



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

The weather brings a light snowstorm into freshly greened-up pastures south of the Enterprise Airport on Thursday, May 19, 2022.

Weather:

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Forage issue

The combination of cool and wet is a positive, but also it has its downside.

“For forage, that combination doesn’t allow it to grow,” Wallowa County Commissioner Todd Nash said. “We have seen a really slow progression of forage this year, and grasslands in particular have been very slow to come.”

Nash said that puts a lot of pressure on people with livestock who want to get out to pasture, and has led to feeding more hay at a significant financial cost because of the scarcity. This year’s hay crop likely won’t begin to come to fruition until the middle of June at the earliest because of the slower growing conditions.

That comes on top of last summer’s drought that Nash called “the most severe that anyone alive in Wallowa County has ever seen.” The combination of overuse a year ago and the slow growth of forage this year continues to put stress on those raising livestock even as moisture has recently returned.

Summer is coming

Lohmann said the summer outlook calls for above-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation.

“Through the end of

May and first week of June, I think we will still be on the cool side and then transition to our summer pattern of drier, warmer conditions,” she said.

As wildfires become more probable during summer months, it is important individuals prepare to protect their home and belongings. Here are some tips to keep the immediate area around your home safe:

- Clean roofs and gutters of dead leaves, debris and pine needles that could catch embers.
- Replace or repair any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration.
- Reduce embers that could pass through vents in the eaves by installing 1/8-inch metal mesh screening.
- Clean debris from exterior attic vents and install 1/8-inch metal mesh screening to reduce embers.
- Repair or replace damaged or loose window screens and any broken windows. Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- Move any flammable material away from wall exteriors — mulch, flammable plants, leaves and needles, firewood piles — anything that can burn. Remove anything stored underneath decks or porches.

County:

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This just gives us the ability to tell the state we don’t want you subtracting that payment anymore.”

Bicycle playground

As they expressed hopes for at their May 4 meeting, the commissioners got to hear about the planned bicycle playground in Wallowa from Ron Pickens of Building Healthy Families.

As he handed out preliminary diagrams of the proposed project to be on the north side of the Wallowa School campus, he reflected on how the idea of the project came about.

“About a year ago, I was standing with a kid I mentor in front of the City Hall in Wallowa while I was on the (Enterprise) skate park rebuild project,” Pickens said. “This kid said to me, ‘When’s it our turn? When will it be our turn for a project for a skate park or something in our community?’ And I said, ‘I don’t know. I’m pretty tired after fundraising for this.’ But it really tugged at my heartstrings as I realized they would like to see something like this in their town.

“So we took that to heart and released a survey among the kindergarten through sixth grade in Wallowa to identify to families and community members what they wanted in the way of a new facility, what they might want to see there. So that’s where we came up with this bicycle playground project idea.”

He said the company contracted to build the Wallowa park is the same one used for the skate park remodel in Enterprise.

“The idea here is to create a facility that not only skate-



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Ron Pickens, of Building Healthy Families, waits his turn to address the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners at its meeting Wednesday, May 18, 2022, to request funding for the bicycle playground project he’s spearheading in Wallowa. The commissioners approved \$7,000 in county funds for the project.

boards could utilize, but also scooters and bicycles and anything with wheels,” Pickens told the commissioners. “As you’ll see in the design, there’s a pump track of concrete so anything could roll over that.”

He said he’s been quite successful in his fundraising efforts and has put to work some of the kids he mentors who will make use of the park.

“After we released that survey, and we identified a facility of this nature, we hit the ground running in October with grant-writing,” he said. “(As of) today, we have submitted (requests for) close to 65 grants. ... A lot of them were a shot in the dark — we knew that — but a number of them have come back and we’ve been incredibly successful with that.”

Pickens said he’s received more than 90% of the funding goal of \$329,500. On May 6, the Reser Family Foundation has pledged a match of \$12,000 and the

Roundhouse Foundation has pledged \$10,000, in addition to the \$15,000 Roundhouse already has given. On May 12, Pacific Power and Light donated another \$3,000.

Pickens wanted to clarify for the commissioners and the audience that this project is separate and different from other recreational projects that have been ongoing in the county.

“I know there are several projects running simultaneously, with the skateboard park here, Rail with Trails and the Wallowa School project,” he said. “I just wanted to make it known what this was.”

The commissioners all were enthusiastic after hearing Pickens presentation.

“I think it’s a great idea,” Roberts said. “For years, we’ve been trying to think about something to do in Wallowa. I really appreciate this, having grown up down there, there wasn’t lots to do. This is great and I wanted to make sure that the commissioners understood how this

is different from the other things that might be going on.”

Nash said Pickens’ plan goes along with other hopes county leaders have had for the Wallowa area.

“It’s been a major concern of Mandy Decker’s (the county’s director of youth services) to try to get something started down there,” he said. “We tried to get a youth center started last year and that didn’t happen and she lost some staff and some funding. This is a great idea and it goes along with what she’s wanting to get done down there, as well. It’s just more things for the kids to do.”

As a result, the commissioners approved a \$7,000 donation from county video lottery proceeds.

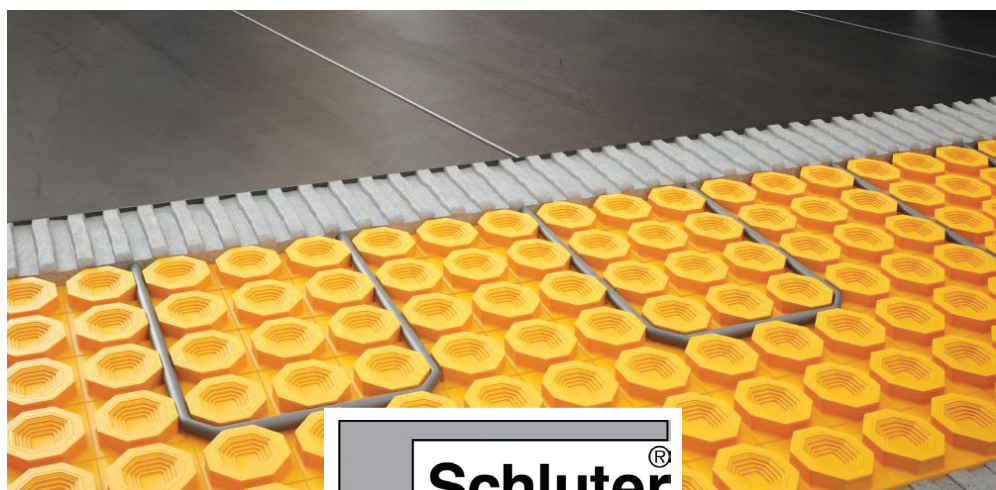
Other business

In other action, the commissioners approved:

- A resolution appointing members to the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District board.
- An order to approve the cancellation of uncollectible property tax as presented by the county treasurer.
- The receipt of unanticipated revenue in pledged support for the Wallowa County Fair and a transfer of those funds.
- An intrafund transfer of funds for Wallowa County parks.
- Easements for a new residential driveway on Jim Town Road requested by Tom and Mary Elder and a power line on O.F. Mays Road in Lostine requested by Karen Girod.
- An annual agreement with the Department of Revenue to map a maintenance contract.
- An annual plan of action under a municipal audit law to prepare financial statements.



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Join us for a live demonstration on the Schluter DITRA, DRIRA XL and DITRA-HEAT electric floor warming system. Find out what’s new, and have all your questions answered in an informative, energetic atmosphere.

Thursday, May 26, 2022

5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Dinner will be provided

Carpet One Floor and Home
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Please RSVP:

Jared Bedard 541-426-9228

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