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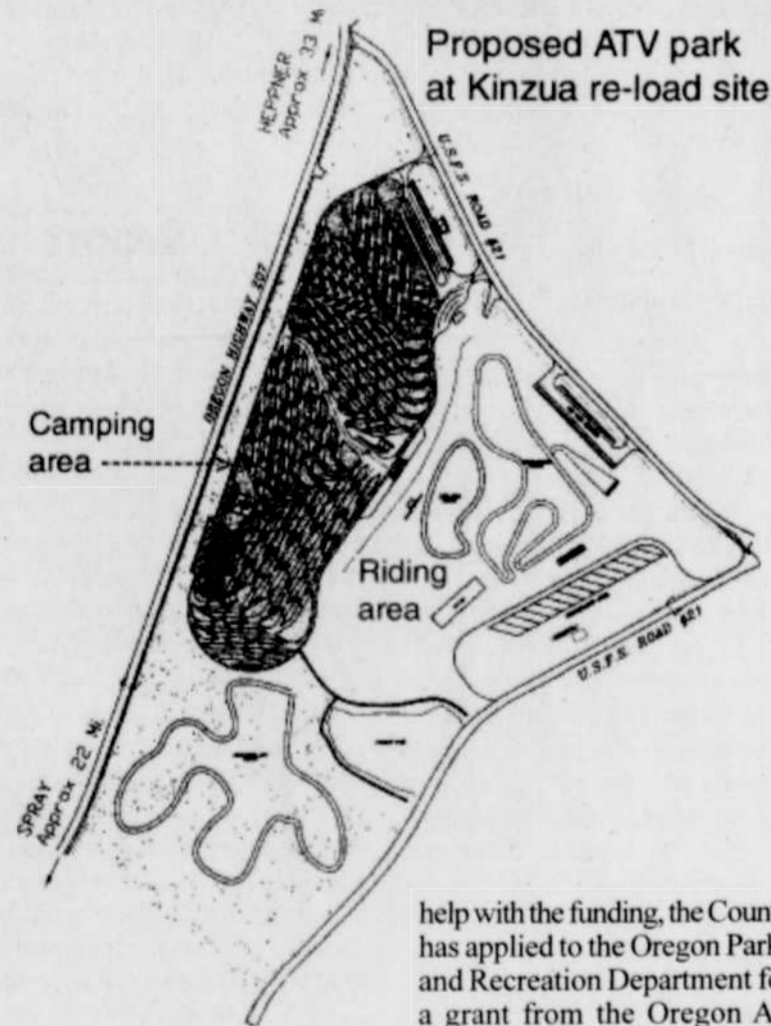
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Gazette  
Times

VOL. 121 NO. 49 8 Pages Wednesday, December 4, 2002 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

## ATV Park site bid proposal accepted



and will hopefully have a response soon after.

Morrow County Public Works has been working with a steering committee of local landowners, government agencies and business owners to develop the initial plans for the park. Now that the purchase of the land is progressing, the committee will begin discussing the park in more detail. Earlier plans for the park included tent and RV campsites, motocross and ATV tracks, and trails, with many other plans in the making as well. Electricity and an 800-ft. well are also available on the site. Once the purchase is complete, hopefully by March 1, 2003, according to Karen Wolff, executive assistant for Morrow County Public Works, details will be made available.

help with the funding, the County has applied to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department for a grant from the Oregon All Terrain Vehicle Program. A grant funded from a portion of the gas tax and from the issuance of ATV operating permits.

Morrow County has been notified that they are the successful bidders for the parcel of land known locally as the Kinzua Reload. With the successful purchase of this land, located 33 miles from Heppner on Hwy. 207, the proposed All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Park will be on its way to construction.

Due to funding contingencies still in the process, details about the park and the purchase are not available. To

One hold-up has been that while the money is in the ATV fund, and has not been affected by the growing budget crisis, it was not included in this year's budget. Thus, the "State E-Board", a board of legislatures that will approve the changing of the budget, will decide on whether to add the money from the ATV program fund to the budget, so that it can be used this year. The Board meets in January

If by some chance the deal is not closed, the bid deposit made by Morrow County is refundable.

