

‘Unearthed’ follows truffle hunters in Falls City

Discover Channel shares mushroom adventures in Western Oregon in show's Friday premiere

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — If all you are seeing in Oregon's forests are trees, you need to dig a bit deeper. Seriously, dig.

That is what six men in the Falls City area do for a living as truffle hunters, and The Discovery Channel is premiering a show Friday “Unearthed” that examines the secretive world of black truffle foragers in Western Oregon.

The show, produced by Zodiak NYC for the Discovery Channel, actually came about not because of the mysterious — and potentially lucrative — nature of black truffle industry, but because of the landscape where the delicacies are found.

Joseph Schneier, Discovery's executive producer on the show, said after seeing photos and footage of Oregon, producers knew they had found a way to film here.

He said they were impressed with “how gorgeous Oregon is, especially Western Oregon.”

“We wanted to tell a story about Western Oregon,” he said.

Profiling the players in the black truffle world seemed a perfect way

Truffle treasure hunters

What: “Unearthed.”
Where: The Discovery Channel.
When: Friday, 10 p.m.

to combine a compelling story with the beautiful backdrop of Oregon's forests, Schneier said.

“It's incredible that something that smells funny and looks like it should be trash is so valuable,” he said.

Crews filmed the majority of the footage last fall, in the run up to the busy holiday season when “the truffle men of Oregon,” Roy Siegfried, Terry Drazdhoff, Ty Hale, Levy Schwartzendruber, Richie Maxfield and Justin Anderson were trying to collect their haul.

These guys range from “lone wolf” Maxfield to “truffle kingpin” Anderson, but they are all facing the same problem: a dry fall.

Black truffles are fungi after all, and require water to thrive. Dry weather threatens truffle “seams” that have taken years to find and

develop into productive patches. Dependent on the delicacy for their living, the season's five-episode span show how each hunter navigates the challenge.

“I think (the audience) will like the ingenuity and the lengths they go to,” Schneier said.

Schneier also admires the relationship the hunters have with the forests.

It's not just about finding and keeping secret areas with the perfect combination of trees, soil and water to produce the coveted fungus. Truffle hunting is a delicate art; disrupt the soil too much and the patch may die out.

“Old timers” Siegfried and Drazdhoff especially are interested in educating people in the right way to harvest truffles — anything else could threaten an industry they helped established.

“They have a ‘do no harm’ ethos,” Schneier said.

He added he's hoping the show is a success, so Discovery can look into what other fascinating industries and characters can be found in the woods of Oregon.

“We think we are not done telling stories out there,” Schneier said.



DISCOVERY CHANNEL/for the Itemizer-Observer
Terry Drazdhoff co-stars on the truffle men of Oregon, featured on Discovery Channel's new show, “Unearthed,” which premieres on Friday. The show was filmed in Falls City for its striking beauty.

Monmouth PD station costs wrapping up

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — The Monmouth City Council approved an additional \$96,000 at its April 21 meeting to complete the renovations to the new Monmouth Police Station, located off Highway 99W.

“For whatever reason, we didn't have the best estimate for the station from the architect for the bond,” said City Manager Scott McClure.

The council had already approved \$375,000 in July 2014, but it wasn't enough to complete the project, McClure said.

The original estimate was \$3.785 million to renovate the old Boise Cascade building,

done by Group Mackenzie, the architect that was ultimately hired for the renovation.

McClure said the voters approved a bond of \$4 million.

“To try and save taxpayers a few dollars, we only issued \$3.935 million in bonds,” he said. “Project costs aren't finalized yet, but we anticipate that the total project will be \$4.406 million.”

“When we got everyone contracted and going, we only went with a 3 percent contingency,” he said. “We knew we were low, and just through a whole bunch of different things, we ended up off a little bit.”

One of the bigger issues that threw the budget off was making the building seismic-

cally safe, McClure noted.

“I think when the architects looked at (the building) initially, they thought it was stouter than it was,” he said. “When they really started looking at it, they said no, we have to do more.”

Other projects to renovate the old Boise Cascade building took longer than expected, which cost more time and money, McClure said.

“The project manager said it's probably just 80 different things that came up a bit more expensive (than planned),” he said.

One of the most recent issues was a problem with the building's sump pump, McClure said.

“We have an emergency electrical backup system,”

he said. “The sump pump had failed in the vault, and the vault had rusted out all the components.”

Those components had to be replaced before the backup generator could be installed, costing another \$3,000 to \$4,000 more than expected, McClure said.

All said and done, total costs went over budget by about 12 percent — only 10 percent above the voter-authorized \$4.0 million, McClure said, including bond costs, construction and buying the building itself.

He said 12 percent isn't much over budget, especially for remodel projects.

“The fact is, we have a great police station,” McClure said.

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