

Gazette Times

Heppner's First Friday deemed a success



The Heppner Outreach Council members (L-R): Jackie Alleman, Darcie Chick, Sheryll Bates, Tayllor Brannon, Kathy Cutsforth, Sharon Miller and John Bowles.

The first occurrence of the scheduled Heppner's First Friday celebrations that was held on July 5 was considered a success by the organizers, the Heppner Outreach Council. A spokesperson for the group told the Gazette, "We are speechless with the success of Heppner's First Friday Celebration!"

The celebration consisted of events for people of all ages along with music and vendors lining the streets. Dallin Puzey, Hermiston, had an incredible sound and kept the community wanting more. When he finished his set, people were asking him to play longer. By collecting donations from the audience, he was able to play for one more hour.

Kids were entertained by area first responders who brought a fire truck, a police car and an ambulance. Bucknum's and Murray's provided beer and wine tasting for the adults. Vendors of all types were set up displaying and selling their wares and local businesses stayed open late offering special discounts for the event. St. Patrick's Senior Center provided extra seating in the shade where everyone could sit and enjoy the festivities.

The Heppner Outreach Council members are look-

ing forward to the August 2 First Friday celebration, saying they could not have managed such a successful event without the help of area businesses and organizations, including Wheatland Insurance, the Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Morrow County Fairgrounds, Heppner City Hall, Columbia River Heat Softball team and all of the vendors who traveled near and far.



City considers changes to water billing

Due date would be 15th of month

By David Sykes

The city of Heppner is considering changing its due date for payment of water bills without a late fee from the 10th of the month to the 15th.

Under the same change the city would mail a delinquent notice to accounts that are 30 days past due, and then if not paid five days later post a notice of disconnect on the property. If the bill is still not paid, then the water will be cut off 10 days after mailing

the delinquent notice, or five days after posting the disconnect notice. A disconnect charge will also be added to the account at that time. These billing changes were presented to the council at Monday's meeting and a final decision is to be made at the August council meeting.

City says auto repair business illegally zoned

In other business at Monday's meeting the council heard from local auto repair businessman

Marty Brannon who said he received a notice from City Administrator Kraig Cutsforth that Brannon's business was in violation of the city's zoning ordinance and could be subject to a \$435 per day fine. The letter also instructed Brannon to clean up his property at 126 E. May Ave within 15 days or face a separate penalty.

Brannon said he was not aware of the ordinance making his business illegally zoned. "I have no problem cleaning up," he said, pointing out that he already had a crew work-

Experts answer Willow Creek Lake Dam questions

Safety, water quality and stream erosion discussed



Workers drill into the Willow Creek Dam taking core samples for study. The drilling is part of the periodic inspection of the dam and was done in February and March of this year.

By David Sykes

A large contingent of experts attended a recent public meeting in Heppner to talk and answer questions about dam safety and water quality at the Corps of Engineers operated Willow Creek Dam.

Quite a bit of time was spent on water quality at the lake and the occurrences of algae blooms during the summer months. The corps has been continuously motoring the reservoir water since 1984 to identify changes of water quality. The corps has tried several methods to alleviate the algae which can be dangerous to humans and animals if consumed.

Testing of the water is done by the University of Idaho with results turned over to the Oregon Health Authority, which in conjunction with the local Morrow County Health Department issues the health alerts.

Lake is high on list with algae

Willow Creek Lake has one of the most days of harmful algae bloom advisories in the state. Since 2005 only Lost Creek Lake a reservoir located on the Rogue River in Jackson County, has come close to the number of days. In 2018 Willow Creek Lake had 54 total days of harmful algae bloom advisories during the year. The highest year was 2008 when there were 153. Local health department nurse Shelley Wight said her department assists in informing the public locally once the alerts are issued.

Officials say there are many reasons for the algae

including phosphorus from upstream animal waste and fertilizers. Actually what everyone calls blue-green algae is really bacteria that lives in the water, said Rebecca Hillwig, Natural Resource Specialist with the Oregon Health Authority. She said when the bacteria loses its food source lower in the water it raises to the surface in search of food. That is when everyone sees the blooms. She said it is a "tough" bacterium and difficult to get rid of.

The corps has tried several things to try and get rid of it including an aeration system from 2004 to 2007, long distance circulators in 2008-09, and alum and nitrate additions in 2009-10. Nothing has worked and the problem still persists. Asked if the algae is a problem downstream it was reported that the stream water in the creek below the dam is not tested by the Corps of Engineers. Questions were raised on the quality of water people are putting on plants with irrigation water from the creek downstream. Kevin Payne of the local Soil and Water District says they have done some creek sampling but have not found any toxins in the water.

There is a measuring device attached to the dam that moves up and down in the lake water to take water temperatures at different depths. The cables on the device have malfunctioned so the device is stuck at its lowest level in the lake. Corps officials say they are still getting temperature readings, just not at all levels of the lake. They are

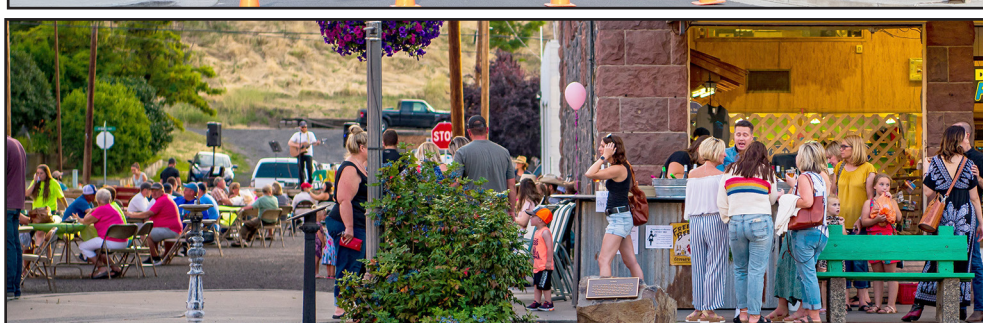
not sure when a dive team will be able to come in and fix the device.

One Heppner resident asked why the state can't enforce water quality standards to improve conditions at the lake, including keeping out animal waste. She wanted to know why there isn't any money for farmers to address these issues. "We have to have our farmers, but there should be money for this," she said. A representative of the Department of Environmental Quality said the state can enforce water quality and that farmers can apply for grants for water quality projects. He also said toxin from the algae is not absorbed through the skin and needs to be ingested to cause harm to humans. He added that dogs can lick the algae off their skin even when dry, which is not good for the animals.

Dam has lots of storage capacity

Corps officials also addressed concerns about the capacity of the lake for holding water, especially with the large amount of rain and snow this year. Both 2011 and 2019 had "high water events" and the dam still had "plenty of room" to accommodate all the water coming down, Corps officials said. They said this spring was a "long event" with multiple peaks that kept sending water in. The dam did its job and kept flooding from happening downstream. The dam regulates three streams that come into the lake, Willow, Skinner and Balm Fork. The other streams down-

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