An interest from people all over Oregon has been expressed in this new project, according to Wolff. There are many families that enjoy this form of recreation and the park would provide a great opportunity for them. There are also trails in Ukiah, which would be complimented by this new area, Wolff said.

If you have any questions regarding this project, you can contact Morrow County Public Works by calling 989-9500 and ask to speak with Burke O'Brien, public works director, or Karen Wolff, executive assistant.

## Port considering burning mint waste at Heppner plant

By Frank Lockwood  
Hermiston Herald staff writer  
[From the Nov. 29 edition of The Hermiston Herald]

DEQ has confirmed that the Port of Morrow is considering burning mint waste in the electrical generating plant at Heppner.

The question of DEQ permits came up after a citizen expressed concerns the plant in Heppner was cranking up to burn some mint waste along with the usual hog fuel beginning Dec. 2. The DEQ had not heard of the planned changes.

"I spoke to the plant contact today and he informed me that the Port of Morrow is just considering what options are available as far as fuel is concerned," Mark Fisher of DEQ reported on Nov. 21. So far, the port had not been burning anything but wood fuel in the boiler, Fisher said he was told.

The permittee is required to notify the department and obtain approval before making a change in operations, including changing the type of fuel.

## Christmas at the Courthouse just around the corner

Christmas at the Courthouse with the first-ever live auction of decorated Christmas trees will be held Saturday, Dec. 7, at 7 p.m.

Everyone is invited to the celebration, held at the courthouse, ending the yearlong 100th anniversary. There will be tours, refreshments, music and the Chamber tree auction. There will also be an opportunity to vote on your favorite tree. The auctioneer for the event will be Ken Grieb of Lexington.

Proceeds go toward Chamber non-dues projects such as the decorative Christmas wreaths, flower baskets each spring, and banners as needed.

Sponsors of the event include: Sharon Harrison and Trish Sweeny, Bank of Eastern Oregon, Wheatland Insurance, John's Other Place, Murray Drugs and Country Rose, The Morrow County Courthouse and Central Red Apple Market.

## Chamber raffle gun recovered after robbery

Morrow County Sheriff's Office reports that the Chamber raffle gun stolen, Wednesday, Nov. 27, from Heppner Hardware has been recovered and they have the suspect in custody.

Philbert Dean Lossing, 20, was arrested for Theft-I and Burglary-II. He is lodged at the Umatilla County Jail.

According to the Sheriff's office, the Heppner Fire Department was involved in finding and recovering the stolen gun, which was found outside a Heppner residence.

On the evening of Nov. 27, in a group effort, one part of the group entered Heppner Hardware asking for some items in the back, while another person entered asking for a bird stamp. Having gotten, Cliff Green, owner of Heppner Hardware, busy in the back of the store, Lossing entered the store and took the raffle gun that was hanging in the front window.

"The sheriff's department did an excellent job," said Green of the department's efforts in recovering the gun.

The department routinely inspects permitted facilities to make sure they are complying with the permit conditions. Among other things, the inspector would look at the type of fuel being burned. There are provisions for 10 or 60 day default approvals, depending on the environmental significance of the change. Significant changes can take six months or longer for final approval.

Port Manager Gary Neal had mentioned at the Boardman Chamber of Commerce that the supplier of this mint waste is B&G Farms, a private source said.

Legally disposing of mint waste has become a difficulty for some mint farmers, apparently including B&G, which has operations in Royal City, Wash., and in Boardman.

It was the subject of a several-page report in a Tri-City Herald special report of July 21-24, which chronicled pollution, fines, deaths, thefts and illegal dumping as B&G Farms struggled with piles of waste left over from distilling mint. The article also cited "hundreds of pages of investigatory reports by a dozen state and federal agencies," and "misadventures" by B&G over the last decade.

