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"Not a good session for rural Oregon," says Representative Smith

Eastern Oregon got the short end of the stick during the just concluded state legislature, Representative Greg Smith said last week.

Speaking to Heppner Chamber of Commerce Smith said even though the state had $2.5 billion more in additional revenue to spend this session, not much of it reached projects important to the Eastern part of the state.

"The legislature spent a lot more money on K-12 (kindergarten through high school education) but others areas did not get funding," he said.

Smith particularly pointed out his desire to receive more money for the state police so that there could be 24/7 coverage in the rural areas of Oregon. "With all that money and we couldn't even come up with enough money for the state police."

Smith said economic development that helps Eastern Oregon also took a hit, with the Baker Morrow Partnership receiving no funding, and there was no money for capital infrastructure projects. "It was not good for rural Oregon," he said. "We got rolled."

With control in the government shifting to the Democrats for the first time in 10 years, Smith said the emphasis in Salem was on the environment and labor. He was moved from appropriation committees he has served on in the past to the environment committee. He said he was able to stop two pieces of legislation that would have damaged Eastern Oregon. One would have required electric co-ops like Columbia Basin Electric to buy a certain percentage of their power from renewable resources. The bill would have increased power rates by 30 percent. Smith said he was able to get co-ops exempted from the bill. He also lamented the fact the Democrats would not recognize hydro power as renewable.

Smith said he was also able to stop a bill that would have required monitoring and reporting of all water usage. He said he fears a movement afoot in Portland area to eventually put a tax on all water usage.

Smith also pointed out that despite the large increase in tax revenue because of Oregon's growing economy; Democrats raised $85 million in new fees, some as much as 300 percent.

He said the legislature did manage to put $300 million into a rainy day fund for downturns in the economy, but he felt that would not be enough to do much when hard times arrive.

Greg Smith addressed the Chamber of Commerce last Tuesday, and said Eastern Oregon "got rolled".

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Bicycling the state to hear about land use

Two young men who recently set out on a 1,000 mile bike trip around Oregon to hear about land use conflicts and the controversial Measure 37, came to Heppner last Friday.

Mathew Berkow and George Zaninovick, who are students working on their master degrees in urban planning from Portland State University, set out from Eugene June 30 on their trek to learn more about how different people in various parts of the state view the controversial land use law passed by Oregonians.

"We will cover over 1000 miles through at least 24 counties in 40 days. Our goal is to interview 100 people. We plan to ride four or five days a week to leave plenty of time to talk with people and hear stories," the two said on their website www.landusestories.org.

"In addition to the bike route, from Eugene to Hood River via Medford, Baker City and parts of the Oregon Trail, we will be spending a week or more in Portland and the Willamette Valley, where 68% of the Measure 37 claims reside," they said.

By the time they reached Heppner Berkow and Zaninovick could say measure 37 had put Oregonians into two pretty clear categories, yes and no, for and against. "We came on this trip to find out how people feel and think about measure 37, and how they use the land for their livelihood," said Berkow.

In Heppner the two met with Morrow County Planning Director Carla McLane, county planning commission members David Sykes and Pam Schmidt, and Merilee McDowell of the Soil and Water Conservation.

Mclane said even though a high percentage of voters in Morrow County approved Measure 37, so far she said there have been only two claims in the county. Most of the claims in the state have originated in the Willamette Valley.

Measure 37 mandates that if government changes land use laws that affect how private property is used, the government must either compensate landowners for loss of value of the land, or allow the use to move forward.

In addition to working on their master degrees with the bicycle riding, information gathering trip, Oregon Public Broadcasting will air interviews the pair has gathered.

"We will speak with a wide variety of citizens, including ranchers, farmers; Measure 37 claimants, and neighbors of claimants. Our intention is to write a narrative that captures the diverse perspectives we encounter. This 'story base,' as opposed to the ever-expanding database of Measure 37 claims, can serve the public by providing a more accessible avenue for understanding this issue," the two said.

Mathew Berkow (left) and George Zaninovich hear about land use while in Heppner.

