

# EOU grant to help prepare rural students for college

By ANDREW CUTLER  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A program designed to help recruit and retain rural students at Eastern Oregon University is getting a boost.

Oregon U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley announced last week that roughly \$1.2 million in grant money will go to Eastern to power a new program called Achieving Careers for Rural Oregon Student Success, or ACROSS. The program's goal is to increase outreach to schools in the region and provide courses that allow students to earn credits for high school and college at the same time.

"Part of our case is, we're Oregon's rural university, this is what we do," Tim Seydel, Eastern's vice president of university advancement. "We're primed to do this."

Seydel said ideally, the ACROSS program could

save students up to a full year of tuition and get students into the workforce quicker.

"It'll expedite their college completion because they would be able to come in as, essentially, a sophomore if they do it all," he said. "And then that, of course, that means that can fast track them into career pathways within the workforce."

Kathleen Brown, EOU's associate director of early college initiatives, told Oregon Public Broadcasting that the funding will help the university hire two college engagement specialists to support the ACROSS program as it gets off the ground. Brown said she and the new hires will be able to travel to schools throughout the region to meet students in person and talk to them about EOU.

"We have some obvious places where we get students. We get people from Pendleton. We get people from La Grande High. We get peo-

ple from Baker," Brown said. "But there are small schools where they've reached out to us, so, let's go out there."

EOU will begin implementing the program in October, when it can officially access the grant money. But Brown told OPB that the university is already starting to do some work in the meantime.

Part of preparing for the ACROSS program will be beefing up what Brown calls "pre-college success courses." She said that means increasing both online and in-person dual-credit offerings for rural high school students.

Brown said the idea is to provide offerings to help students "not just take random

credits but be able to really focus and see what they can do so they can be successful here." But Brown said EOU is still in the process of mapping out what exactly those offerings will be.

"Different things such as like econ or music or whatever the major is — grab one or two of their really dynamic classes and be able to allow students to take those here or online," Brown said. "You always have classes that have a few extra spots in them, so why don't we allow our high school students to go in those?"

High school students who pass classes through those dual credit pathways could enter EOU with enough credits to be at soph-

omore standing, Brown said. And for students who enroll at EOU, a big focus will still be making sure that students are acclimated to college and have the support they're used to coming from smaller communities.

"One of the things that we have is a bunch of students will go somewhere and it sounds great and they're taking these dual credits, but then they come to a university and it's like, 'Whoa, I don't have the exact same supports that I had before because I had my mom, and I had my dad, and I had my counselor and all my teachers,'" Brown said.

At EOU, Brown says, there's a recognition that rural students are coming from tight-knit, small communities and might have different experiences than students from larger cities around the state.

"We want to just basically have this smooth transition from all these loving people

that have put an inordinate amount of time into you, and this is going to be the next group of people that do the same thing," she said. "So, we want to be able to have that same feel, and I think that Eastern is primed for that because we are a small institution and we have small classrooms."

EOU President Tom Insko said the grant funding will help the school fulfill its mission.

"EOU's work as Oregon's Rural University will be greatly enhanced through this grant," he said. "Our strategic goal is to intensify rural student recruitment and outreach, and providing access and support for educational and career pathways will help build and sustain our communities. We are grateful for the support of Oregon's U.S. senators."

— Oregon Public Broadcasting reporter Meerah Powell contributed to this report.



Brown



Insko



Seydel

# Wallowa-Whitman National Forest mining plan study released

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest is proposing to approve 22 mining operation plans along Powder River tributaries southwest of Baker City and near Sumpter.

The Wallowa-Whitman last week released a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) that's been in the works for about four years.

Some of the miners, however, have been waiting even longer for their plans to be approved.

The 224-page draft EIS analyzes the potential environmental effects from the proposed mining operations on the national forest.

Locations near Sumpter include claims along Cracker, McCully, Deer and Lake creeks, and Buck Gulch.

Several of the claims are southwest of Baker City, including ones along Blue Canyon, French Gulch and California Gulch. There is one proposed mining operation along Salmon Creek west of Baker City.

The proposed work includes placer mining, suction dredging and, in four places, underground (lode) mining.

