

# Funding for dam again mulled by Legislature

Delayed a year by pandemic, hopes remain it will go through

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA LAKE — Although sales for bonds to fund refurbishment of the Wallowa Lake Dam were supposed to begin this month, the Oregon Legislature had to put that on hold for a year because the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp drop in Oregon Lottery revenue.

But lawmakers and dam stakeholders are optimistic the funding will come through this year.

“What they have decided to do is include those in discussion for this year’s funding cycle. Because they were in the governor’s, that gives us some options,” state Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, said Thursday, March 25.

He said that although the lottery funding is “trending in the right direction,” it may not be necessary to rely on the bonds and the funding could come out of the fund out of general fund or another fund.

“We won’t need to go to lottery bonds in that case,” he said.

The plan was to raise \$14 million through sale of bonds from lottery revenue and begin selling them this month, with work on the dam to begin after irrigation season ends Sept. 30. Another \$2 million of the \$16 million project will be raised from “other sources,” said Dan Butterfield, president of the Wallowa Lake Irrigation District, which



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

**The century-old Wallowa Lake Dam is slated for a \$16 million refurbishment, \$14 million of which was to come from state lottery funds that have been put on hold. The Oregon Legislature is in the process of adding the dam project to the budget for the 2021-22 biennium.**

owns the dam.

“There’s been some outside interest expressing a desire to help,” he said. “But we may have to fund that ourselves.”

He said the project is waiting for the state money to be assured before seeking the additional funds.

“That has to be solidified before we break ground,” he said.

Butterfield was encouraged that the governor and lawmakers seem enthusiastic about funding the dam this year.

“She’s the reason we got put on the budget in the beginning,” he said of Gov. Kate Brown. “It’s nice to have support at that level.”

In addition to the irriga-

tion district, the stakeholders in the dam project include the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Nez Perce Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Last fall, all four entities signed a memorandum of agreement to support the project. The latter three stakeholders are primarily interested in natural resources concerns at the dam, such as a fish passage from the Wallowa River to the lake and downstream watersheds. The irrigation district manages the lake level and outflows for agricultural irrigation.

The dam and more than 30 other projects were put on hold when the June lottery report came in below

the four-to-one ratio needed to sell bonds to fund them. That means \$4 million in lottery revenue must come in to sell \$1 million in bonds. The report came in at only 3.1 to one.

Hansell said final word on lottery funding won’t come in until June. If it’s sufficient, bonds can be sold beginning in April 2022, with construction to begin that fall.

Plans call for an improved spillway, to add more concrete for weight, replacing the five conduit gates with new ones and to upgrade the electrical and instrumentation.

The most difficult element in the plans is that of the addition of a fish passage.

What type of passage has yet to be determined, Butterfield said. The tribes want the fish passage to restore the ability of sockeye salmon — and other fish — to make Wallowa Lake their home. Steelhead, coho salmon, bull trout, mountain whitefish and rainbow trout are all species that can live in the lake.

At their March 17 meeting, the Wallowa County commissioners agreed to send a letter addressed to the governor and the top officials in the state Senate and House of Representatives expressing their support for the dam project.

“Understanding the project was delayed due to budget constraints the state weathered over the past year

caused by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we trust that fixing the Wallowa Lake Dam will continue to be on the forefront of priorities for rural Oregon,” the letter stated in part.

“All indications are that there’s an overwhelming amount of support” for the project, Commissioner Todd Nash said during the meeting. “We were bumped back in the queue for the next funding round of lottery funds that weren’t what was anticipated.”

Hansell said he had seen the letter and was encouraged by it, but believes similar letters from other counties with projects on the line have been sent.

Butterfield said that as discussion of the various interests among the stakeholders continue, their relationship has improved.

“We’re developing a really good relationship with Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes and ODFW,” he said.

All entities are remaining optimistic.

“We’re assuming we’ll get funded,” Butterfield said. “We’re hoping to have a big party in a year or so” to celebrate the funding coming through.

## IN BRIEF

### Joseph City Council to meet Thursday

JOSEPH — The agenda for this week’s Joseph City Council meeting includes two resolutions, one on a Corrective Action Plan and another on spending limitations, according to a press release.

The meeting will take place at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 1, at the Joseph Community Events Center.

In addition to the various department reports, the council will continue to discuss short- and long-term goals for city government, the materials to be used this year for the Oregon Department of Transportation to upgrade sidewalks around town and the Citizen Involvement Committee.

