this year. All rides and trainings begin at Salt Creek Summit Snow Park

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Guest \_\_\_\_\_  
Children \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Barquet Meal Selection: Please indicate how many of each meal according to Number of Guest(s) registered.  
Prime Rib Number of Guest(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken Number of Guest(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Registration per Adult \$36 prime x \_\_\_\_\_ Registration per Adult \$28 chicken cordon bleu x \_\_\_\_\_  
Registration per Child \$12 spaghetti x \_\_\_\_\_ Sweatshirt \$25 each SM MD LG XL XXL XXXL \_\_\_\_\_  
Hats \$5 x \_\_\_\_\_  
Registration Total \_\_\_\_\_  
Please make checks out to WCCSC and Mail to PO BOX 255 Enterprise, Oregon 97828  
FOR A LIST OF ACCOMMODATIONS CHECK OUT THE OSSA WEBSITE www.ossanow.org

**Happy New Year!**

**EPA** United States Environmental Protection Agency

**Records now available for the Wallowa Lake Drum Removal, June 2019**

The U.S. EPA has finalized the record for the Wallowa Lake Drum Removal that took place last June. In the fall of 2018 volunteer divers reported finding dozens of drums on the lake bottom, including drums labeled as herbicides. From June 13-18, 2019, EPA and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality investigated and found 76 drums on the lake bottom. EPA removed five drums with legible labels and/or believed by divers to be intact. Further inspection found that none of the five removed drums was intact, and analysis of sediment and water samples taken by the agencies detected no chlorinated herbicides.

Supporting documents (the Administrative Record) available online at semspub: <https://semspub.epa.gov/src/collection/10/AR66179>

For more background and photos go to the web page at response.epa.gov: [https://response.epa.gov/site/site\\_profile.aspx?site\\_id=14292](https://response.epa.gov/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=14292)

Documents are also available by request at: **Joseph Public Library**, 201 North Main, Joseph Oregon, 97846, 541-432-0141

TDD/TTY users may call the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Then please give the operator # 206-553-6362 for Michael Boykin.