Health district physician staffing stressed

Morrow County Health District CEO Victor Vander Does told the MCHD Board Monday night that physician staffing for the district had reached a critical point during July. Vander Does said that because of previously scheduled vacation time for physicians and a physician's assistant and the lapse in coverage between the time one doctor left the district and another will be coming on board, he feared that there would be no doctors in the community one week in July.

Vander Does was eventually able to hire locums physicians to cover the time period. He also said that several physicians are planning to come to Heppner for a visitation. He reported that Dr. Betsy Anderson is in the process of purchasing a home in Heppner and is expected to be on board shortly.

Despite the staffing difficulties, however, Vander Does and Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney said that while figures were not complete, July was shaping up to be another "decent" month financially.

The district ended June with a $56,417 gain for the month and a $445,550 gain for the year, with a $37,129 average monthly gain year to date.

Also at the meeting, the board approved up to

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From playing Bonanza to becoming a Fair Princess

Jessica Hamilton fell in love with horses at the young age of three when her uncle, Jack Meligan, first put her on a horse during a family visit. Visiting her uncle as a child was about the only time she would be able to ride. As a military daughter whose family was stationed in Europe from 1997 to 2005, Hamilton was not able to have a horse. So instead she used to "ride" a suitcase, pretending it was a horse, and played "Bonanza". Hamilton is now 17 and is currently living in Heppner where she can get in all the riding on a real horse that she wants.

Hamilton, who was born in California, is the daughter of Michael Hamilton of Austin, TX, and Geri-Ann Hamilton of Heppner. While traveling throughout Europe she traveled to many countries, including Ireland where she kissed the Blarney Stone.

She had one brother, Jaden, who was born on Valentine's Day but died soon after, when Hamilton was only eight years old. She has one horse, a 24-year-old bay gelding named Mac, one cat, and three dogs. Hamilton's favorite dog is a black and white McNabe that she has named Sassy. Some of her favorite activities include going on cattle drives, bucking bales, and riding barrels for fun. Hamilton would one day like to be on the rodeo circuit.

When Hamilton first moved to Heppner she saw the rodeo court and decided that she wanted to one day be on it. So she applied, participated in an interview, rode her horse to show her riding ability, and gave a presentation including a five-minute speech as to why she felt she could do a good job representing the county. The first time she applied she was selected to be a pennant bearer. This year, however, Hamilton was chosen to be princess. She sees this opportunity as "a job that allows her to represent her community."

Hamilton's previous experience includes participating in the Wrangler's Club and being involved in various 4-H activities. She also was a teamster on Happy Canyon and Pendleton Round Up Wagon train where the participants dress up like pioneers and travel a portion of the Oregon Trail in a wagon and camped out, facing problems just like the pioneers might have faced.

Hamilton's favorite experience so far has been Chief Joseph Days in Joseph where a rodeo clown rode a motorcycle off a ramp and jumped a horse trailer and a truck.

Her favorite outfit to wear during an event is a burgundy and gold top with black jeans and chaps.

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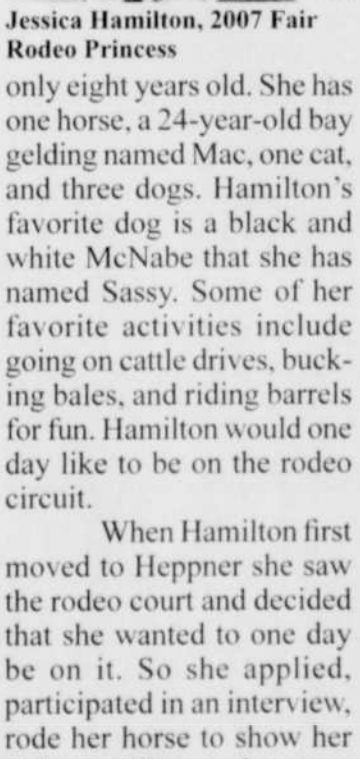

Jessica Hamilton, 2007 Fair Rodeo Princess

Junior Golf Clinic held

The Willow Creek Country Club recently hosted a junior golf clinic for children ages five through 16. Over 30 children participated. Results from the tournament can be found on page three

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