



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

50¢

VOL. 141 NO. 37 8 Pages Wednesday, September 21, 2022 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

It's Over



A demolition contractor imploded the smokestack and boiler building at Portland General Electric's shut down coal-fired power plant near Boardman last Thursday

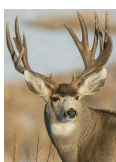


Front Page of Dec. 27, 1979 Gazette-Times proclaims 'Coal Arriving'

Coal arriving at Carty coal-fired plant Jan. 10

The 656-foot tall smoke stack, and a 19-story boiler building at the Boardman coal plant came crashing down last week, as explosives finished off the most visible vestige of a 40-year history of coal-powered electric generation in Morrow County. The plant began operation in 1980 and, in addition to providing the largest steady flow of electricity to Portland General Electric customers, also supported over one hundred well-paying jobs to citizens in the area. Although the plant still had many years of useful life left, it was shut down after passage of strict new state air guidelines that cut the amount of carbon emissions a utility can emit.

The Heppner Gazette-Times wants to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Stop by to have your picture taken, drop off photos, mail them to PO Box 337 in Heppner, email them to editor@rapidsolve.net or text cell phone photos to 541-980-6674.



DEADLINE:
MONDAYS
AT 5PM

Public nitrate water meeting held in Boardman

Around 65 people attended a public meeting last Thursday giving testimony and demanding action on nitrate contaminated water in the north Morrow County area. The meeting was held in Boardman and hosted by the environmental and social justice community organizing group Oregon Rural Action from La Grande.

Ever since the county declared a water emergency in June Oregon Rural Action has been working with County Commissioner Jim Doherty and county staff members of the health and emergency management departments testing wells for nitrate levels, going door-to-door and delivering bottled water to affected residents.

Doherty was one of the main speakers at the community meeting where he informed the gathered crowd of the efforts underway to ensure residents have safe drinking water. According to Doherty he and Ana Piñeyro of the health department along with Oregon Rural Action volunteers have tested 485 home wells so far, with 200 showing nitrate levels higher than the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) safe drinking limit of 10 parts per million.

Doherty said in addition to distributing bottled water, filters are also being installed on home wells to remove the nitrates. "The state is working with the county and we have some filters and have been installing them," Doherty told the crowd. He says there is also follow up being done after installation, with tests showing a high effective rate. "Ninety percent of them (filters) are getting the nitrates down below 10 parts per million," he said. "They are doing what they are supposed to be doing."

Doherty said although the state is becoming involved, they are not moving as fast as he would like to see. "They are ready to step in and they have \$1,800 filters but we are in a holding pattern right now while the DOJ (Department of Justice) is writing contracts

with local plumbers." He said the state is a couple of weeks away from coming in with water filters to install on affected wells. "They are willing to put in whatever filters they need to at whatever dollar level they need to," he told the crowd. He said the state is willing to spend up to \$4,500 per filter, but people need to "keep the pressure on the state and keep asking for funds and to help Oregon Rural Action help you," he urged.

Oregon Rural Action (ORA) is a La-Grande-based community organizing nonprofit founded in 2001 that according to its website, "promotes social justice, agricultural and economic sustainability, and the stewardship of the region's land, air, and water. Through community organizing, public conversations, and policy advocacy, ORA is building a rural movement for the well-being of all people and our environment." Doherty said the group has not received any county funds.

As part of last Thursday's program several people gave testimonials on their experiences and concerns living with high nitrate water wells. For example, Paulo Lopez said he has lived 26 years in Boardman with his wife and two daughters, and he also supports his mother who he was most concerned about. "She has a water well and recently we received news that her water has high levels of nitrates. Her well was tested and the result was a 40.1, that's four times what it should," he related. He said his mother puts chlorine in the soap to wash dishes and when bathing, as well as disinfecting the tub. Lopez said a filter would help his mother. "I urgently ask you to continue providing resources so that we have access to emergency water, well testing and treatment, until we become a rural community with safe water," he said.

Continued page eight



Members of the audience hold up signs demanding clean water at a community meeting last week in Boardman. Several people, including Paulo Lopez of Boardman inset, gave testimonials about living in the contaminated water area.

POLARIS
UPGRADE YOUR RIDE
ELEVATE YOUR ADVENTURE

NEW FOR 2022

CHECK OUT THE ALL-NEW 2022 POLARIS LINEUP. WE'LL HELP YOU LOCK IN WHAT YOU WANT.

Morrow County Grain Growers INC.

CALL
541-989-8221
ext 204
for more information

WARNING: Polaris off-road vehicles can be hazardous to operate and are not intended for on-road use. Driver must be at least 16 years old with a valid driver's license to operate. Passengers, if permitted, must be at least 12 years old. All riders should always wear helmets, eye protection, and protective clothing. Always use seat belts and cab nets or doors (as equipped). Never engage in stunt driving, and avoid excessive speeds and steep turns. Riding and stunts require skill. All riders should take a safety training course. Call 800-342-3764 for additional information. Check local laws before riding on trails. ©2021 Polaris Inc.

POLARIS | OFF ROAD