

NRCS announces local EQIP 2009 application cutoff

Local farmers and ranchers interested in financial and technical assistance for conservation measures on their working lands have until October 3 to apply for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding for federal fiscal year 2009.

"EQIP is a voluntary conservation program to provide incentives to farmers, ranchers, and foresters to improve and enhance the condition of water, soil, and other natural resources on private working lands," says Tom Bennett. "With the onset of the new Farm Bill the program has changed a little providing an opportunity not only to individual farmers and ranchers but also group projects with organizations."

There are many practices available for each different land use and here are just some highlights.

For irrigated and dryland farmers there are incentives for the use of GPS guidance systems or overlap reduction spray systems, the use of cover crops, or precision nutrient management. Irrigators also have incentives which include water management and structures that allow better water management such as the conversion from flood to sprinkler irrigation.

Ranchers have incentives which include new seedings, cross fencing, water developments, and grazing management. Incentives on Vineyards and Orchards include the use of onsite weather stations for irrigation and pest management and intensive nutrient management. Improved Forest Health and fire risk reduction can be achieved with incentives that include forest stand thinning, seeding and tree planting.

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) accepts applications for EQIP year-round. Funding decisions, however, are made at cutoff points during the year. Applications received before October 3 will be given priority for 2009, in the following counties: Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Grant, and Wheeler.

Interested parties should contact their local USDA-NRCS to apply. In Heppner, the USDA/NRCS service center located at 430 W Linden Way. NRCS also has offices in Pendleton, Condon and John Day.

For more information about EQIP, including local ranking information, enrollment requirements and program payments, please visit the Oregon NRCS website at: <http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov> or contact your local NRCS office.

Conservation Garden of the Year award given to Verrall

By Kay Proctor

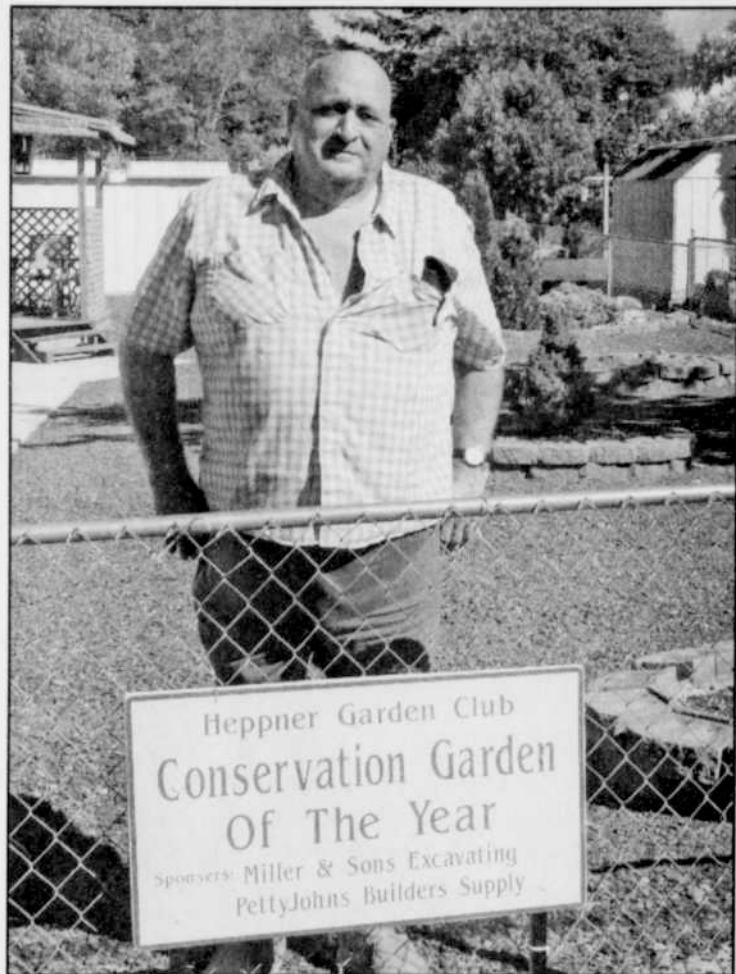
Lyle Verrall of 630 N. Main Street, Heppner, has been awarded the first "Conservation Garden of the Year" recognition by the Heppner Garden Club.

