

Record rains come at perfect time for local farmers

By **ANTONIO ARREDONDO**
East Oregonian

The wettest spring on record in parts of Oregon came just in time for farmers across Umatilla County.

The 2022 season did not start out promising for Helix farmer Jeff Newton. Thanks to an exceptionally dry 2021, crops were planted much later in the year than usual. Midway through another dry winter, the ground still looked poor.

“If you told me in February that this would be the return we have today, I would’ve told you there’s no way in heck,” Newton said.

Thanks to record rainfall from April through early June, things are looking better for the fourth-generation farmer. Crops are producing at an impressive rate, not only at Newton Farms but throughout the region.

“A farmer’s income is going to be higher, and in both winter and spring they expect a good yield,” said Oregon State University soil scientist Don Wysocki. “This happens

infrequently, farmers may see it one or two times in their career.”

Normally, the rains in Umatilla County shut off by May. This year, the rains didn’t stop — they increased. Rainfall from May to early June was 2.7 times higher than most years, greatly helping the spring crops.

The difference between 2021 and 2022 was even more dramatic.

Total rainfall at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton from March through June 2021 was 1.32 inches — just

30% of average.

This year, rainfall during that four-month period was 8.38 inches — more than six times the amount from a year ago, and slightly more than double the average.

Wysocki said winter wheat tends to out-grow spring wheat by 60%. Right now, though, the spring crop is full. Newton said this year’s spring wheat could be mistaken for winter.

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— Jeff Newton, Helix farmer

Helix farmer Jeff Newton stands in a Newton Farms field June 30, 2022, admiring his wheat crop. Newton said the record levels of moisture this spring greatly helped keep him optimistic.

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