



# Solar eclipse countdown begins



**Darlene Yan, program coordinator for Multiverse, speaks to a Grant County audience in Canyon City about next year's solar eclipse.**

The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

## Preparing for 'the most observed astronomical event in human history'

By Angel Carpenter  
Blue Mountain Eagle

After seeing his first total solar eclipse in Scotland in 1999, Mark Bender has traveled the globe to see the "mind-blowing" astronomical event.

Rainy weather with visibility like "pea soup" almost prevented the photographer and filmmaker from witnessing a life-changing event, he said, but just before the moon passed between the sun

and the Earth, casting a shadow that turns daytime to darkness, the clouds parted.

"Because of all the water in the atmosphere, it not only had the corona, but the corona had all these little rainbows shooting off it — it completely changed my life," he said. "I needed to see more of that action."

Since then, he has traveled to Africa, Indonesia and near the North Pole chasing eclipses. A little less than a year from now, on Aug. 21, 2017, the rare "totality" — when the moon completely covers the sun — may bring people from around the world to Grant County. Not only will the eclipse travel right over the rural county, the lack of lighting compared to urban areas will enhance the viewing experience

when the sun goes dark.

In Oregon, the last total solar eclipse was almost 100 years ago, and the last one to pass over the continental United States was 37 years ago. This eclipse will travel coast to coast in the United States, in a line, from Newport, Oregon, to Charleston, South Carolina. Bender said many people will travel to see the once-in-a-lifetime event.

"There will probably be 10 million people who want to come into the path — the whole path — and that's a small estimation," he said. "It's unparalleled. ... This will be the most observed astronomical event in human history."

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## Rail Fire expands to 32,170 acres

Firefighters have blaze 40-percent contained, but it's still growing

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Firefighters have contained more of the Rail Fire near Unity, but it continues to grow.

The fire now encompasses 32,170 acres and is 40-percent contained, according to a Tuesday update from the management team.

As a precaution, County Judge Scott Myers said a level one pre-evacuation notice has been issued for Summit Rock, Elk Creek Campground and Hunter's Camp Area. Level one means residents and visitors to the area should be ready to leave if conditions worsen.

The areas under advisory are 2 to 3 miles southwest of the Rail fire, Meyers said. The area extends from Summit Prairie Road east to the Grant County line and south from the Grant County line 3 miles to Tub Springs.

Windy conditions fanned the fire Monday night, testing containment lines, but firefighters were able to extinguish small spot fires, the management team reported. Cooler temperatures, higher humidity levels and air support have helped firefighters along the fires southeast flank.

Mop-up operations are the primary concern on the western, northern and eastern edges of the

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# NOTHING EASY ABOUT EASEMENTS

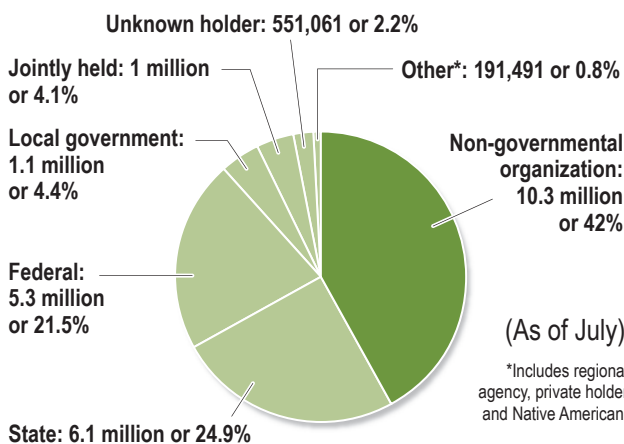


Eagle photos/Sean Hart

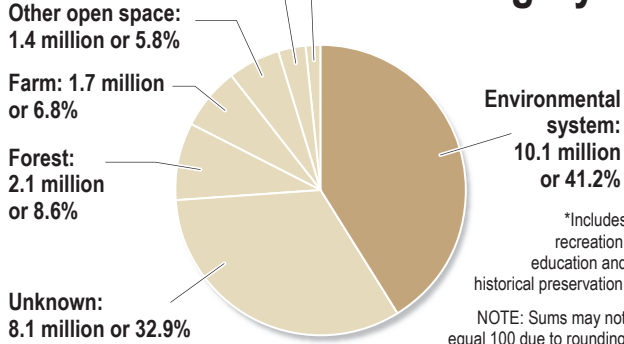
Roger Ediger describes his difficulty with easements at his Mt. Vernon ranch with McClellan Mountain in the background.

## Easement acres by holder ...

(More than 24 million U.S. acres have been placed in easements.)



## ... And by category



Source: National Conservation Easement Database

Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

## Anxiety surrounds conservation agreements and making them work

By Mateusz Perkowski  
EO Media Group

Rancher Roger Ediger has no problem giving up the ability to subdivide his nearly 2,700-acre property near Mount Vernon.

Development is the biggest threat to agriculture, wildlife and open space, Ediger believes, which is why he decided to place a conservation easement on the land that will preserve its current condition in perpetuity.

"If we don't look farther than our own lifespan, then we'll have nothing," he said.

However, Ediger still faces a dilemma. He is reluctant to have an environmentally oriented land trust or similar entity impose conditions on how he operates the ranch in exchange for "holding" the easement.

Since no third party holds the easement, though, it's possible that a future landowner

will simply ignore the prohibition against development if nobody's there to enforce it.

"An easement is only as good as it is enforceable," said Mike Running, executive director of the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts.

### A microcosm

Ediger's situation is a microcosm of the anxiety surrounding conservation easements in the agricultural community.

Some farmers want to extinguish development rights to protect the landscape while reducing property values to cut inheritance taxes, but they're worried about someone forever looking over their shoulder.

"I have no desire to be micro-managed. I have no desire at all," said Ediger, who hopes that Grant Soil and Water Conservation District will ultimately agree to hold his easement.

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"If someone comes around with the right amount of money, they can keep you tied up in court until you holler uncle."

Roger Ediger  
Mt. Vernon rancher



Roger Ediger's cows graze on his Mt. Vernon ranch.



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