There are opportunities for residents to address the council and Mayor Belinda Buswell during the meeting for items not on the agenda.

### Flora School Days to be online again

FLORA — Once again, the annual Flora School Days will be held online instead of in person because of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a press release.

The pioneer demonstration gathering held each June will make a schedule change from February’s CANT (Crafting a New Tomorrow) and last June’s viral productions. School Days Online 2021 will start Tuesday, June 1, and end on the usual Saturday, June 5.

The weekday presentations will be from 6-8pm Tuesday through Friday, June 4. Each pioneer skill will be prerecorded, but each presenter will be live to answer questions on the skills presented.

The Saturday folk arts will be live and once again viewers can ask questions. Presentations will be tanning hides, smithing hinges and nails and cutlery, carving a bowl, using a wood cookstove, nine-patch sewing by hand and machine

and herbal gathering of food. The mission of the event is to keep pioneer skills alive and to restore the now-closed Flora School.

Come June, tune into the Flora School Education Center’s webpage at [www.floraschool.org](http://www.floraschool.org) to view the demonstrations.

For more information, contact the center at 541-828-7010 or [floraschool@tds.net](mailto:floraschool@tds.net). Also, learn more on Facebook, Instagram and the center’s YouTube channel and Instagram site.

### Paint your wine glasses at Josephy Center

JOSEPHY — A class in Wine Glass Painting will be offered at the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture in Joseph from 5-7 p.m. each Wednesday through Aug. 11, according to a press release.

Instructor Pamela Beach will lead the free, in-person class — which started March 24 — to teach artistic friends and neighbors to help paint wine glasses. The glasses are then given to those who purchase opening-night tickets for the Wallowa Valley Festival of the Arts.

Wine glasses, glass paints and brushes are all provided. No experience is necessary.

For everyone’s health and safety, masks are required. A maximum of six people is

allowed in each class. Walk-ins are welcome.

### Book Group to discuss The Yellow House: A Memoir

JOSEPHY — A copy of *The Yellow House: A Memoir* by Sarah M. Broom is being offered to those interested at the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture in Joseph, according to a press release.

The book costs \$17, but Book Group members get a 15% discount. Anyone can become a member, the release stated.

It’s part of the centers Book Group, which meets regularly to discuss various books.

In 1961, Broom’s mother, Ivory Mae, bought a shotgun house — a narrow rectangular domestic residence — in the then-promising neighborhood of New Orleans East and built her world inside of it. It was the height of the Space Race and the neighborhood was home to a major NASA plant. The post-World War II optimism seemed assured. The widowed Ivory Mae married Sarah’s father, Simon Broom, and their combined family would eventually number 12 children. After Simon died — six months after Sarah’s birth — *The Yellow House* would become Ivory Mae’s 13th and most unruly child.

To read more, visit <https://library.josephy.org/book-group/>.

### Ceramics class offered at Josephy Center

JOSEPHY — A class called Foundations in Ceramics for Beginners will be offered at the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture in Joseph from 5:30-7:30 p.m. April 19 to June 7, according to a press release.

Preregistration required by April 15. A cost of \$195 is charged for the recurring event.

The in-person class will be taught by Pamela Beach, a ceramicist and instructor in the project-based clay-making journey. Students will learn the fundamentals of hand-building with lessons in design, texture and glazing. The class includes clay, glazes, firing and three open studio sessions, offered Saturdays, May 1, May 22, and June 12.

The class is for adults 18 years and older. No experience necessary!

For everyone’s health and safety, masks are required at all times.

— Chieftain staff

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**Births**  
A daughter, Chloe Jane Starner, was born March 17, 2021 in Enterprise to John J. Tye and Cindi Starner of Lostine. Grandparents are Terrie & John Wynans, George Starner, Terri Tye and John P. Tye.  
A son, Matthew Kelly Bickell, was born March 23, 2021 in Enterprise to Steven Bickell and La Gina Fowler of Enterprise. Grandparents are Darin Fowler, Jill Bickell and James Steve Bickell.  
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**ATHLETE OF THE WEEK**  
**LUTE RAMSDEN**  
Lute Ramsden of Wallowa posted big numbers in the Cougars' hard-fought loss to Crane on March 23. The quarterback threw for 241 yards and three touchdowns, including a scoring pass to big brother Zeb that briefly gave Wallowa a 22-20 lead late in the fourth quarter before the Mustangs scored last to win the close battle.  
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