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HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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Smith says coal shipping now needs additional permitting

Scope of environmental review also delaying project

By David Sykes

The Ambre Energy coal-shipping project through the Port of Morrow now needs an air permit from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Greg Smith told the Heppner Chamber of Commerce Sept. 20. Smith was giving an update on the project at the chamber's regular meeting.

"When we started this project, we were told we would not need an air permit. The DEQ now says we do need an air permit, and there will probably be litigation," Smith said.

The coal shipping project will see millions of tons of coal shipped by rail from the Powder River area of Wyoming to the Port of Morrow at Boardman, down the Columbia by barge and then on to South Korea, Taiwan and Japan. Smith is an Oregon legislator but is working on this project as head of his economic development company, Greg Smith & Company, LLC.

The scope of the environmental impact required on the project is also an issue at this time, Smith said.

"Some people want an environmental assessment from Wyoming all the way to Asia," Smith says. "We feel it should only be on the dock area at Boardman.

"They will be covered barges and absolutely no dust will escape" during shipping, he said. Smith said the scope of the environmental review is in the public comment period at this time, and he urged people who support the project to comment in favor of the limited assessment.

"We are trying to do this project correctly," Smith said. He added that there would most likely be litigation either way over the Corps of Engineers' decision on the scope of the environmental review required for the project. He

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Greg Smith gives update on the Ambre Energy coal shipping project to Heppner Chamber of Commerce. *–Photo by David Sykes*

Heppner native begins medical career

By Andrea Di Salvo

Heppner High School graduate Trisha Eckman, 30, launched into her medical career this week when she began work Monday at St. Luke's Eastern Oregon Medical Associates Clinic in Baker City, OR. Eckman's specialty is family practice, which she says will include pediatrics and obstetrics.

Eckman is the daughter of Mike and Tonia Adams of Heppner. She was born in Pendleton when the family lived in Spray, OR, but they moved to Heppner when she was four years old.

She has a long history of wanting to be, and training to be, a doctor.

"I have wanted to be a doctor since I was about eight years old, when my family and I spent a lot of time interacting with the health care community while my aunt battled leukemia, and I just never changed my mind," she says.

In fact, Eckman's first job was at Pioneer Memorial Hospital while she was still in high school. She worked as a nursing assistant, mostly in the nursing home. Her work experience wasn't limited to medicine, though. Like many local kids, during high school and her first two years of college, she worked summers driving wheat truck and combine during harvest, as well as other odd jobs.

Trisha Adams Eckman

She attended school in Heppner through her graduation in 2000, then went on to college at Albertson College of Idaho in Caldwell, ID (now called The College of Idaho), majoring in biology with a chemistry minor. During her last two college summers and part-time during the school year, she worked at Gem State Developmental Center in Nampa, ID at their summer and after-school program for developmentally disabled children.

Eckman says she took a "year off" before launching into medical school, instead living in Bend, OR and working as a caregiver and medication aid at Bend Villa Retirement in the assisted living department. She then entered medical school at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland; she earned her medical doctorate in 2009.

Eckman says she struggled with her choice of specialty at first.

"I originally wanted to be a pediatrician, then an obstetrician/gynecologist," says Eckman. "Then I realized I liked all of those fields equally and could do them all as a family practice doctor."

Deciding on a specialty wasn't the end of her medical training, though. She married Jared Eck-

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Obama blocks Chinese-owned wind farm

Company says action is unconstitutional

By David Sykes

Citing national security, President Barack Obama has barred a Chinese-owned wind-turbine company from constructing a 20-tower facility in North Morrow County near the Navy Bombing Range. It is the first time in 22 years a president has blocked a transaction as a national security risk.

Obama has told the Ralls Corp. to remove all of its property and installations from the site, located on property owned by Kent Madison, within two weeks and divest all of its interests in the wind farm within 90 days. The Chinese company Sany is a subsidiary of Ralls and actually makes the turbines.

