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Neal says next 30 days will be "go, or no go" on co-gen sale at industrial park

By David Sykes

The next 30 days will tell if the co-gen plant at the South Morrow Industrial Park will be sold to a Sweet Home company or the deal falls apart, Port Manager Gary Neal told the Heppner Chamber of Commerce last Thursday.

The Port of Morrow owns the co-gen plant and has entered into a deal with T2, Inc. of Sweet Home which plans to purchase the plant and produce electricity from waste wood. T2 has told the Port it needs to work out some fuel issues and find customers for the electricity the 10-megawatt plant will produce before it can proceed with the sale. If operational, the company plans to hire 12-15 workers.

"We solicited proposals from companies that might be interested, and T2 made the best offer," Neal said. The purchase price is reportedly $4 million. "This is the company we thought could do the best so we went with them," he added.

"The biggest problem is fuel and another problem is power sales," said Neal. "They need to pay us sometime in the next 30 days," he added. "It is a go or no go deal."

Under terms, T2 has 60 days to accept the deal and another 30 days to purchase the facility, which will include 20 acres of property and various equipment. Company officials estimate if the plant goes into operation generating electricity from wood waste, it could employ 12 to 15 people.

The proposed sale includes all equipment, fixtures, and improvements, plus a truck, fuel handling system, boiler, turbines, electric power infrastructure, water treatment system and the truck scale at the industrial park.

The bio-generating plant has not operated since 2003. The Kinzua sawmill closed at the site in 1998, and the Port of Morrow acquired the property shortly thereafter.

Neal also said the Port is getting closer to obtaining a "no further action" letter from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The letter will give the log yard at the former mill site a clean bill of health from the DEQ and should make it easier to find buyers or leasers for the property.

Gary Neal

In other activities Neal says the Port is putting in a lot of infrastructure at its north end facilities. "We have a lot of infrastructure projects on going," he told the chamber. "Lots of road and water projects." He cited the East Beach area of the Port Industrial park where they have spent $5 million on new roads and infrastructure and are planning on spending more. He said there is grant money available both from federal stimulus and from the State of Oregon for infrastructure projects. As an example he said the Port received $320,000 from the state and $1.5 million in federal stimulus money for a rail project to upgrade a rail spur and extend the line to the new planer facility. Neal said the port is also receiving about $10 million for a new rail container yard in the same East Beach area.

The Port has been able to expand its container handling by widening its barge slips to accommodate two barges side by side.

continued page five

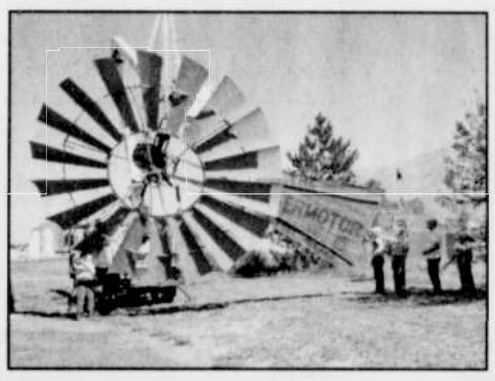
Electric Co-Op to perform tree trimming operations

Columbia Basin Electric Co-Op, and their subcontractors, will be conducting their annual tree trimming operation throughout the service territory during the coming weeks. Consumers with power lines going through trees are asked to call the Co-Op so these locations can be put on the list of areas to be trimmed.

Trimming of trees around power lines is an annual chore and is required by Oregon PUC and REA to reduce outages and insure continuity of electrical service. Areas affecting both Primary (distribution) and Secondary (individual service connections) lines will be cleared.

