

## Secretary Vilsack announces general signup period for Conservation Reserve Program

Speaking at National Pheasant Fest 2011, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the next general signup for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will begin on March 14 and continue through April 15. This is the second consecutive year that USDA has offered a general CRP signup.

"Over the past 25 years, support for CRP has grown thanks to strong backing from farmers, ranchers, conservationists, hunters, fishermen and other outdoor sports enthusiasts," said Vilsack. "Not only has CRP contributed to the national effort to improve water and air quality, it has preserved habitat for wildlife, and prevented soil erosion by protecting the most sensitive areas including those prone to flash flooding and runoff. Today's announcement continues the Obama Administration's effort to conserve sensitive areas and improve wildlife habitat."

Through CRP, eli-

gible landowners receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland. Land can be enrolled for a period of up to 15 years. During the general signup period, farmers and ranchers may offer eligible land at their county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. Land currently not enrolled in CRP may be offered in this signup provided all eligibility requirements are met. Additionally, current CRP participants with contracts expiring this fall may make new contract offers. Contracts awarded under this signup are scheduled to become effective October 1. The general sign-up for CRP will not affect cropped acres for this growing season. Acres will be enrolled in the program in the fall.

To help ensure that interested farmers and ranchers are aware of the signup period, USDA has signed partnership agree-

ments with several conservation and wildlife organizations that will play an active role in USDA's 2011 CRP outreach efforts. They include; Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, National Association of State Foresters, Playa Lakes Joint Venture (Lesser Prairie Chicken/Sage Grouse), and the Longleaf Incorporated Bobwhite Conservation Initiative.

The FSA implements CRP on behalf of Commodity Credit Corporation. FSA will evaluate and rank eligible CRP offers using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) that shows the environmental benefits to be gained from enrolling the land in CRP. The EBI consists of five environmental factors (wildlife, water, soil, air and enduring benefits) and cost. Decisions on the EBI cutoff will be made after the sign-up ends and after analyzing the EBI data of all the offers.

In addition to the

general sign-up, CRP's continuous sign-up program will be ongoing. Continuous acres represent the most environmentally desirable and sensitive land. For more information, visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp>.

CRP protects millions of acres of American topsoil from erosion and is designed to safeguard the Nation's natural resources. By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP protects groundwater and helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams. Acreage enrolled in the CRP is planted to resource-conserving vegetative covers, making the program a major contributor to increased wildlife populations in many parts of the country. Through the 2008 Farm Bill, CRP is authorized for a maximum enrollment of 32 million acres. USDA estimates that contracts on 3.3 million to 6.5 million acres are scheduled to expire annually between now and 2014.

## MCGG fueling the future



John Ripple (center) with Morrow County Grain Growers presents a check for \$982 to Heppner Elementary School Principal Matt Combe (left) and Heppner High School Principal Daye Stone (right). The money donated is from Morrow County Grain Growers Fueling the Future program. -Photo by Sandy Matthews

## City of Irrigon to adjust water rates

The City of Irrigon will be adjusting water rates to cover the loan payments that financed the Water Improvement Project.

That project included drilling of two new wells that are essentially free of nitrate pollution, a 1.5 million gallon water reservoir and many miles of new and larger distribution piping. The project increased the system reliability and the ability to provide adequate water for fire fighting. The improvements also allow the city to maintain a safe source of water in an emergency when electric power is out. The water now provided by the City of Irrigon exceeds all state and federal standards for purity and is among the highest quality drinking water to be found.

The annual loan payments are now \$167,974. If paid for according to water sold, the cost just for the debt service would be \$1.08 per 1,000 gallons. Or, if the costs were divided according to the number of meters, the cost would be \$22.80 per month per meter for the debt service.

The Irrigon City Council has proposed apportioning the added cost of the loan payments with a portion being applied to

the number of meters and a portion to the cost of the water sold. The council is proposing to set the base rate for water service at \$24 per service and allow up to 5,000 gallons of water with the base rate. The cost of water sold above the 5,000 gallons would be set at \$1.80 per thousand gallons. This rate structure would put Irrigon into average territory with other East Oregon cities. Many users would actually see a decrease in the cost of their water under the new simplified structuring.