Both Sany and Ralls had said they were not affiliated with the Chinese government, and concerns of possible espionage from the wind-farm site were "not credible." At least one string of five towers on the 20-tower wind farm is located about five miles from the restricted air space of the bombing range. The Navy tests electronic warfare planes and equipment at the range.

After the presidential ruling, Ralls said it was planning a lawsuit against the federal government, charging Obama's action was unconstitutional. The company is seeking to have the order overturned or be paid compensation for its losses. Earlier, the company had said if it did not get the wind farm operational by Dec.31 it would lose out on approximately $25 million in federal production tax credits.

M.C. schools announce enrollment figures

By Andrea Di Salvo

With the school year in full swing, current enrollment figures are in for South Morrow County.

The Morrow County School District reports that Heppner High School has a current enrollment of 178, compared to 184 date-to-date last year.

The concern for the school district is Heppner Elementary School, which has a current enrollment of 171, compared to 190 last year, a decrease of 19 students.

Morrow County School Superintendent Dirk Dirksen said the decline was due to a couple of factors. One is simply that if families with small children move away, as happened this year, HES enrollment takes a hit.

Another, larger problem is an ongoing pattern the district is observing of transferring about 30 students from the elementary school to the high school every year but receiving fewer than that—usually around 20—into kindergarten. This year, he said, the high school has 37 seniors, while only 21 students started kindergarten. Dirksen said that, if the decrease continues at this rate, Heppner High also will see an eventual decline in its enrollment figures.

On a brighter note, the Ione School District reports 185 students enrolled in grades K-12, down only three from 188 at the end of last year. School staff members say that, considering last year's large graduating class, that small drop in enrollment is "pretty good." Ione Community School Principal Jerry Archer, at a meeting of the Ione School District, said the school had good new-student figures, including incoming students from Lexington and outside the county.

Local woman arrested on theft charges

A local woman was arrested by the Morrow County Sheriff's Office on Wednesday, Sept. 19, on charges of Theft I.

Virginia Lynne Patton, known as Ginger, was the manager at the Shell gas station in Lexington. The 43-year-old was arrested after her employer terminated her for theft and then called the sheriff's office to advise them of that. She was lodged at Umatilla County Jail after her arrest but was released after a court appearance the next day, Sept. 20.

Under Oregon law, a Theft I charge is a Class C felony that may be committed in a variety of ways, including stealing property valued at more than $1,000.

According to the MCSO and the Morrow County District Attorney's office, Patton is still under investigation for charges of Theft I; no charges have been filed against Patton through the DA's office.

Local man air-lifted in critical condition

A local man was transported by Life Flight to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, WA last week after being pinned between two vehicles.

Andre L. Kendrick, 54, of Ione was working Friday afternoon with a vehicle that was on a trailer towed behind a second vehicle. The vehicle that was on the trailer apparently rolled forward and pinned Kendrick against the tow unit.

A neighbor called 911 and units from the Morrow County Sheriff's Office, Ione Fire Department, Heppner Fire Department and Morrow County Health District responded to the scene. Kendrick was extricated 10 minutes later by the first responders. CPR was started on scene, and Kendrick was transported to Pioneer Memorial Hospital before being transferred to Kadlec hospital by Life Flight with "life-threatening injuries."

He was listed in critical condition later that night. Some sources say Kendrick is now doing "better than expected" but the Gazette-Times was unable to confirm his exact condition before press time.

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

Lexington man killed in crash near Ukiah

Lexington man Loren Woodside, 82, was killed Saturday when his pickup rolled on Highway 244 about four miles east of Ukiah.

On Sept. 29, about 2:40 p.m., Woodside's 1993 Dodge pickup was westbound on Highway 244 near milepost 5 when, for what Oregon State Police say was an "unknown reason," it traveled toward the shoulder. Woodside apparently over-corrected and lost control. OSP report that the pickup rolled more than once before coming to rest on its top.

Woodside was pronounced dead at the scene. He was wearing his seatbelt.

OSP was assisted at the scene by Ukiah Quick Response and Pendleton Ambulance. OSP is continuing the investigation. Sergeant Seth Cooney is the lead investigator.

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