



Clemency decision may be imminent for imprisoned Oregon ranchers

Dwight and Steven Hammond sentenced to five years for arson

By Matusz Perkowski
EO Media Group

A decision may be imminent on presidential clemency for two Oregon ranchers serving five-year minimum mandatory sentences for arson, according to farm groups seeking their release.

Dwight Hammond, 76, and his son, Steven Hammond, 49, were convicted in 2012 of setting fire to rangeland close to their ranch near Burns, for which they were initially sentenced to prison terms of three

months and one year, respectively.

However, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned those more lenient sentences at the urging of the U.S. government, finding the ranchers had to complete the full five-year minimum terms for arson required by federal law.

The Hammonds reported to prison in early 2016 to begin serving the remainder of their time, but protests of their plight culminated in the standoff between federal agents and armed occupiers at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

The father and son asked for clemency from President Barack Obama shortly after resuming incarceration, but it now appears their request has gained traction under the Trump administration.

Protect the Harvest, a nonprofit representing agriculture and hunting interests, has learned the Hammonds' request for clemency has in recent weeks come under review by the Office of the White House Counsel Don McGhan, said Dave Duquette, the group's national strategic planner.



Steven Hammond



Dwight Hammond

"It's moving much quicker than we anticipated it moving," he said. "That's a good thing, from what I've heard."

The Hammonds have sought a commutation of their sentences but are hoping for a full pardon, which is

within the president's power to give, Duquette said.

"If they only get a commutation, then they're still felons," and subject to a prohibition on owning guns, among other restrictions, he said.

Jerome Rosa, executive director of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, said he recently broached the subject with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke during a visit to Washington, D.C.

Just as Congress recently affirmed that air emissions from livestock weren't intended to be reg-

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Contributed photo
Two dragons from the Portland Lee's Association Dragon & Lion Dance Team eye a head of cabbage.

CELEBRATING

KAM WAH CHUNG

Chinese dragon dancers to perform at dinner

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

It's been about 140 years since Kam Wah Chung & Co. opened its doors to Chinese and American customers in John Day. And it's been 10 years since the Friends of Kam Wah Chung restored the historic business into an interpretive center.

To celebrate this unique heritage site, the Oregon State Parks Foundation and Friends of Kam Wah Chung will host a dinner June 9 at the John Day Senior Center with former First Lady Mary Oberst and Barbara Sidway, who spearheaded fundraising for the interpretive center in 2005, as honorary speakers. Other speakers will include Christy

Sweet, who served as curator at the Kam Wah Chung Heritage Site from 2005 to 2016, and Eric Brand, an expert in Chinese herbal medicines who accompanied five professors from universities in Hong Kong, Beijing and Taiwan in a cultural visit to John Day in 2017.

Following the dinner, the Portland Lee's Association Dragon & Lion Dance Team will perform a traditional Chinese dance. They also will perform during the '62 Days parade in Canyon City the same day at 11 a.m.

Unique site

Between the Chinese Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 and the communist country's dramatic industrialization over the past three decades, much of Chi-

na's rich heritage has been lost, leaving the Kam Wah Chung site both culturally unique and significant. The five visiting Chinese professors commented on this fact last August.

"During their visit, they were allowed access to the apothecary and archives, where they were absolutely amazed at the amount of information we had on Chinese medicine," site curator Don Merritt said in his season newsletter. "In fact, they told us of all the places they visited around the world in the last 10 years, this is the best preserved, most intact and complete collection they have seen so far."

That information includes some 20,000 documents found inside the building.

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Eagle file photo

The Kam Wah Chung & Co. Museum in John Day.

Chinese miners supported historical business

Kam Wah Chung sold herbal medicine, even automobiles

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Whiskey Gulch gold rush in 1862 brought thousands of prospectors to the Canyon City and John Day area. About nine years later, Chinese immigrants opened a store called Kam Wah Chung, translated as Golden Flower of Prosperity, in a former trading post that was built on The Dalles Military Road around 1866.

About 2,000 Chinese men lived in the "Tiger Town" part of John Day by 1885. Two Chinese immigrants bought the business in 1888 and expanded it to a grocery, dry goods store and clinic.

Ing "Doc" Hay offered herbal medicine to the burgeoning Chinese population as an alternative to Western medicine. Lung On,

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Filling finance gap for new sewer plant could be a challenge

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

When completed, John Day's new wastewater treatment plant could be the largest project in Grant County history — perhaps twice the cost of the Grant County Regional Airport, City Manager Nick Green told the John Day City Council at their May 22 meeting.

The project would be a big lift for the local economy, and the 70-year-old plant located close to the John Day River needs to be replaced, Green said. But ac-

cording to results of a recent income survey conducted to see if the city would be eligible for a federal grant, the local community cannot afford to pay for the plant, he said.

Combining the \$750,000 in the city's wastewater reserve fund with a \$2 million federal grant and a \$2.5 million federal loan would only get the city halfway to the final cost of the plant, Green told the council.

Green said he will travel to Pendleton June 21 to meet with the state's Infrastructure Finance Authority about how to pay for the new treat-

ment plant, but he expects to come away with a gap that the city will need to fill.

Representatives from the Anderson Perry engineering firm and Sustainable Water of Richmond, Virginia, will attend the council's June 26 meeting for a review of the updated facilities plan.

Green noted that the city needs financing in place or it can't go forward — and whatever the city builds must last another 70 years. Mayor Ron Lundborn added that other Oregon

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Recreational pot industry to expand in Grant County

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Fifty-three percent of Grant County voters recently overturned a ban on recreational marijuana businesses, but how the new industry will look is not entirely clear at this point.

With 3,179 votes cast in the May election, a total of 1,687 voted to repeal the ban and 1,492 voted against. Grant County Clerk Brenda Percy said the election results would be certified by June 4 at the latest.

The ban was put in place by the Grant County Court in 2015 following passage of Bal-

lot Measure 91 by 56 percent of Oregon voters in 2014, allowing marijuana businesses. An initiative to overturn the county ban was defeated in May 2016 by a 1,689 to 1,469 vote. The court amended the ban in September 2016 to allow registered patients to purchase medical marijuana.

Expanding business

Rocky Mountain Dispensary has been selling medical marijuana just outside the John Day city limits in the city's

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