

Polk County
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Plan ahead for heavy traffic in August

ODOT officials expect two- to three-hour delays at best during eclipse weekend

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — During the Great American Eclipse, the total eclipse will last about two minutes.

Arriving to and leaving from your destination will take a bit longer.

“We don’t anticipate closing any roads, but we expect all the roadways to be very, very busy, especially in the path of totality,” Oregon Department of Transportation’s Angela Beers-Seydel said.

Expect delays of a few hours, and that may be optimistic.



Be prepared to sit in traffic during eclipse weekend.

“I’m thinking that’s the minimum,” she said. “We’re asking people to arrive early and then stay put and leave

as late as you can.” It will be imperative for people to plan ahead. That includes making sure gas

tanks are filled, directions are nailed down, and having supplies such as food and water, in case you get caught in traffic.

“What are you going to need if you have to hunker down,” Beers-Seydel said. “If you’re stuck in traffic for potentially hours or if you can’t leave for maybe a day, what will you need to have with you. We want people to anticipate those kinds of things and get that stuff together the week beforehand.”

Having food, water, medications and fuel is key, Beers-Seydel said. Just as important will be packing an

extra dose of patience.

“This is one of those events that everyone wants to be at,” she said. “We don’t want people stopping at places that aren’t safe. Planning extra time is really, really important. Be aware of everyone around you. Once the eclipse is over, will everyone try to leave at the same time?”

Potentially complicating matters during the eclipse weekend is the Grand Ronde Powwow.

“We’ll have flaggers out there,” Beers-Seydel said. “That can be a nightmare on a regular year.”

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**IN
YOUR
TOWN**

DALLAS

Sheriff recognizes teens’ quick thinking in an emergency.

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FALLS CITY

Two die after crash on 99W south of McMinnville on July 3.

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INDEPENDENCE

Volunteers help on Ella Curran Food Bank moving day.

»Page 2A

MONMOUTH

Western’s new athletic Curtis Campbell is on the job.

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SPORTS

Dallas’ turf field will have many benefits for the athletic program.

»Page 13A

**Countywide
burn ban in
effect**

Itemizer-Observer staff report
POLK COUNTY — The Polk County Fire Defense Board in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Forestry has enacted a countywide burn ban for all of Polk County.

Residents of Polk County are reminded that no burning of any type is allowed during the countywide burn ban. The burn ban will remain in effect until significant rains return in the fall. For burn complaints and information: www.wcc911.org or call 503-588-6420.

**Work causes
delays on
HWY 99W**

Itemizer-Observer staff report
POLK COUNTY — Travelers should expect delays and watch for crews on Highway 99W at milepost 74.5 this week, a press release from the Oregon Department of Transportation states.

The southbound lane is expected to remain closed near Adair Village much of the week as crews continue cleanup of a diesel spill that occurred on Friday. Flaggers will control traffic. Alternate routes should be considered to avoid the area. Check TripCheck.com or call 511 for the latest traffic information.

TAKING MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS

Dallas resident Alex Lofton, family and friends restore and renew Tawney memorial sign

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — When Alex Lofton found out Sgt. Ian Tawney’s memorial park sign was vandalized, he wasn’t going to let it sit overnight without trying to fix it.

The Sgt. Ian Tawney Memorial Park sign was tagged at about 4:30 p.m. on July 4.

Someone posted a picture of the defaced sign on the Dallas Community Facebook page, and comments began streaming, people upset that anyone would damage the sign marking the park named in memory of the fallen Marine.

Dallas resident and U.S. Army veteran Lofton didn’t see the thread until 11:30 p.m. on July 4 and decided to take action.

“To me it’s really — it wouldn’t have mattered what day it was, that would have bothered me — but especially Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, those are the days it’s more sacrilegious,” Lofton said.

He, his brother, his girlfriend and friend packed up buckets of soapy water and scrub brushes, parked his



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

The Sgt. Ian Tawney Memorial Park sign was informally rededicated Thursday night with a pizza party.

car in front of the sign and used the headlights to try and clean off the pink spray paint.

