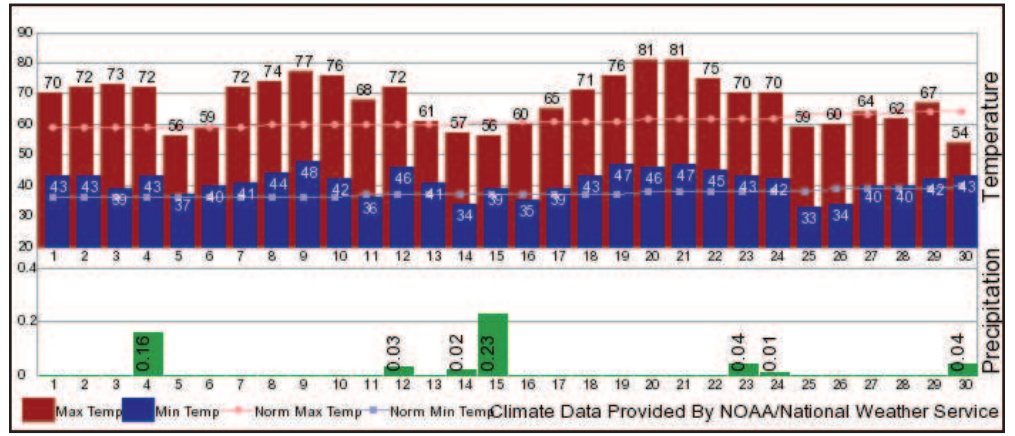


# Gazette Times

## April second warmest on record



According to the National Weather Service in Pendleton, temperatures at Heppner averaged much warmer than normal during the month of April, making this the second-warmest April on record locally. The warmest was 55.6 degrees in 1934. The average temperature for April was 54.4 degrees, which was 5.4 degrees above normal. The warmest April averaged 55.6 degrees in 1934. High -See WARM WEATHER/PAGE THREE

## Rep. Smith appointed to committee for 2017 Transportation Package

SALEM, OR—Last week it was announced that Rep. Greg Smith (R-Heppner) has been appointed as a member of the long-awaited Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization, which is tasked with the development of a major transportation package for the 2017 Legislative Session.



Rep. Greg Smith

Rep. Smith. "If done right, a strategic transportation package can invest in our state's aging and crumbling infrastructure while driving economic growth and job creation in our ports, counties and communities."

On Wednesday, both the Speaker of the House Tina Kotek (D-N/NE Portland) and Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem) announced the creation of the 14-member committee. The committee's anticipated transportation package, which is declared by both Republican and Democrat legislators as a top priority, is expected to make significant investments in Oregon's highways, bridges, ports and rail system. The goal of the investments will be to repair, modernize and expand Oregon's transportation infrastructure.

Smith also stated he will be working with House leadership to help include Eastern Oregon communities on the list of public hearing locations.

"I applaud legislative leadership for their willingness to travel outside of Salem and Portland to have this important conversation," said Smith. "This package has the potential to have a positive effect for all Oregonians, so all regions of the state should be invested and engaged."

Rep. Smith also serves on the Joint Ways and Means Committee, Co-Vice Chair; Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction; Emergency Board; Small Business Growth Committee, Co-Chair; and the Governor's Small Business Cabinet.

## Ballots due May 17



Twenty-four hour drop locations like this are available in Morrow County for voter convenience. -File photo

Ballots for the primary and Election Day (May 17) from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. Election Day, Tuesday, May 17. Ballots must be received, not simply post-marked, on that day. For voter convenience, 24-hour drop boxes are located throughout the county. Locations are as follows:

- Heppner:** Courthouse parking lot (24 hours) or the Morrow County Clerk's Office, Room 102 inside the courthouse. Open 8 a.m. to noon and 1-5 p.m., M-F

- Lexington:** 365 West Hwy 74 (Public Works Parking lot). Turn off Hwy. 74 onto Tom Street and left into the public works parking lot. Open 24 hours.
- Ione:** Spring St. (in front of the turn to 3rd Street). Open 24 hours.
- Boardman:** NW Boardman Ave. (24 hours).
- Irrigon:** 205 NE 3rd St. (Irrigon Annex). Open 24 hours.

## Mustang Mop-Up planned for next week

Heppner High School will hold its annual Mustang Mop-Up next Thursday, May 12. Anyone who has a project request should contact Greg Grant at Heppner High School, 541-676-9138.

## WCVEDG launches push for more rental development

The Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group met last week with two potential developers to discuss rental property development in the Heppner area.

WCVEDG has been working for some time to develop more rental units to ease a chronic shortage, which some say hinder local businesses and employers from hiring qualified people.

"We have seen it happen quite a few times. A new person comes here to apply for a job, and then they can't find appropriate housing," said WCVEDG President David Sykes.

Sykes, who is also a local realtor, says he has witnessed firsthand people applying for jobs at the hospital, bank and grain co-op, and then having trouble finding a place to live.

