

Health district signs three-year contract with Nichols; reports great month in June

By April Sykes

At their regular meeting in Ione Monday night, the Morrow County Health District Board approved a new three-year

contract with Dr. Russ Nichols with no salary increase. The board, however, approved four additional vacation days for Dr. Nichols, from 20 to 24, to bring his contract more on par with the district's contract with Dr. Betsy Anderson. Drs. Nichols and Anderson work at Pioneer Memorial Clinic and Hospital in Heppner and also at the Irrigon Clinic.

The board also heard from Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney, who reported that the district had "a great month" in June with \$665,192 in gross revenue for the month and a \$49,237 monthly gain. The district rebounded from a \$160,036 loss the previous month.

Also at the meeting, MCHD CEO Mike Blauer told the board that the first cardiology clinic scheduled in Heppner, coordinated through MCHD and Oregon Health Sciences University, went well. A

proposed schedule for a monthly cardiology clinic at Pioneer Memorial Clinic for the next year and a half is already in the works.

Blauer also reported that the federally mandated change from paper to electronic medical records is progressing. He said that MCHD staff training by Healthland, the company selected by MCHD to provide hardware and software, is planned this fall. Blauer said the district is working on Phase I of the federal plan, but, he noted that the federal government may back off on the deadline for compliance in Phase II because of complaints and uncertainty over what the federal government is actually requiring. Mahoney said that one big question that has not yet been resolved is what the feds determine is actually reimbursable in the plan. Blauer said that issue will not impact MCHD's current anticipated federal reimbursement.

In other business, the board:

-heard from Blauer that the sidewalk renovation at Pioneer Memorial Clinic has been completed and "looks good."

-learned from Blauer that he has spoken to an architect concerning plans and costs for a proposed renovation of the Irrigon Clinic.

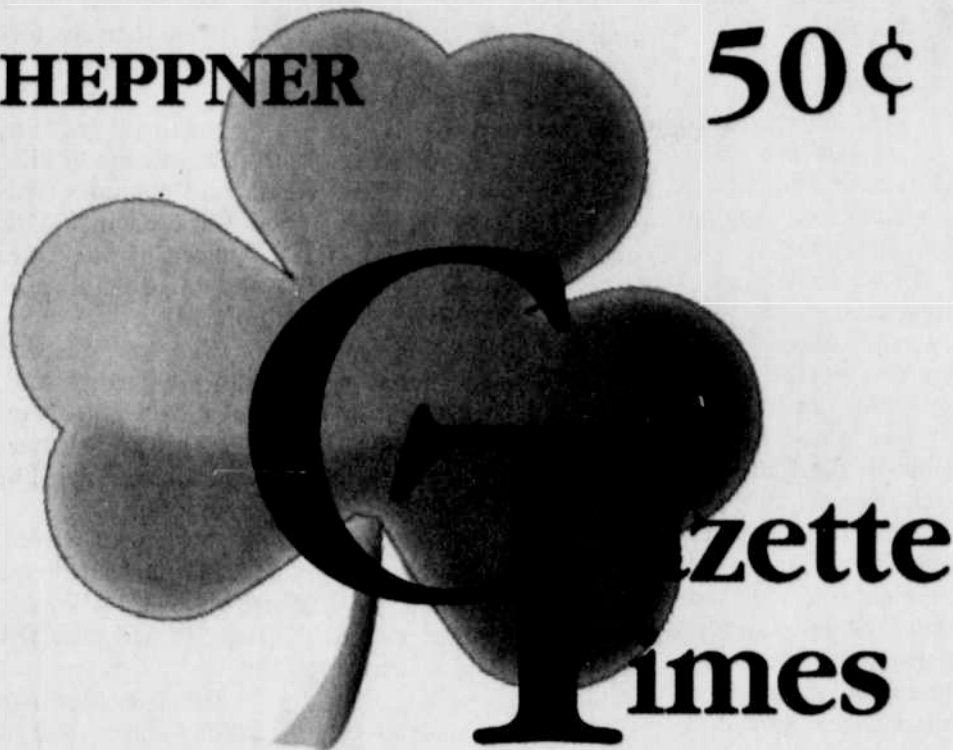
-discussed a planning meeting to be held this fall, which would include providers and department heads.

-learned from Blauer that he recently attended a Hospital Association meeting that included discussion on topics such as bills in the legislature, funding for rural hospitals and a managed care program, Coordinated Care Organizations, which has been passed by the state legislature. Through this program, hospitals, for example, would get a

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SWCD welcomes new staff member

By Andrea Di Salvo

Jake Gelineau is the latest addition to the staff at the Morrow County Soil and Water Conservation District. The 27-year-old joined the Morrow SWCD early in July as the office's new habitat technician.

Gelineau was born in Wenatchee but raised in Burlington, in Washington's Skagit Valley. He graduated from Burlington-Edison High School in 2002 and went on to attend Washington State University in Pullman. He graduated from WSU in 2007 with a bachelor of science degree in wildlife ecology.