The paint would not scrub off.

“Our friend Jenny was like, ‘I’ve got acrylic paints, do you think we can just paint over it?’ I said, ‘Let’s try,’” Lofton said.

Dallas police officers were

called out on July 4. After confirming Lofton was trying to fix the sign, they left him to work.

The next morning, it wasn’t good enough for Lofton, as the spray paint continued to show through. Lofton thought the employees of Dallas Parks Department would be busy cleaning up after the Fourth of July fes-

tivities, so he took the day to get back to the sign.

“So I went back and started working on it again,” he said. “I worked on it about six hours (on July 5), and then my friend Janie (Sires) showed up because she was like, ‘Are you still working on the sign?’”

Lofton and his girlfriend were at the park for five and

a half hours on July 5.

“I think I only got about three and a half hours’ worth of work because people stopped and hugged me and wanted to shake my hand,” he said. “It’s been a huge community thing.”

Lofton decided to paint the background a darker, “Marine Corps green.”

See SIGN, Page 5A

Blueberries abound in Polk County



STEPHANIE BLAIR/Itemizer-Observer

Blueberry farms are in Perrydale and Independence.

By Stephanie Blair
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — It’s blueberry season and the native North American berries are ready for harvest.

The blueberry season is a long one, running from April to late September, according to the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council. In Polk County, many farmers provide farm-fresh blueberries that can be carton-bought or self-harvested.

Though blueberries are available in-store, buying local supports local farmers and provides an opportunity to soak in sunshine while picking the antioxidant-

dense fruit.

The u-pick options for blueberry lovers span from larger operations, such as Perryhill Farms in Dallas, who also provide cherries, peaches and apples throughout the year, to small patches run out of family yards. In Independence, a self-service blueberry patch can be found behind the Central Vision Clinic.

When picking blueberries, it’s important to keep hydrated and wear sunscreen. Similarly, to get the best berries, Pickyourown.org explains that pickers should “select plump, full blueberries with a light gray-blue color.

A berry with any hint of red isn’t fully ripened.” However, red berries will still ripen after picking, unlike white or green berries.

After harvesting, blueberries can be used for a multitude of recipes, from fruit salad and blueberry lemonade, to blueberry pies and preserves.

Blueberries are also perfect for snacking on during the car ride home from the farm.

The early harvest is coming to a close, so potential patch pickers should call ahead before heading over to ensure that a u-pick is open and ready for the next wave of fruit-picking frenzy.

**THE NEXT
7
DAYS
PLANNING
FOR YOUR
WEEK**

wed
Try your hand at pickleball at the Roger Jordan Community Park with the Dallas Pickleball Club.
9 a.m.-noon. Free.



Sunny
Hi: 80
Lo: 52

thu
Check out what’s new and in season at the Polk County Bountiful Market on the lawn at the Academy Building.
10 a.m.-3 p.m. Free.



Sunny
Hi: 79
Lo: 53

fri
The American Red Cross is having a blood shortage. Donate today at Trinity Lutheran Church in Dallas.
11 a.m.-4 p.m.



Sunny
Hi: 82
Lo: 54

sat
The Polk County Museum in Rickreall will host its annual porch sale, a fundraiser for the museum.
9 a.m.-3 p.m. Free.



Sunny
Hi: 84
Lo: 53

sun
Come fly with the Dallas Wingdingers RC Flying Club at its indoor fly at Whitworth Elementary School gym.
1 to 3 p.m. Free.



Sunny
Hi: 83
Lo: 52

mon
Mingle with other professionals and eat lunch at the Dallas Chamber luncheon at the Dallas Civic Center.
11:30 a.m. \$12-\$15.



Sunny
Hi: 81
Lo: 53

tue
Dallas library hosts two story times for children, so you can find a time that’s right for you to read.
10:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Free.



Sunny
Hi: 81
Lo: 53