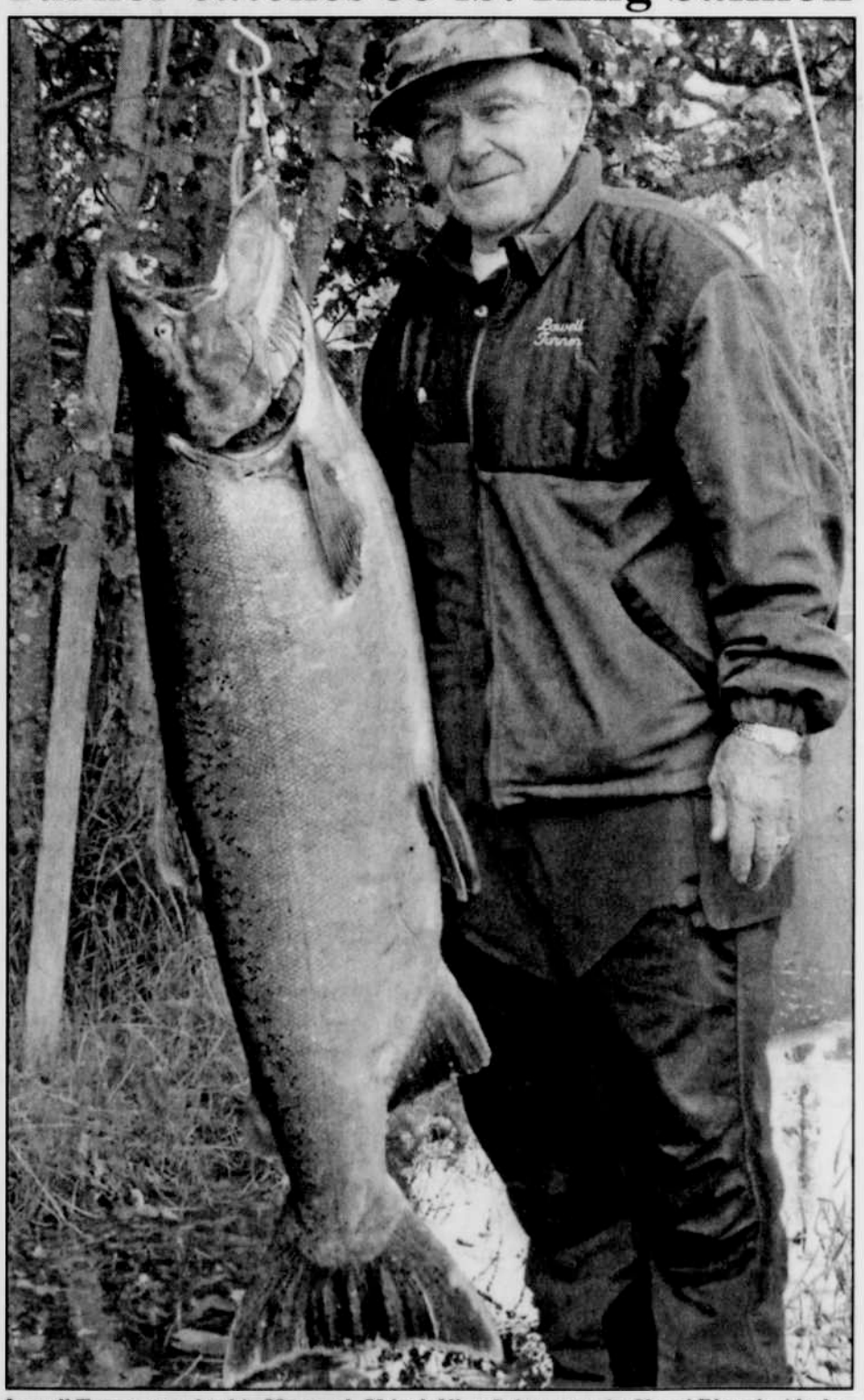
Any comments, concerns or questions about trees obstructing power lines or the removal of them may be made to Slater Mitchell at 541-676-9146 or slaterm@columbiabasin.cc

Ag Museum adds 45 foot windmill



The Ag Museum in Heppner put up this windmill for display on Friday, August 21. The windmill was donated by Steve Anderson this past spring. The windmill is 45 feet high, plus the wheel which is 20 feet across. It is one of the largest windmills in the Northwest because of the size of its wheel. The wheel is so large because it had to lift water approximately 300 feet uphill. *–Photo by Andrew Sykes*

Turner catches 55 lb. King Salmon



Lowell Turner caught this 55 pound, 50 inch King Salmon on the Kenai River in Alaska. He caught the fish at the end of July while fishing with his brother who is a guide on the Kenai River. The record for a King Salmon caught on a rod and reel on the Kenai is 98 pounds. *–Contributed Photos*

The Heppner Gazette-Times wants to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Stop by to have your picture taken, drop off photos, or email them to editor@rapidserve.net.

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

Merkley to hold Town Hall Meeting in Boardman

Wyden not sure about holding healthcare meetings

Oregon's Senator Jeff Merkley will hold town halls next month in Deschutes, Crook, Wheeler, Morrow, Union, Wallowa, Baker, Malheur, Grant, Harney and Lake Counties.

Merkley will hold the Morrow County Town Hall meeting on Thursday, September 3, at 10 a.m. at the Port of Morrow in the River Front Room. The Port of Morrow is located at 2 Marine Drive in Boardman.

He will update constituents on his work in Washington, DC and answer their questions about the challenges facing Oregon and America.

"Advocating for Oregonians is my number one responsibility," Merkley said. "I invite all Oregonians to meet me and discuss what we need to do to get our nation back on track."

Last year, Merkley pledged to hold town halls in each of Oregon's 36 counties every year. He held his first town hall in February in his native county, Douglas County, and his 25th town hall in Jefferson County earlier this month. This swing of 11 town halls will fulfill his annual commitment to hold a town hall in every county and up his August and September town hall total to 15.

The Heppner Gazette-Times contacted Senator Wyden's office to find out if any town hall meetings to address healthcare issues would be held. The Gazette-Times was informed that Senator Wyden currently plans on visiting eight counties to complete his plan to conduct town hall meetings in each county in Oregon. Senator Wyden's office stated that Wyden was not sure if he would double back to conduct the town hall meetings on healthcare.

Harvest average drops from last year

According to the Morrow County Grain Growers and the Oregon State University Extension Office, this year's harvest is down approximately 35% from last year.

This year's harvest average was 23-30 bushels per acre for south Morrow County. The best yields were 40 bushels per acre but most yields were in the teens.

Though yields were down this year, "last year was not good either," said Larry Lutcher of the OSU Extension Office.

Start/End times for Heppner and Ione Schools

Schools in Morrow County will start back on August 31 for the 2009-2010 school year.

Heppner Elementary School students will begin the school day at 7:55 a.m. K-2nd graders will get out a 2:45 p.m. and 3rd-6th graders will get out at 3:15.

Heppner High School students will begin their day at 7:55 a.m. and will get out at 3:30 p.m.

Ione Community School students will begin their day at 8 a.m. and will get out at 3:30 p.m.

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Minimum purchase $14.95 a piece Thru Aug. 30
Morrow County Grain Growers Green Feed & Seed
242 W. Linden Way, Heppner • 676-9422 • 989-8221 (MCGG main office)