

## Southern portion of forest implements public use restrictions

Blue Mountain Eagle

The southern zone of the Malheur National Forest has implemented Phase A public use restrictions.

On the Emigrant Creek Ranger District, the following are now prohibited:

- Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site or while stopped in an

area at least 3 feet in diameter that is cleared of all flammable material.

- Operating a chainsaw between 1-8 p.m. Saw operators are required to have a shovel and fire extinguisher in their possession. A one-hour fire watch is required after saw operations cease.

- Operating any combustion engine without a spark arresting device properly

installed, maintained and in effective working order.

- Using a vehicle off of National Forest System roads, except when parking in area devoid of vegetation within 10 feet of the roadway.

For more fire danger and public use restrictions, visit [https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/malheur/fire/?cid=fsb-dev3\\_033802](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/malheur/fire/?cid=fsb-dev3_033802) or call 541-575-3113.

## Larger regional food bank distribution center set to open soon

By Dick Mason  
EO Media Group

An expanded food distribution center is set to open soon in Island City, one which will help Community Connection of Northeast Oregon provide an added boost to families and individuals who have fallen on hard times.

The Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank's new food distribution center is set to open by early August at 10213 N. McAlister Lane, said Margaret Davidson, executive director of Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, which operates the food bank. The new distribution center will have 8,500 square feet, almost eight times the 1,100 square feet the regional food bank's distribution center has at its La Grande site at the Union County Senior Center.

"This is wonderful. The community is really pulling together to help us," Davidson said.

The total cost of the project is \$1.04 million, which includes the purchase price of the building formerly owned by Pendleton Grain Growers. The funding has been provided by about eight grants, Community Connection and donations from individuals and businesses.

Community Connection has received \$150,000 in donations from individuals and businesses, \$65,000 more than Davidson's initial goal.

"People have been so generous," she said.

The larger distribution center will allow the regional food bank to maintain a stronger reserve for the pantries it provides food for in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Grant counties. It will also put the food bank in a position to better address emergencies such as those which could be caused by natural disasters and extended power outages, Davidson said.

The new distribution center will have more refrigeration space, allowing the regional food bank to provide more fresh food items, such as milk and eggs.

"It will give us more



EO Media Group/Dick Mason

**Mat Barber and Margaret Davidson, of Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, discuss the renovation of the old Pendleton Grain Growers building into a food distribution center on June 11. Davidson is the executive director of Community Connection and Barber is the construction manager for the project.**

options. We will be able to provide a wider variety of healthier foods," Davidson said.

The new distribution center will not only provide more space inside but also outside, with an expansive parking area, making it much easier and safer for large trucks to make deliveries. Davidson noted that presently it's difficult for large trucks to make deliveries at the Union County Senior Center which has a much smaller and more crowded parking lot.

The distribution center's move to Island City will have no impact on the services it offers to the public at the Union County Senior Center. All services there now will continue, including food distribution services.

Community Connection began looking for a larger distribution center site about 2 1/2 years ago.

The search was frustrating at first. The first six sites looked at failed to meet all of Community Connection's needs. Davidson said for a while it appeared that Community Connection would have to construct its own building. Then it was learned that the PGG building, which Romans' Precision Irrigation had just moved out of, was available for sale.

Community Connection leaders soon determined that the PGG building had met all its needs.

"Everything clicked. It was

perfect," Davidson said.

Renovation work started in late March. The construction manager for the project has been Mat Barber, of Community Connection.

"He has been invaluable in keeping the project moving," Davidson said.

The Northeast Regional Food Bank must be out of its storage building at the Union County Senior Center by July 31 due to an order from the Federal Transit Administration.

The FTA issued its order because the food bank's present location was originally built to serve as a site for the operation of a public transportation operation, Davidson said. Northeast Oregon Public Transit, which Community Connection also operates, will later use the site to house vehicles and equipment.

Davidson said the FTA order spurred Community Connection to begin searching for a new distribution center site. She noted though that, even before the order, the organization needed a larger distribution center.

"We knew we needed more space before then," she said.

The Northeast Oregon Regional Food Bank provides food to 18 pantries in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Grant counties plus additional sites including Department of Human Services offices. The food bank provided 1.3 million pounds of food in 2020.

## Eastern Oregon Search and Rescue to hold annual training at Salt Creek Summit June 25-27

Blue Mountain Eagle

People taking Forest Road 39 to Halfway or Hells Canyon this weekend should expect some possible delays, along with ATVs, pickups, people and maybe even extra help for those who get into trouble.

Search and rescue units from across Eastern Oregon will hold their annual training exercise in the Salt Creek Summit area this weekend, June 25-27.

"This training is a huge value to all of our volunteers to be able to network and train with multiple agencies from (Northeast) Oregon," said Wallowa County SAR Capt. Brent Neely. "Participating counties frequently call on each other for mutual aid for specialized rescues or extended searches and having experience training with each other's teams is invaluable."

There may be significant traffic and UTV/ATV congestion in and around the Salt Creek Summit parking area during this time frame. The parking lot will be open to the public, but parking may be limited due to the volume

of SAR equipment and tents staged there.

About 100 search and rescue volunteers from 10 Eastern Oregon counties (Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Union, Umatilla, Wallowa and Wheeler) are expected to take part in the exercises. Most will be camping in the Salt Creek Summit area, near where most of the training will take place. Wallowa County Search and Rescue volunteers are hosting the event.