Although the City of Irrigon records and bills water usage in cubic feet, the City has chosen to use gallons for comparison as most people are more familiar with gallons as a term of water measurement. One cubic foot of water is equivalent to 7.48 gallons.

A public hearing will be held on February 15 at Irrigon City Hall at 6 p.m. regarding the change in water rates. If customers have questions regarding what their water bills might look like under the new rate structure, they are encouraged to visit City Hall at 500 NE Main Avenue, Irrigon Oregon, or to call 541-922-3027.

## Sheriff's Report

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office reports handling the following business:

**Dec. 2 cont.:** -MCSO arrested Don Caraway Weems, 53, on a Morrow County Circuit Court warrant for Failure to Appear/Possession of Meth. The subject was also wanted on a Umatilla County warrant.

### INVITATION TO BID

FOR  
MORROW COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS  
23 Portable toilet self contained  
free standing units

Sealed bids for twenty three (23) portable restroom units (Porta Potty's) will be received by Morrow County, Public Works Office, P.O. Box 428, 365 West Highway 74, Lexington, Oregon, 97839. Until the bid closing time of 4:00 p.m., on the 22nd day of February 2011. Bids will be publicly opened and read at the bid opening time of 9:30 a.m. On the 23rd. day of February 2011. At the Morrow County Court house, 100 Court St., Heppner, OR. Morrow County Public Works requires the units to be serviced on a mid week schedule on a weekly basis. Units are located at various locations in Morrow County, locations and numbers of units are as follows.

- 1 Unit South end transfer station  
57185 Hwy 74, Lexington, OR 97839
- 1 ADA Unit North end transfer station  
69900 Frontage Ln, Boardman, OR. 97818
- 2 Units Cutsforth Park  
58430 Willow Cr. Rd., Heppner, OR. 97836
- 1 Unit Ansonwright Park  
47500 Hwy 207-Spray, Heppner, OR. 97836
- 16 Units OHV Park  
71000 FS Rd. 21, Heppner, OR. 97836  
3 of 13 units at remote locations  
Harrington Creek, Day use  
(Grant Co. Portion) and Rock Pit (lake).
- 1 ADA Unit OHV Park  
71000 FS Rd. 21, Heppner, OR. 97836
- 1 Portable wheeled Unit  
Various road project locations

Bids shall be bid by monthly basis. Morrow County reserves the right to reject any and all bids or to postpone the award of bids for thirty (30) days from the date of opening. The County will award the yearly contract with in twenty (20) calendar days of the bid opening at that time units will need to be readily available and in place. Morrow County does not discriminate on the basis of age, religion, race national origin, sex or handicapped status in hiring or the provision of services. For additional information and concerns please contact Morrow County Public Works (541) 989-9500.

## Morrow County Court weekly meetings held

The Morrow County Court met on January 19 in Boardman with Judge Tallman and Commissioner Grieb in attendance. Following is a summary of the meetings provided by Leann Rea.

The court reviewed and approved the minutes of January 11, 2011.

The court reviewed and approved the account payables and payroll payables in the net total amount of \$125,943.02.

**Road Department**  
**Ice and snow:** The crew has been plowing snow as needed county wide, but mostly on the higher elevation roads. The crew was all geared up for the major snow storm that was predicted to arrive overnight on January 11 and into January 12. Forecasts were calling for five to seven inches of snow, then that was backed off to two to four inches of snow. Actually only received a skiff up to a half inch in the north end, then it turned to freezing rain before the transitioned to just rain.

**Brush crew:** A four person brush crew has continued with brush

removal in the north end of the county. The crew is currently working in the Irrigon area.

**Culvert cleaning:** The crew continued with cleaning out culvert inlets and outlets in the Lone-Gooseberry and Liberty School areas. Later they will be moving back to Spur Loop road to finish cleaning out and extending some culverts in that area. Some utility locates needed to be done before this project can be finish.

**Road grading:** The graders have been assisting with snow removal as needed. Most areas were too soft and wet to do much grading. However, the crew did get a chance to build up the shoulders along Pleasant View Road in Irrigon. Currently a grader is grading the roads in the West Glenn subdivision, while another one is working in the Baker Lane area, and one is working in the Dee Cox Road area.