Part of Garden Club's conservation pledge states "I pledge to protect and conserve the natural resources of the planet Earth....so that we may become caretakers of the air, water, forests, land and wildlife." Members strive to meet that pledge and decided to establish this new recognition to honor others who do, too.

Verrall, who is retired from the Corps of Engineers, purchased his home in 1987 and had a traditional grass yard, vegetable garden and a monthly water bill to prove it. He couldn't live with the idea of just letting the yard go to weeds to save money, so he came up with a plan that is "something I can live with." A few years ago, he rototilled the lawn, laid down black plastic and spread a thick layer of gravel over his entire yard. Spraying a few weeds that pop up is needed only occasionally.

Other projects followed, but not all at once. Cyclone fencing has been built by Larry Kennedy in phases. Lyle has several 'islands' put in throughout the gravel mulch bordered by brown landscape blocks and filled with a variety of plantings. Lyle's favorite 'island' holds a 90 gallon pond that is home to a school of goldfish, albino catfish and algae eaters with a turtle statue named "Brownie" guarding over them. Stored away is an unused 110 gallon pond form that if Lyle does not put to use, he may sell.

Plantings include Alberta Spruce, a tomato plant, butterfly bushes and colorful poppies and wildflowers that reseed themselves. Trees include birch, horse chestnut, spruce and



Lyle Verrall was awarded the Conservation Garden of the Year award by the Heppner Garden Club. -Contributed Photo

a maple that was a gift from Lyle's sister.

One of Lyle's favorite activities is to watch families of birds at the feeder in one of his 'islands' from his comfortable, shady front porch. Future plans are to attract more fine, feathered friends with a bird habitat; Hinton Creek borders his property providing fresh water and berry bushes already provide cover.

Having faced health challenges, Lyle's goal is to "live long enough to fix this up." He credits several

who have helped him put his water conserving plans into reality; Cheryl McBride, Erik Skaggs, Dewey Harvey. Verrall enjoyed helping others when he could and states that he is "now the old man" that others help although his enthusiasm for life, and gardening, proves he is still young at heart.

The Conservation Garden of the Year recognition is co-sponsored by the Heppner Garden Club, Pettyjohn's Builders Supply, Miller and Sons Excavating and Heppner TV.

Hospital remodel project on schedule



The remodeling project underway at Pioneer Memorial Hospital is "on schedule," according hospital CEO Victor Vander Does. The remodel, which includes three private rooms, two semi-private rooms, a tub room, and a solarium/dining room, should be finished around mid-November. The changes were made to accommodate a long term care facility. -Photo by Autumn Morgan

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GOOD THRU OCTOBER 31, 2008

Oregon East

Symphony presents gala opening weekend

The Oregon East Symphony will start its 2008-2009 concert season with two very special concerts.

On Saturday, October 4th at 7:30 p.m. in the historic Vert Auditorium, conductor Kenneth Woods will lead the Symphony in a performance of Oregon composer Ernest Bloch's rarely performed Suite for Cello and Orchestra. Cellist Parry Karp returns to the Vert stage for this performance.

To round out the weekend, join Kenneth Woods and Parry Karp with special guests Suzanne Casey, Adam Lamotte and David Yang on Sunday, October 5th at 2 p.m. at the Pendleton Center for the Arts.

Tickets for the Saturday concert are \$20/\$16 for adults and \$17/\$14 for seniors. Tickets for the Sunday concert are \$12. Tickets for both these events are available through the Oregon East Symphony office, call (541) 276-0320, or email info@oregoneastsymphony.org, or at the door.

Season tickets for 2008-2009 are still available starting at just \$46 for the entire year.

New bathrooms to be installed at Willow Creek Lake



The Willow Creek Park District is putting in new bathrooms at the Willow Creek Lake. Concrete pre-fabricated bathroom will be put in on Thursday with a sidewalk around them. -Photo by David Sykes

Armato, Pranger named season winners for NEOJGA



Northeast Oregon Junior Golf Association season winners Maggie Armato and Joe Pranger led in overall points earned for the NEOJGA. The NEOJGA provides competitive golf tournaments in North East Oregon for Jr. Golfers ages 8 through 18. Golf tournaments were held twice a month during the summer. Golfers from all over participated in tournaments held in Union, Baker City, La Grande, Pendleton and Echo. Logan Greib placed second in his division. -Contributed Photo

Les Schwab Tire Center
124 North Main St., Heppner 676-9481