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The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

Restoration Fuel's torrefaction plant at the Malheur Lumber mill in John Day is expected to be in operation in 2020.

TORREFACTION

Improving forest health and the economy

Plant will add new jobs, new markets for biomass

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

New jobs are on the horizon with the completion of the torrefaction plant expected at the end of the year.

Matt Krumenauer, CEO of Restoration Fuels, said the plant that will turn forest biomass into a product that can be burned for fuel plans to be in operation in 2020.

All of the equipment is in place. The boiler system will begin running by mid-November, Krumenauer said, and the rest of the system will be in production at the start of 2020.

The first three months of 2020 will focus on startup and commissioning in preparation for the plant to work at one-third capacity for the rest of the year, a common process that assures production goes well when the plant works at full capacity in 2021, he said.

At full capacity, the plant is expected to

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HOW TORREFACTION WORKS

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

A piece of torrefied wood made by the torrefaction plant. Matt Krumenauer, CEO of Restoration Fuels, is holding the wood while Senator Ron Wyden holds the bag.

When the torrefaction plant in John Day fires up at the end of the year, nonvaluable wood will be chipped, dried, torrefied and made into pellets before it is densified into briquettes that can be sold as fuel to power plants. Here's how it works.

1. The boiler

Although the wood to be torrefied doesn't enter the boiler, it's the machine that provides the heat for the dryer and the torrefier. The building that houses the new boiler system is 50 feet by 70 feet and stands over 42 feet tall. The wood-fired boiler will use "hog

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John Day distributes first housing incentive rebates

City manager receives largest amount for new home under construction

By Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle

John Day's housing incentive program has distributed its first payments to people who constructed or remodeled homes within the city's urban renewal district.

Only three site-built homes had been permitted in the last decade, and three new homes — two of which are still under construction — qualified for the new city program that provides cash rebates equal to 7% of the increase in assessed value for new homes, according to John Day City



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

City Manager Nick Green, left, and John Day Mayor Ron Lundmon discuss housing incentive rebates at a city council meeting.

Manager Nick Green.

The program also provides a 15% rebate for remodels that increase assessed value

by at least \$10,000, and two projects qualified for those rebates in this first round of distributions.

"We wanted to incentivize new housing growth and improvements to existing homes because we desperately need private sector investment in our housing market," Green said. "We need it to stop our population decline and to address blighted property conditions that are discouraging business growth and deterring potential new residents from choosing to live in our community."

Like other urban renewal programs in the state, the city's housing incentive works through tax increment financing, where tax gains from increases in a property's assessed value each year are funneled into a separate account for use by the urban renewal

agency, which is operated by the John Day City Council.

Property taxes paid to other jurisdictions, such as Grant County and the school district, will be frozen at the levels that were paid in 2017-2018, and any increases will go to the urban renewal district to fund the rebate program for the life of the program, which cannot exceed 20 years.

"We created an incentive package that, while not perfect, has led to nine new dwelling units and two major renovations within the first 18 months," Green said. "We are addressing blight, expanding the tax base, adding new homes and creating job growth in the construction industry through policy innovation."

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Walden won't seek reelection in 2020

By Gary A. Warner
EO Media Group

U. S. Rep. Greg Walden, the only Republican in Oregon's congressional delegation, announced Monday he will not run again in 2020.

"I will not seek re-election to the U.S. House of Representatives, nor election to any other office," Walden, 62, said in a video statement. "Instead I will close the public service chapter of my life, thankful for the friends I've made and the successful work we've done together."

Walden's departure means the 2nd Congressional District seat will be up for grabs for the first time in a generation. Walden was first elected in 1998 and won 10 re-election bids. Walden beat Democratic opponents by more than 60% of the vote in his heavily Republican district until Jamie McLeod-Skinner of Terrebonne held him to 56% in 2018.

The 2nd district includes Grant, Umatilla, Morrow, Baker, Union and Walla counties, as well as most of Eastern Oregon and much of southern Oregon. Walden is from Hood River. He is the



Eagle file photo

Grant County Judge Scott Myers, left, listens as Rep. Greg Walden speaks about mental health issues during a meeting at the Community Counseling Solutions office on Aug. 29. Walden announced Oct. 28 he will not seek reelection in 2020.

only Republican among the five House members from Oregon. Both U.S. senators — Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkeley — are Democrats.

Walden became the 22nd Republican member of congress to announce their retirement before the

2020 election, which will include the re-election bid of President Donald Trump. Seven Democrats have said they won't run. Walden is the fourth GOP House member who lost a committee chairmanship last year because of the majority switch who has announced they are leaving next year.

Walden said he was not retiring out of any concern that he could lose re-election or fail to regain the House majority, where he had served as chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee before Democrats took control in 2018. He is now the ranking member of the committee.

"I am confident I could earn the support of 2nd District voters for another term," he said. "I'm also optimistic that a path exists for Republicans to recapture a majority in the House."

Walden, whose background is in radio, gave no specifics about what he will do after he retires from Congress.

"For me, the time has come to pursue new challenges and opportunities," he said.

Walden's statement would appear to rule out

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