"I'm very, very pleased that it is finally out," Jan Alexander of Unity, mineral policies director for the Eastern Oregon Mining Association, said of the draft EIS. "It's been a long haul. I'm very glad for the miners. They waited an awfully long time for this."

The initial project started around 2005 or 2006, said Ray Lovisone, minerals coordinator for the Wallowa-Whitman.

At some point, he said, a previous forest official stopped work on the analysis of the proposed mining plans. Lovisone said the

## CLAIMS COVERED IN DRAFT EIS

A list of the mining plans covered in a draft environmental impact statement released last week by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest:

- AC, placer, 11 acres, Cracker Creek
- Amigo Mines, placer, 4 acres, Elk Creek
- Anchor 1/Old Crow/Peerless, placer, 20 acres, Elk Creek
- Bald Mountain Mine, lode and ponds, 1 acre, McCully Creek
- Barbara 1, lode, 2 acres, Lake Creek
- Blue Jay, placer, 2 acres, Cracker Creek
- Buster 1, placer, 10 acres, Blue Canyon
- Buster 3, placer, 2 acres, Blue Canyon
- California Gulch, 5 acres, processing with hand tools, possible suction dredging
- David No. 1, placer, 3.5 acres, Cracker Creek
- Dead Horse, placer, 9 acres, Buck Gulch
- Fine Gold, 3 acres, processing in existing pond, Cracker Creek
- High Bar No. 1, placer, 22 acres, possible suction dredging, Cracker Creek
- J&J, placer, 1 acre, Blue Canyon
- Medic, placers, 5 acres, McCully Creek
- Native Spirit, placer, 3 acres, McCully Creek
- Pardners Group, placer/lode, 2 acres, Poker Gulch
- Return Placer Group, placer, 44 acres, Deer Creek
- Salmon Creek, placer, 1 acre
- Slow Poke, placer, 15 acres, Buck Gulch
- Struggler Lode and French Gulch, placer/lode, 12.5 acres, French Gulch
- Tough Luck Charley, placer, 11 acres, Bridge Creek west of Auburn

work restarted soon after he started work on the Wallowa-Whitman in 2017, in response to repeated requests from miners.

He said a staffing shortage on the forest forced officials to hire a contractor to do much of the work on the draft EIS, which is part of the reason the process has taken four years.

Alexander said many of the miners whose operating plans are included in the draft EIS are members of the Eastern Oregon Mining Association, based in Baker City.

Although claim holders can do minor exploration on their claims without an approved plan of operation, they need such a plan to use equipment to process ore, even at a small scale, Alexander said.

That means the release of the draft EIS, with the potential for final approval of the 22 operating plans, is significant, she said.

Alexander, a former Wallowa-Whitman employee who retired in 2001, said all 22 of the proposed mining operations are relatively small scale projects, generally involving a few miners who work their claims during the spring and summer, often

only on weekends.

She said that in most cases the mining proposed would take place on less than one acre each year.

"The amount of ground disturbance we will see is pretty insignificant," Alexander said.

None of the mining plans involve the use of chemicals to process ore, she said.

The claims are unpat-

ented, meaning the land remains publicly owned, with the claim holder having the exclusive right to prospecting and mining for minerals or precious metals.

One exception is the Bald Mountain lode mine northwest of Sumpter, which is a patented claim, meaning it was converted to private land decades ago.

The Bald Mountain plan

of operation is included in the draft EIS because the owner plans to use ponds that are on adjacent public land as part of the mining.

The draft EIS includes a 45-day public comment period, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

That federal law, which dates to 1969, requires agen-

cies to study the potential environmental effects of projects on public land, such as mining or logging, and to give the public a chance to comment about such proposals.

The draft EIS and associated documents, as well as instructions on commenting, are available at [www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=45945](http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=45945).

We cannot appreciate this month's volunteer, Dee Peterson, enough. Her weekly time supporting BHF staff with their recycling needs has been truly amazing! We love her positive attitude and the important impact she is having on our community and planet.

Thank you Dee!

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Copy Deadline is July 1st at 10 am.  
All ads approved for print by NOON on July 5th

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