If the plan goes forward,

it will not be the first time B&G owners have attempted to use mint waste to produce electrical energy. B&G earlier this year discussed with the Grant County Public Utility District an interest in producing green power by burning mint waste. But Grant PUD officials at that time reported there was no imminent project with B&G and they were not in negotiations with B&G toward that end.

The Port of Morrow and B&G had not notified the DEQ of an intent to begin supplementing their fuel with mint waste on Dec. 2, but a citizen notified the DEQ last week. The burning of alternative fuels has been approved by the department for other facilities, especially if the quality of the alternative fuel improves the combustion efficiency.

"Wood waste is not always the greatest fuel because it is variable and contains high moisture. Adding other fuels with higher heating values can improve combustion. However, the department needs to be notified in advance so that the fuel properties and constituents can be fully evaluated," Fisher reported. "I reminded (the Port) that they need to notify the Department and obtain approval before changing fuels," Fisher said.

## Health district prognosis good

It's official. The patient is on the road to recovery and the prognosis is good. After near closure several years ago and month after month of dismal financial reports, the Morrow County Health District has taken a turn for the better. According to Michael R. Bell & Company, Certified Public Accountants and Consultants, the district is in a "better financial position and more stable position" and they expect the turnaround to continue. "The balance sheet is much, much stronger. We're starting to see a trend as to how the facility has come around. The district is overall in a much better position than last year, with a lot more cash and better able to deal with upcoming problems," said Konrad Capeller, a cpa with Bell & Company, at the district's monthly meeting in Heppner November 25. Bell & Company gave the district an "unqualified opinion" and noted no significant problems in the audit. The audit showed a gain of \$142,930 in excess of expenses for 2001 and a loss of \$133,505 for 2002.

Michael R. Bell credited MCHD CEO Victor Vander Does for his "mature guidance" of the district and noted that Vander Does was a "big factor" in the district's turnaround. Bell said that Vander Does' work to obtain Pioneer Memorial Hospital's designation as a "Critical Access" hospital resulted in a dramatic increase in the district's Medicare reimbursement rate, crucial to the district's financial health.

Bell also praised MCHD Chief Financial Officer

Nicole Mahoney for her expertise in supervising the district's financial matters, including providing accurate financial statements and improved collections. "She does a great job and is a great asset," said Bell.

Bell said that the district's next challenge is improving the ailing bottom line of Pioneer Memorial Nursing Home, but he outlined a plan which could accomplish that goal. According to Bell, Pioneer Memorial Nursing Home costs are around \$180 per patient/per day. However, the state reimburses the district at a rate of only \$110 per patient/per day. Bell said that a change in the designation from "nursing home beds" to "hospital swing beds" could dramatically increase the reimbursement rate, while still allowing the hospital to retain the beds for nursing home patients. Bell said that the change could increase yearly Medicare reimbursements to the hospital/nursing home as much as \$320,000. Vander Does estimated that accomplishing the change in designation from nursing home beds to swing beds could take at least two years, which is about the time that the federal Pro Share program, which has allotted around \$240,000 yearly to PMNH the last several years, may run out of funds. Bell also said that the district would save "very little" by closing the nursing home and added that a large part of the overhead of running the facility would still remain.

## CBEC meter reader travels rural areas on motorcycle

Columbia Basin Electric Co-Op wants to inform their rural consumers that the contracted meter reading service, Accu-Read of Spokane, is now utilizing a motorcycle to travel the rural routes while reading electric meters.

The local employee, Mike Stahl, rides a red motorcycle with an orange-colored helmet. Consumers should not become alarmed if they see Stahl riding the rural roads, stopping to note meter readings.

"All our meter readers carry full identification," said an Accu-Read spokesperson. Anyone with questions or concerns regarding suspicious visitors should call the sheriff's office or 9-1-1.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:  
MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.



## CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

Friday, December 13th from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

COME JOIN THE FUN!

Refreshments, cookies and hot apple cider

Morrow County Grain Growers

Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396 For farm equipment, visit our web site at www.mcggr.net