The training includes work in fast tracking, responding to a swiftwater (water rescue) emergency, advanced incident command, land searches, K-9 land searches, civil air patrol searches and searching using a drone.

"If you plan to recreate or travel in this area, please be aware of this training," said WCSAR event coordinator Paige Sully. "However serious it may appear, we are not engaged in an actual search and rescue incident response."

The Wallowa County SAR volunteers have developed the training exercises that also include equine packing and rescue.

"There are thousands of volunteer hours that go into planning and training at this event," Neely said. "I want to say thank you to all the SAR members for the personal time, energy, and money they donate to make our Northeast Oregon SAR teams the best they can be."



Contributed photo/Washington State Dept. of Agriculture

The USDA Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory last week confirmed rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus 2 in a wild black-tailed jackrabbit collected near Christmas Valley on May 20.

## Deadly rabbit disease spreads to wild

By George Plaven  
EO Media Group

A wild, black-tailed jackrabbit collected near Christmas Valley has tested positive for Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2, or RHDV2, raising concern among state wildlife officials trying to curb the disease's spread.

While not harmful to humans, RHDV2 is highly contagious and deadly to rabbits and hares. It can spread through contact with other infected animals or contaminated food and water, causing sudden death.

The jackrabbit was one of several found dead in the area of south-central Oregon with signs of the disease, according to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife.

ODFW collected the animal on May 20, sending it to the USDA Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory for testing. Results came back positive for the disease last week.

RHDV2 was also confirmed March 14 in eight feral domestic rabbits in the Portland metro area.

ODFW says it will continue to collect and sample rabbits throughout the state to keep the disease from spreading to other wild rabbit populations. The public should also report rabbit mortalities to help the agency track the virus.

Colin Gillin, ODFW state wildlife veterinarian, said hunters should take extra precautions handling rabbits, especially if they have pet or domestic rabbits at home.

"If you have pet rabbits, do not handle dead wild rabbits in the field and then go home and handle your own pet or domestic rabbits as you may spread the disease," Gillin said. "Wear nitrile gloves when handling, and then shower and wash clothes before getting near any other rabbits."

Disease symptoms may include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite, lack of coordination, excitement or nervousness, difficulty breathing, congested membranes around the eyes or bloody, frothy nasal discharge at death.

There is no licensed vaccine for the disease in the U.S., though there are two vaccines licensed by the European Union, Eravac and Filavac, which may be imported under a special USDA permit in states with confirmed cases.

A veterinarian can request to use the unlicensed vaccines only for individually identified rabbits, and only with permission from the state veterinarian. The USDA says it has limited information about the EU vaccines, and no supporting data for recommended usage.

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease was also discovered in two wild jackrabbits in Ada County, Idaho, earlier this year. The disease was previously confirmed in a New Mexico rabbit in March 2020, and has since been spreading in other states including Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada and Texas.

To report dead rabbits in Oregon, call 1-800-347-7028 or visit [www.oda.direct/RHD](http://www.oda.direct/RHD).

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! U.S. 395: Sidewalk Improvements in John Day

In 2022 we will upgrade sidewalks between SW Sixth Avenue and Grant Union High School along the west side of U.S. 395 (South Canyon Boulevard) to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Work also includes widening the existing bicycle lane and installing curbs and gutters for storm runoff.

To collect your feedback about the upcoming project we are holding a virtual open house.

**ONLINE OPEN HOUSE June 21 - July 7**

Go to [odotopenhouse.org](https://odotopenhouse.org)

and click on the [U.S. 395 Sidewalk Improvements John Day project link](#).

Please take a few minutes to visit the site before July 7 to review our plans, pictures, videos and traffic impacts information, and then let us know if you have any comments.

**Overview:** U.S. 395-C serves as a major route through John Day connecting businesses and homes with the elementary, middle and high schools. Sidewalks along this section do not meet ADA standards, or do not exist. This places pedestrians, especially children traveling to and from school, in unsafe situations. Existing bicycle lanes are located next to busy, fast-moving traffic, making travel unpleasant for children and less experienced riders.

We will enhance safety along the corridor by:

- Building new sidewalks to current ADA standards.
- Widening existing bicycle lane.
- Installing curbs and gutters for storm water runoff.
- Constructing storm water facilities.

We will design the project this year and construct in 2022.

We appreciate your review and feedback. It will help us construct a better, safer project.

ODOT is pleased to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you need special accommodations or alternate language formats to participate in this open house event, please contact us (contact information below). Alternate formats available upon request or call statewide relay at 711, or e-mail: [ODOTeeo@ODOT.state.or.us](mailto:ODOTeeo@ODOT.state.or.us)...

For more information, please contact Tom Strandberg, ODOT Public Information Officer at 541-663-6261, or email [thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us](mailto:thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us)



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2021

## EASTERN OREGON PHOTO CONTEST

Voting for 'People's Choice'  
NOW OPEN

Vote online for People's Choice from 12:01 am Monday, June 21 through 11:59 pm Wednesday, June 30.

The winners will appear in the July 7th edition of Go Magazine; the top 25 will appear online.

Gift cards to a restaurant of your choice will be awarded for first, second and third place.



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All photos online at: [bluemountaineagle.com/photocontest](http://bluemountaineagle.com/photocontest)