

Progress continues on new fire hall



With the foundation laid, the new fire hall in Heppner is going up by leaps and bounds. The hall is estimated to be complete in late August. -Photo by David Sykes

Heppner seniors turn their tassels



The 25 members of the Heppner High School Class of 2016 held their commencement exercises on Saturday, June 4, in the Heppner High School gymnasium. -Photo by Sandra Putman

Warm weather expected to continue through June

Despite some cold and breezy days and near-freezing night, weather in the month of May averaged warmer than normal in the Heppner area, a trend that is expected to continue through June, according to the National Weather service.

According to preliminary data received by the NWS in Pendleton, the average temperature in May was 57.9 degrees, which was 1.8 degrees above normal. High temperatures av-

precipitation of at least .01 inch was received on seven days with the heaviest, 0.74 inches, reported on the 15th.

Precipitation this year has reached 5.93 inches, which is 1.35 inches below normal. Since October, the water-year precipitation at Heppner has been 9.77 inches, which is 1.57 inches below normal.

The highest wind gust was 35 mph, which occurred on the both the fourth and eighth.

The outlook for June

Smith has plan to deal with PERS bubble

By David Sykes

Oregon Representative Greg Smith says he did not create the PERS (Public Employee Retirement) funding crisis, but he has a plan on how to deal with it. And as an influential member of the legislature and the Co-Vice Chair on the Ways and Means, he's in a pretty good place to push for those changes.

The State of Oregon has a \$22 billion unfunded liability in the PERS fund, Smith said at a recent meeting of the Heppner Chamber of Commerce.

"I did not create the PERS crisis," he is quick to point out, explaining how in the 1980s the public employee unions wanted a pay raise but was instead given a generous guaranteed retirement fund, one the state now has no money to pay for.

Smith says this generous funding arrangement has been challenged several times in court and each time it has been ruled a contractual agreement which the legislature cannot change.

"The Supreme Court says we have to pay it



Oregon District 57 Representative Greg Smith recently addressed the Heppner Chamber of Commerce. Smith is in a good position to wield considerable influence, as he is Co-Vice Chair of the Ways and Means Committee in this year's legislative session. -Photo by David Sykes

and the State of Oregon must honor it, and as vice co-chair of the Ways and Means I see a tidal wave coming at us," Smith says of the large amount of unfunded payments the state and tax payers are obligated to pay. "We have to handle it," he adds, saying there are 25 more years of the payments in the pipeline.

To "fix" the problem Smith says his plan is for the state to take out bonds for the next 25 years, pay the PERS with the bonds and effectively "get the is-

sue off the table."

"This will stagger the payments out of the general fund. You are going to have to pay the bill and I feel this is the best way to do it," Smith told the Chamber of Commerce. He says the alternative is to "keep rolling along" and dealing with the payments in each budget cycle with the uncertainty that brings to the budgeting system.

Smith says small taxing districts will have the most difficulty dealing with the large PERS liability, but

that the local school district has done a good job with its PERS. It was pointed out that Morrow County chose not to participate in PERS at the time, and therefore has a lower retirement liability than most public bodies.

In other comments to the chamber Smith said the proposed corporate tax increase coming to voters for approval is a bad deal for Oregon and he urged a no vote.

"That tax comes right off the top of gross sales," he points out. He said it would be a bad deal for our local businesses like MCGG and Columbia Basin Electric. "Keep in mind what it is going to do to business. Corporations will not want to expand here in Oregon," he said.

He said there is a \$1.4 billion shortfall in the state budget this biennium and voters will hear a lot of talk to pass the new corporate tax. "It is sales tax on steroids," he told the chamber. "IP28 (the corporate tax bill) is not in the best interests of this community or this state," he said.



Temperatures are expected to remain above normal with near-normal moisture for the month of June.

eraged 70.3 degrees, which was 1.6 degrees above normal. The highest was 83 degrees on the fourth. Low temperatures averaged 45.6 degrees, which was two degrees above normal. The lowest was 34 degrees on the 20th.

Precipitation totaled 2.22 inches during May, which was 0.56 inches above normal. Measurable

from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for above-normal temperatures and near-normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner rise from 73 degrees at the start of June to 81 degrees at the end of June. Normal lows rise from 47 degrees to 51 degrees. The 30-year normal precipitation is 1.38 inches.

Final report of 2016 snow season predicts low summer streamflow



The last of the winter's snow at McKenzie Pass. -Photo courtesy of Bill Overman (Oregon NRCS)

PORTLAND, OR— Oregon's snow season was shortened by early snowmelt, even after most of the state's mountains achieved near-normal to above-normal seasonal snowpack.

Warm temperatures and rapid snowmelt during April resulted in an unusual amount of snowpack loss, even breaking records in

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Energy Siting Council to discuss Wheatridge Wind Facility

The Wheatridge Wind Energy Facility is on the agenda when the Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council holds its meeting June 17 in Boardman. The meeting will be held at city hall and starts at 8 a.m. No public comment will be taken at the meeting, and the Wheatridge Wind Farm

is only one of seven items on the council's agenda.

The council will receive a presentation and review the Draft Proposed Order for the Wheatridge Wind Energy Facility, according to the agenda. "The Council will not permit comments on any issue that may be the basis for a con-

tested case," it states. The council had taken public comment on the facility at an earlier meeting.

The new facility will consist of 292 towers and stretch from the Bombing Range to the outskirts of Heppner, and will also be located partly in Umatilla County.

Marijuana edibles now legal

OHA provides information to help keep children safe

On June 2 edible marijuana products containing up to 15 mg of THC became available for retail sale in registered medical marijuana dispensaries across the state to adults 21 or over. Although zoning

laws regulating marijuana dispensaries may vary from city to city, the accessibility of marijuana edibles still creates a safety concern for children.

Smoking marijuana has the added risk of harmful

smoke exposure, but eating or drinking marijuana still exposes you to THC, the chemical that makes you high. While you quickly feel the effects of smoked

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FATHER'S DAY SPECIALS

WRANGLER ORIGINAL COWBOY CUT
JEANS 13MWZ \$21.95 ON SALE
10% OFF DANNER & GEORGIA BOOTS

ALL OTHER MEN'S CLOTHING 25% OFF



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