After college, Gelineau moved to Lewiston, ID, where he worked for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. While there, he worked to accomplish habitat improvement on public lands, as well as working closely with landowners to improve habitats on private lands.

About three years ago, he moved from Lewiston to Kamiah, ID, where he continued to work for Idaho Fish and Game as a wildlife technician. One of his main duties in Kamiah was to conduct ongoing studies of elk/wolf predation. Basically, Gelineau says, he used collared populations of wolf, elk and other



SWCD's newest staff member, Jake Gelineau, says he's anxious to get out from behind the desk and interact with the community...especially if it means getting to use new tools like this no-till drill. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

species to study the effects the wolf population had on other wild animal populations.

"We did a lot of helicopter trapping, wolf management," he says.

His duties at the Morrow SWCD will be somewhat different, dealing mostly with creating wildlife habitats.

"My main job is to improve and increase upland bird habitats," Gelineau says. "I'll work with organization like SWCD, NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service), the ODFW (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Pheasants Forever, hunting organizations and landowners to get better bird habitats

established in and around Morrow County."

Part of that will involve working on CRP contracts for the NRCS and getting more hunting access on private lands, which he says will be accomplished partly through incentive programs being developed by the ODFW and NRCS. While much of the habitat will be on CRP ground, he says he will also work with landowners who have range land or other acreage they would like to improve as wildlife habitat. He's also excited about some of the equipment he has at hand, especially a tractor and no-till drill and a truck

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Harvest continues to meet expectations



Harvest is well underway throughout Morrow County. Some growers anticipate a possible record-setting harvest, with 60 to 80 bushels per acre expected. -Photo by Anne Morter

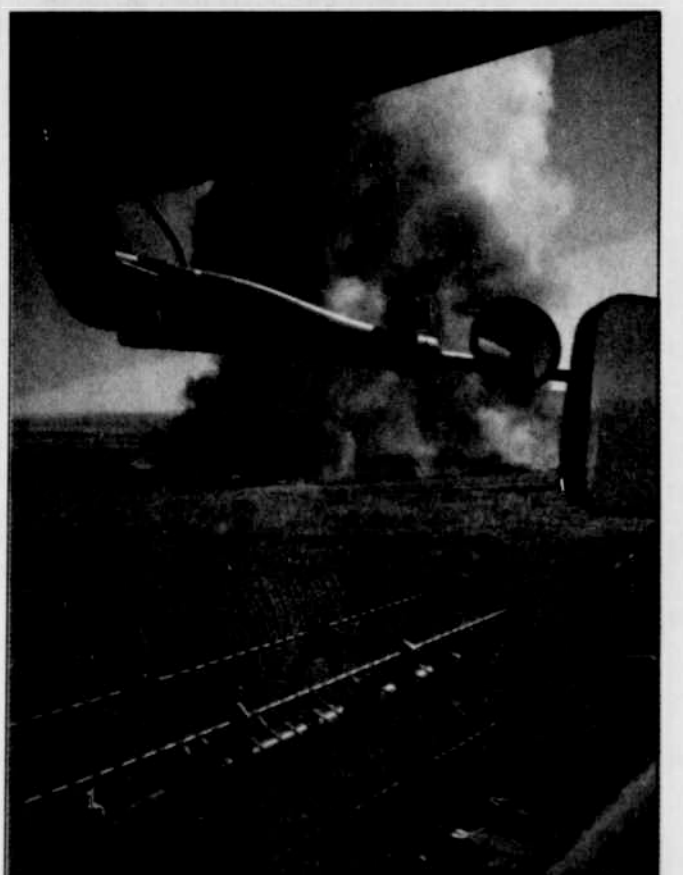
Field fire contained on Pettys Canyon Lane

A wheat fire that occurred on Pettys Canyon lane outside of Lexington last Saturday was quickly contained.

The fire started about 4 p.m. on land owned by Myrtle McMillan and farmed by Chuck Nelson. According to Tim Holtz, who was doing custom cutting on the property, the fire was started by a tractor pulling a grain wagon. He theorizes that a hot brake may have been the cause.

The fire destroyed about 40 acres of wheat before the harvest crew and several neighbors were able to put it out. The crew called the fire department but, since the fire went within a couple of yards of Myrtle McMillan's house, protecting the house was the department's first priority, said Holtz. He said that was all right, since they had all the help they needed.

"The neighbors showed up with a couple long to put it out at all," said Holtz. "The disc is the [field] fire."



A wheat fire that raged on Myrtle McMillan's land outside of Lexington was quickly contained when neighbors gathered to help. -Photo by Jason Thompson

Summer fun in full splash at Willow Creek Water Park



With hot weather finally here, kids and adults alike are beating the heat at Willow Creek Water Park. -Photo by Megan Futter

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