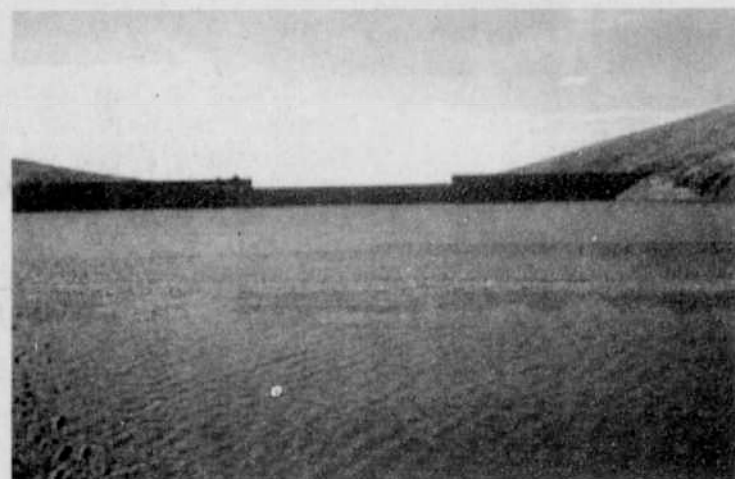


HEPPNER

50¢



Lake level to drop dramatically



The Corp of Engineers has sold water from lake to down stream irrigators

Willow Creek Lake's water level will be dropped this summer to below the floating boat docks and just to the edge of the launching ramp by October, according to the US Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps and the Bureau of Reclamation could be selling 3,400 acre feet of water to downstream irrigators this year, which will cause the drastic drop in water level.

The draw down has already started and by October will be at a very low level, Corps spokesmen say.

The water is being sold under one year temporary contracts to six irrigators for \$8 an acre-foot, or a total income of about \$27,000.

Council members says: 'we can't afford it'

City puts \$6 million water project on hold

The Heppner city council decided Monday to put the city's \$6 million water system rehabilitation project on hold while it studies a smaller, less expensive alternative.

For the past year the city has been moving toward borrowing funds, applying for grants and preparing engineering plans to completely re-do the city's water system, including two new wells and a storage tank. Monday night council member Tom Wolff dropped a bombshell of sorts when he asked the city council to approve a motion to completely change the size of the project and how it is being funded.

Wolff said the city couldn't afford the payments on the 30-year \$4,750,000 debt that

At a meeting in Heppner July 9 representatives of the Corps said that the primary use of the dam is for flood control and secondary irrigation. Recreation use is not a major stated use of the dam and reservoir so the impact on recreation was not a major consideration when deciding to sell the water.

The Corps received permission to sell the water after the Willow Creek area was declared in an emergency drought situation. The last time water was sold was in 1992. The Corps said economic benefit from releasing the water to irrigators would be \$310,000.

would be required to complete the project as currently proposed. "I am in favor of the project. I believe the city needs the project done. I just don't think we can afford it," Wolff said.

He said the recent water rate increase will raise an additional \$143,000 (approx) per year, but that is not enough. Apparently it will cost approximately \$203,000 per year to repay the debt, and water rates will most likely have to be raised again to cover the payments, Wolff said.

City manager Jerry Breazeale said Tuesday that figures are approximate, but the additional \$70,000 needed to cover the payments would come from a reserve fund already in the budget recently set up by the city to cover

According to documents on the Corps web site recreational use has increased at Willow Creek Lake from 42,000 visits in 1990 to more than 50,000 visits in 2002 (this does not include visits to the RV park). Visitation in 1999 was almost 40,000 visits. With multiplier effects, these visits generated about \$340,000 in income and supported 17 local jobs. Economic benefits of the present recreational use would be proportionally higher, but no estimates have been calculated, the web site stated.

The corps said that the water release will be from the bottom of the lake and could cause there to be more algae in the lake. By September 17 the surface area of the lake will have been reduced from 156 acres to 126. The floating boat dock near the launching ramp probably will not be floating after Labor Day, the Corps said.

Because of the declared drought in this area the water can be sold to irrigators, however, the Corps said it is investigating the possibility of selling permanent long-term water contracts every year regardless of drought conditions.

emergency water repairs. Breazeale said while he could not guarantee that water rates would never have to be raised again, a new water system will lessen the need for repairs and

Pre-fair edition deadline set

Tuesday, Aug. 29 is the deadline for turning in articles and advertisements for the Heppner Gazette-Times' pre-fair edition. If you would like to have an article or advertisement about your event or activity at the fair included in the pre-fair edition please bring it to the Gazette office, 147 Willow St., Heppner, before 5 p.m., Aug. 29. You can also fax your stories to 676-9211 or email them to david@heppner.net.