**Road signs:** The crew has been working on sign replacements and repairs, county wide, as well as putting object markers on

some of the bridges.

**Permits:** On the recommendation of the road department approved Permit #OHX between Umatilla Electric and the county for an overhead electrical line on Paul Smith and Kunze Roads.

**Bridges:** Mr. O'Brien reported to the court that there are three bridges in the county that need weight restrictions posted on them. On bridges is on Big Butter Creek and two of the bridges are on Rhea Creek.

**Olson Road:** Held a general discussion regarding assisting the City of Boardman with work that needs to be done on Olson Road which will be the primary access for the new Ag Center Facility.

The court conducted the following business: Authorized a purchase preauthorization for the Road and Weed Department to put a 500 gallon poly spray unit on a Ford F-450 in the amount of \$9,030; The court received an update report from JR Cook regarding the progress of the Umatilla Basin

Water Commission towards the water restoration project being proposed in the County Line area; The court heard the second reading of the zone change proposal from the Port of Morrow. The court then adopted the change and requested that the Comprehensive Plan be amended to reflect this change; The court appointed Vern Frederickson to another three year term to serve on the Budget Committee. The court also reviewed and approved the budget calendar for the 2011-2012 budget dates; Greg Sweek, Assessor/Tax Collector provided the court with information regarding a new program for Assessment and Taxation that is currently being used in 11 other Oregon Counties. A discussion on how to finance such a change was discussed.

Various correspondences and upcoming meeting notices were reviewed and discussed.

If you would like to be placed on the list to receive county minutes, contact Karen Wolff at (541)676-5620.

The Morrow County Court met on January 26 in Heppner with Judge Tallman and Commissioners Grieb and Rea in attendance. Following is a summary of the meetings provided by Leann Rea.

The court reviewed and approved the minutes of January 12 and 19.

The court reviewed and approved the account payables, retirement taxes and the fourth quarter SUTA taxes in the net total amount of \$65,633.85.

**Appeal of Planning Commission Decision on Remand Review of Condition of Approval 1 Conditional Use Permit CUP-N-213 (Wind Tower Noise).** The court reviewed and approved for signature the "Order" which upheld the Planning Commission's decision regarding the William's residence and overturned the Planning Commission's decision regarding the Wade, Mingo and Eaton residences.

**Bid Opening:** The court opened three herbicide bids from Wilbur Ellis,

Crop Protection Services and Morrow County Grain Growers. The bids were turned over to the Road and Weed Department to check for completeness. Once that process is completed a recommendation will be provided to the court.

**Public Hearing:** The public hearing regarding the naming of McCabe Lane was called to order and after receiving all information regarding the change, the court approved changing a portion of Olden Lane to McCabe Lane and the extension of McCabe Lane from Brenner Canyon Road to Liberty School Road.

**Public Hearing:** The public hearing for the "Recreation Element Amendment" was called to order and after some discussion it was decided that there were additional lodgings in the county that needed to be referenced. After making these additions the planning director will bring the adoption order back to the court for signature.

**Health Department:** Sheree Smith, Director provide the court with an update on activities in her Department. A report on immunizations for school age children was provided, stating that February 16 is the cut exclusion day for children who have not received their necessary immunizations. Smith stressed the importance for the immunization for Whooping Cough, citing some death numbers. If you have questions regarding immunization you should contact the county health department. Smith requested that she be considered for a replacement vehicle. Her vehicle needs were then discussed and the court assured her that her request would be given serious consideration.

The court conducted the following business: Reviewed a request from Justin Nelson, District Attorney for one of the vehicles being rotated out of the sheriff's department. The court assigned one of the Dodge Durangos to the

D.A. with the use of vehicle to take place immediately. Reviewed and approved two property tax refunds. The first was to John and Janna Vandenbrink in the amount of \$2,129.83 due to an overpayment of taxes after BOPTA stimulated agreement and the other to Finley Butte's LTD Partnership in the amount of \$8,114.12 due to overpayment of taxes after a revised value transmittal sheet from the Oregon Department of Revenue. After a lengthy discussion and reviewing of past records, the court approved the payment of \$8,500 to the Boardman Cemetery for a "Needs and Issues Award" that was originally approved for the Boardman Community Development Association in 2006.

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