

THE WEEK IN PHOTOS
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WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



136th Year, No. 52

WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

Farmers relieved by precipitation

After dry winter, March brought snow; spring rains expected

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — A few weeks ago, Wallowa County farmers gearing up for spring planting were worried the snow-pack wouldn't be sufficient once irrigation season arrived.

Then came March — and repeated snow and rainstorms.

In mid-February, Tim Melville, of Cornerstone Farms, was particularly concerned that soil moisture on the floor of the Wallowa Valley was seriously down. He noted that on Wednesday, Feb. 10, according to Oregon SNOTEL, the snow-water equivalent was only at 62% of normal at the SNOTEL site at Mount Howard. But by Thursday, April 1, it was up to 88% of normal.

"I can be a bit more optimistic, but what really counts is where that's at about the first of May," he said last week. "100% back in November doesn't mean much, but 100% the first of May, and you're in pretty good shape."

Dan Butterfield, of Butterfield Farms east of Joseph, said his high-elevation farm off Liberty Road has gotten plenty of moisture. On Friday, March 26, he said he'd received about 6 inches of snow there.

"I kind of wish it would dry up," he said, adding that the level of Wallowa Lake is coming up satisfactorily.

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A TIME FOR (NO-)TILLING: COUNTY FARMERS TREAT SOIL GENTLY

As planting begins, direct seeding helps soil, economy

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — With the arrival of spring, most Wallowa County farmers are gearing up to break ground for planting season.

But maybe "break ground" is the wrong term here, since most here are advocates of "no-till" farming. No-till — or direct seeding — involves no or minimal cultivation, the application of herbicides to fight weeds and the planting of cover crops that cattle can graze and will return nutrients to the soil.

"We got rid of our tillage equipment — the plows, the discs and the cultivators — over 40 years ago," said Tim Melville, patriarch of the family owned Cornerstone Farms near Enterprise. "We have fields that have not been tilled in over 40 years. We just rotate one crop after another year after year."

He sees the practice as environmentally friendly.

"We stop soil erosion to next to nothing from both wind and water," he said. "The other big advantage is you're sequestering carbon because all your residue is being cycled back into the soil by all the biology that is created in those top few inches. They're consuming all that residue; it just disappears. All the worms and bugs that're in that soil are consuming the residue. A plant is mostly carbon; they breathe it in."

Melville sees the relationship between man and plants as one where each helps the other.

"They (plants) are taking what we breathe out and turning it into



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

A no-till grain drill is overhauled in preparation for the upcoming planting season at the Melville family's Cornerstone Farms just outside of Enterprise on Wednesday, March 31, 2021.



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Kevin Melville, of Cornerstone Farms, welds a part onto a grain truck Wednesday, March 31, 2021, at the farm shop near Enterprise in preparation for planting season.

something we can breathe," he said. "It's what you call a symbiotic relationship."

The Mevilles — including Tim's wife, Audry, and their sons Kevin and Kurt and their families — farm about 5,000 acres in the county raising a wide variety of crops. They hope to get started planting this week, Kurt Melville said.

"We grow everything," he said. "Wheat, barley, hay, flax, canola, timothy hay, peas, oats, mustards, quinoa. A lotta things."

Other growers in the Wallowa Valley have followed the lead of the Mevilles, who began their no-till practices in the late 1970s.

"They were the 'groundbreak-

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Kerry Searles tests a harrow Thursday, April 1, 2021, on the Melville family's Cornerstone Farms just outside of Enterprise. The Mevilles — like other Wallowa County farmers — are getting ready for planting season.
Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa County Voices



Destiny Wecks
Enterprise-Joseph

She's starting her own herd

ENTERPRISE — Destiny Wecks has lived in Wallowa County all her life. She lives on a ranch between Joseph and Enterprise with her parents, Jeffrey and Vixen Radford-Wecks.

Her dad is an electrician and her mom is a community health worker out of La Grande.

On the ranch, they raise hay for their more than 30 horses and she has five of her own cows and a couple market steers.

Destiny is a junior at Enterprise High School. Last year, when the school was forced by the COVID-19 pandemic to do online instruction, she discovered its benefits.

After she graduates, she plans on attending a community college before going to Oregon State University for veterinary science. She hopes to practice here as a veterinarian one day, but realizes she may need to seek work in a larger city first where jobs are more available.

"That's the main idea, but it's not exactly set in stone yet," she said.

True to her roots, she shows horses in 4-H and cattle and swine in FFA. She used to play basketball at school, but now her time is taken up with high school rodeo.

"My falls and springs are pretty busy," she said.

Destiny recently shared her thoughts about living in Wallowa County.

What's your favorite thing about Wallowa County?

Because I live so close to the base of the mountains at Hurricane Creek, I love to get up in the morning and see the beautiful mountain range. That's one of my favorite things about the county and how small it is — you know everyone in the county.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you?

For school, Enterprise has offered online or in-person school. I've found I really enjoy (online) because I can take different classes than in school, so I've learned a lot more with online learning, and I get more free time so I can ride my horses more and find new opportunities in life.

Do you plan to get the vaccine against COVID-19 or are you hesitant?

I'm a little hesitant. My brother had cancer and my grandmother's battling cancer so I want to protect them. ... I don't want to bring it back to them. I'm just hesitant.

Which vaccine do you prefer?

I'm not really sure.

What have you learned from living in Wallowa County?

With doing 4-H and FFA, having the community behind you to meet your goals is important. For the past couple years, I've been doing rodeo court, and getting sponsors and selling tickets it helps having a strong community behind you.

What's your advice for people who are thinking about moving here?

Don't try to change it. Bringing new people in can be good because they'd have new ideas, but I don't want them to change how it's been — a beautiful place with great community. ... If people do want to live here, I value my farmland, I don't want to see subdivisions on it.

— Bill Bradshaw,
Wallowa County Chieftain

Vaccination totals continue to rise

Close to 3,000 individuals have received at least one dose of vaccine

By **RONALD BOND**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The Wallowa County Health Care District has given more 2,100 first doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine and has fully vaccinated close to 1,500 individuals in the county, Wallowa Memorial Hospital Communications Director Brooke Pace said.

In updating the *Chieftain* on the status of the vaccine in the county Monday, April 5, she said that there had been 1,804 first doses already administered, and about 340 more

shots were being given during a clinic Tuesday. That would put the county at 2,144 initial doses given through the health district. Sixty more first shots are still on hand.

In addition to that, 1,350 people have been fully vaccinated through the WCHCD with both doses of the two-shot Moderna vaccine. Another 100 doses of the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine have also been given.

More second doses are slated to be given next week.

"We've been saving back second doses as they have been coming in," Pace said. "Right now, we have 250 second-dose vaccines on hand that will be given at an April 13 vaccine clinic."

Pace said the health district, as of late Monday morning, had actually exhausted its current waitlist of

those eligible for a vaccine.

The count she gave "is everyone in Phase 1B, Groups 1-7, as well as Phase 2, Group 1," who currently wants a vaccine, she said.

"As you can tell by the numbers, we are really beginning to reach a period where the majority of people who are interested in being vaccinated (have been)," she said.

In fact, with where things sit in terms of its waitlist and on-hand vaccine — Pace said she expects the district will receive 500 more first-doses this week — it will be moving next week to what she said are "smaller, more frequent vaccine pods." Rather than the large clinics at the Cloverleaf Hall it has been doing throughout the year to this point, they will have options

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