New Ione School District holds first board meeting



Ione School Board members are sworn in by the Umatilla-Morrow ESD. (L-R): Members, Gregg Rietmann, Joe McElligott, Debbie Radie, John Rietmann and Anne Morter.

The Umatilla-Morrow Education Service District Board selected five Ione School District Board members at its meeting Wednesday, July 9, at the Legion Hall in Ione. After a public interview of the six candidates, the ESD Board selected four ISD Board members, John Rietmann, a former member of the Morrow County School Board, Joe McElligott and Anne Morter,

both petitioners for the ISD, and Gregg Rietmann, who was a member of the Ione Self-Determination Committee. Each had six votes among the six ESD Board members present. A run-off for the fifth position, between Joel Peterson and Debbie Radie, who received three votes apiece, was averted when Peterson demurred to Radie, saying that Radie should have the position since she had been

elected by Morrow County voters to the Morrow County School Board. Radie, who lives the Ione School District boundaries, lost her position on the Morrow County School Board after Ione's secession from the MCSDD was successful.

Names of the successful candidates were drawn out of a hat to determine the board members' terms. Joe McElligott and Gregg Rietmann will each serve four-year terms; Anne Morter, John Rietmann and Debbie Radie will serve two-year terms.

Following the selection of the board, the ESD turned the meeting over to the newly formed Ione School District Board, which then elected a chair and vice-chair, approved school entrance policies and took care of numerous housekeeping and other duties.

The ISD Board learned that due to boundary issues, the ISD would have around 20 students fewer than anticipated during the 2003-04 year. At around \$5,000 per student, this negatively impacts the newly-formed district to the tune of around \$100,000.

In other business the board:

-elected Joe McElligott chairman of the board;

-elected Gregg Rietmann vice-chair of the board;

-established school entrance/attendance boundaries/transfer policies as follows:

*Kindergarten Entrance-Any child whose fifth birthday falls on or before September 1 may enter kindergarten at the opening of school in that same year;

*First Grade Entrance-Any child whose sixth birthday falls on or before September 1 may enter first grade at the opening of school in that same year;

*Lexington/Pine City Children Attendance-Ione School district intends to honor the historic attendance rights of choice that the families and children of the Lexington/Pine City School attendance area have had following the closure of the Lexington School. All children who reside in the old Lexington/Pine City School districts' attendance areas are

continued page 4

MCSDD Board faces new times with new members and no Ione

An influx of new members and the absence of an Ione faction appeared to do little to unite a fractious Morrow County School Board as they squabbled until nearly midnight Monday on issues ranging from a board calendar to attendance variances to demands for an Irrigon high school.

After a lengthy debate, the board voted to allow Lexington area students, who currently reside in the Morrow County School District, but who had attended Ione schools during the 2002-03 school year, to attend the newly formed Ione School District-if the parents petition MCSDD for release. Students living in the MCSDD who had not attended Ione Schools previously will not be released from the MCSDD. Parents who now reside outside ISD who wish their students to attend ISD may still do so, however, neither the ISD nor MCSDD will receive state monies, amounting to approximately \$5,000 per student, if the students are not released from one district to attend another. The ISD Board has said that it will consider allowing those students, who are not released from MCSDD, to attend ISD on a case-by-case basis, with one criteria for their decision being academic records. In that case, the ISD Board has said that it will require tuition for students who have not been released to attend ISD.

Despite several impassioned, and sometimes angry pleas to the MCSDD Board from Irrigon residents to establish a high school in Irrigon, one even hinting at the idea of an Irrigon secession from the district, the board

declined to make a decision and tabled the issue until further study and public input could be obtained. (See Letters to the Editor, this issue.) "The only point the board should deliberate is when, not if," said newly-elected board member Ken Matlack, Irrigon. "I don't think it's appropriate to have more meetings. Let's go ahead and act and make a decision," he urged.

The board, at an impasse concerning setting the board meeting calendar, finally went ahead and adopted the calendar as presented, with the stipulation that it could be changed at a later date. Matlack requested that the board's meeting dates be changed from Monday evening to accommodate his schedule. Matlack told the board that he had also been recently elected to another board whose meeting date conflicts with the MCSDD Board. Matlack also requested that the MCSDD Board meeting time be changed from 7:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. The board could not come to an agreement over a different meeting date, so Superintendent Dr. Jack Crippen told the board to bring a list of community meeting dates to the next board meeting, so that they could hopefully select a day that did not conflict with other community boards.

The board declared a board vacancy for the position that had been held by Debbie Radie, Ione, who was elected to the MCSDD Board at the May election, but resides in the new Ione School District. After additional debate, the board

continued page 3

HARVEST HOURS
Monday - Friday 7 a.m.-6 p.m.
Saturday 7 a.m.-5 p.m.

Morrow County Grain Growers

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