"Not everyone wants to buy a home right away," he points out. "They want to rent for a while, find out if things work out, and then buy. We need more rental units," he states flatly.

The major economic engines and employers in this area are the Morrow County Health District, Bank of Eastern Oregon, which has its headquarters in Heppner, Morrow County Grain Growers in

Lexington and Ione, Morrow County government, the school district, and the Forest Service, which has its Umatilla National Forest headquarters located in Heppner.

"If we want to retain and help these employers hire good people, we need to make sure housing is available," Sykes says. "It's an economic development issue. Which is why WCVEDG has become involved."

Earlier the group funded a rental study covering the three communities in south county; now it is moving forward to see if actual new rental units can

be built. "We met with possible investors and developers to see what it will take to get something actually built," says Sykes.

He said the group is looking at several sites in town for a duplex, and while there is government money available for low-income housing, making the economics work for regular, or market, housing is a little more challenging.

At its monthly meeting last week WCVEDG formed a committee to look at possible building sites, explore construction costs and look at various funding options.

## Matteson retires after 21 years at HES

By Andrea Di Salvo

Heppner Elementary School will bid farewell to veteran first-grade teacher Sherry Matteson when she leaves her HES classroom for the last time next month.

Matteson, 62, is actually already "retired," with an official retirement date of July 1, 2015. However, when Morrow County School District requested that she stay on for one more school year, she agreed. Her last day at HES will be June 10.

Matteson was born in Heppner and spent her first four years of life in Condon, but spent the rest of her childhood in Redmond. She graduated from Redmond High School in 1971. She then attended Eastern Oregon State College (now Eastern Oregon University) and obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education in 1975.

After college she began a teaching career that focused almost exclusively on the first grade; she started out in Milton-Freewater, where she taught first grade for 12 years before spending eight years teaching first



Retiring teacher Sherry Matteson in the first-grade classroom at Heppner Elementary where she has spent much of the last 21 years. -Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

grade in Redmond. Some of that time was spent as a substituted teacher as she also focused on raising four young children with her husband, Chuck.

In 1993 the family moved to Heppner. Matteson said they intended to move because of a job prospect for her husband. When it didn't pan out, they decided to move anyway.

"We just liked it here and decided to stay," she says.

Matteson started subbing with Heppner Elementary that same year, and

move to a full-time teaching position in 1995, where she has remained ever since. She says there were a few years when she was split between first and second grade, and she taught kindergarten and first grade last year. However, most of her 21-year career was spent exclusively in the first grade classroom.

"I like the first grade," she says. She says she's retiring now because she and husband Chuck have no family left locally and they would like to be closer to

their children and seven grandchildren; they plan to move to Jordan Valley, OR where most of their grandkids are. She adds that they also have grandchildren in Pendleton, so the Mattesons will be traveling back and forth quite a bit.

"We'll get to start watching our grandkids do things," Matteson says. "We'll be able to help where we're needed and not have to worry about missing stuff."

It won't all be babysitting and ball games, though. Matteson says she intends to keep subbing in Jordan Valley, and the couple has other plans to keep busy.

"We have a house we're remodeling in Jordan Valley with two acres," she says. "My husband does woodworking and I'll help him with that."

For Matteson, the move away from her long-time home and her students will be bittersweet.

"It'll be sad to move. It'll be hard to leave all of our friends, the kids," she says. "The (school) kids just seem like they're your own kids. But we're ready."

## City of Irrigon offers flat billing

Irrigon also developing incentive program for 'nuisance' properties

The City of Irrigon is offering a program that the city hopes will allow customers to better manage their monthly budgets. Through the program, customers will pay the same every month with average, or flat, billing.

The average billing plan allows members to pay a monthly charge of the average of the past 12 months of usage on city bills—an estimated annual bill is divided by 12 months to calculate the initial monthly

budget bill amount, which is subject to adjustment.

According to a press release from the city, this option is "perfect for people who don't want to guess what their monthly payment will be" and eliminates large fluctuations

between winter and summer bills.

Any Irrigon residents interested in seeing if they qualify, or for more information, contact Irrigon City Hall at 541-922-3047 or manager@ci.irrigon.or.us.

In other city news, Ir-

rigon has been awarded a \$20,000 planning grant as part of a \$150,000 Wastewater Facility Plan. The remaining amount is funded through a City Inter Fund-Loan. Internal funds were

-See CITY OF IRRIGON/PAGE THREE

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

### MOTHER'S DAY SPECIALS

**10% OFF - HANGING BASKETS**

**COLOR BOWLS - PLANTERS**

**MONTANA SILVER 20% OFF**

**WEEKS ROSES 20% OFF**

**Morrow County Grain Growers Green Feed & Seed**

242 W. Linden Way, Heppner • 676-9422 • 989-8221 (MCGG main office)