

County Court agrees to support new dairy

Hears from dairy operator and construction manager

By David Sykes

The Morrow County Court agreed Aug. 10 to write letters of support in efforts to locate a new 30,000-cow dairy on land in North Morrow County.

The court's decision follows an earlier July 27 letter it wrote to the Oregon Department of Agriculture stating several concerns, mostly about groundwater, at the new facility. The letter was sent following a public hearing held concerning construction of the new dairy.

In the letter the court had expressed concerns about the dairy's compliance, or noncompliance, with local land use requirements, locating of a large dairy in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area, development of a large dairy in the Buttercreek Critical Groundwater Area, impact of the dairy on adjacent canal operations, impact of construction on the surrounding area, and animal mistreatment. The groundwater is of major concern because of already high levels of nitrates.

The current Willow Creek Dairy, located on leased land from nearby Threemile Canyon Farms, is looking to relocate and expand operation onto 7,288 acres purchased last year from the former

Boardman Tree Farm.

If permitted, the dairy will be renamed Lost Valley Ranch, and would be the second-largest in the state. But before that can happen, the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Department of Environmental Quality must sign off on an application to approve the farm as a confined animal feeding operation.

In response to the letter of concern, both the dairy operator Travis Love and the dairy construction manager Wayne Downey attended the Aug. 10 court meeting to explain the dairy operations and attempt to alleviate concerns.

"We want to address your concerns and tell you we are protecting the laws of the state," Love told the court. "We want to put your mind at ease about our operations."

Love went on to say there would be zero discharge of waste water into the water table, and that the facility will be built in a manner required by state law. He said extensive research and planning went into the grading and compacting of the site, and the holding pond linings would use impermeable material to protect the ground water. He said his facility would actually be much less of a threat to the water supply than conventional farming

fertilization practices.

Love also pointed out that the dairy will take in more than 200,000 pounds of waste feed annually from various food processors in the area, waste that would otherwise end up the landfill.

"Most people don't realize what great recyclers of feed waste dairies are," he told the court.

In responding to a question from Commissioner Don Russell about the use of effluent water and methane digesters, Love said effluent is currently used on their own farm land to build up the soil, and Willow Creek Dairy will export waste water to other farms and to nurseries in the Portland area. He also said methane digesters will be used at the new dairy.

On the subject of air quality construction manager Downey said there is a misconception that cows are great producers of noxious chemical gases. He said the forage crops grown on the planned 5,000 to 10,000 acres at the dairy will offset these gases produced by the cows.

On the economic impact to the county and area, Downey said the annual operating budget for the new dairy will be \$25 to \$30 million, and that this would multiply by five to seven times.

Locals tear up the arena at county rodeo

Guerra wins amateur calf roping saddle



Fabien Guerra took first place in the Morrow County Rodeo amateur calf roping with a time of 42.11 on two, taking home the 2016 championship saddle donated by Morrow County Grain Growers. -Photo by Sandy Matthews

Fabien Guerra rode away with the coveted Morrow County Amateur Calf Roping saddle from the 2016 Morrow County Rodeo Aug. 21. Guerra secured the win with a time of 42.11 on two. Taking second in calf roping was Jacee Currin with 39.40.

It was the team of Tate Gentry and Garrett Robinson who tied down first place in ribbon roping with a time of 15.21. They were followed by Jett Stewart and Trevor Reikkola with 23.14 and Kolby Currin and Kevin Murray with 27.07.

Open tie-down calf roping went to Dick Hoffmann with his time of 15.77. Second place went to Steve Hofman at 17.18, with Kolby Currin placing third at an even 20.

For team roping, it was the duo of Ben Kershner and Trevor Reikkola who placed first with a time of 7.98, followed by Jack McGuire and Lane Bailey with

8.16 and Devin Robinson and Fabien Guerra with 8.6.

Breakaway roping went to Alexis Doure with her time of 2.30. Blane Mahoney took second with 3.40 and Shayla Currin was third at 5.58.

It was Willy Gentry who stuck on the cow the longest during cow riding, earning an 82. Nate Hoffman took second with a 78.

In calf riding, it was Brock Hisler all the way with 74 points.

Reese Weygandt earned the mutton bustin' buckle by hanging on the longest, followed by Denver Eng, Kamryn Dickenson and Jace Wilson.

For barrels, it was Shayla Currin who rode away with first place in senior barrels with a time of 17.94. Mary Hayes was second at 17.96, followed by Taylor Eng and Maryann Munkers tied for third at 18.19.

The winner of junior

barrels was Sydney Bracher with 18.03. Second was Taylor Hoffman at 18.37, with Sierra Greenup rounding out the top three with 18.84.

Intermediate barrels went to Tripp Stewart with his time of 26.00. Quaid Jenson took second with 30.22, with Reese Weygandt third at 35.14.

Savannah Greenup was the winner of pee wee barrels with a time of 31.95+.

Always a favorite at the rodeo are the stick horse races. Taking the first-place trophy for the three-and-under group was Morgan Milligan, followed by Jayden Macias in second and Pearl Miller in third. Ketch Fernnen was the winner in the four-to-five age group, followed by Jayde Espinilla and Kord Dickenson. Placing first in the six-and-seven-year-old group was Avery Lathrop, followed by Soren Miles and Coltan Akers.

-See WILD STEERS & STICK HORSES for photos of more winners/PAGE EIGHT

"We've touched almost every business with something to sell," he said.

Lost Valley Ranch would be located about a mile and a half east of where Homestead Lane meets Poleline Road. About 6,000 acres would be used to grow feed for the cows, such as silage, alfalfa and triticale.

The current Willow Creek Dairy now produces about 70,000 gallons of

milk per day for Tillamook Cheese, which operates a whey plant at the Port of Morrow.

After hearing from the operator and construction manager of the new facility, the court agreed to write a letter of support for approval of the permit, to the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the governor's office.

Wym Matthews, pro-

gram manager with Oregon Department of Agriculture, said he did not have a firm date when the dairy permit would be decided upon. He said following the public hearing more than 2,600 comments were received, and his department and the Department of Environmental Quality were in the process of answering those comments prior to making a decision.

Heppner celebrates opening of car charging station



Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative finished installing a new electric vehicle charging station in Heppner recently. The station was the last of four installed in the co-op's service area, with others located in Ione, Condon and Fossil. Celebrating the car charging station opening with a ribbon cutting Monday were (L-R) Morrow County Administrator Jerry Sorte, Heppner Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Sheryll Bates, CBEC Assistant Manager of Operations Josh Coiner, Heppner Mayor Skip Matthews, CBEC Board Member Gerry Arnsen, CBEC Staff Accountant Debbie Lankford, CBEC General Manager Tommy Wolff, and Morrow County Judge Terry Tallman. -Photo Andrea Di Salvo

G-T closed for Labor Day

The Heppner Gazette-Times will be closed for the Labor Day holiday on Monday, Sept. 5. The deadline for all news and advertising for the Sept. 7 issue will be Friday, Sept. 2, at 5 p.m. Normal business hours will resume Tuesday, Sept. 6.

The G-T wishes everyone a happy and safe Labor Day weekend.

On the Inside....

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

Advertisement for Polaris Factory Authorized Clearance, featuring images of ATVs and UTVs, with financing offers and contact information for Morrow County Grain Growers.