

County seeks water consultant

Will address water quality and quantity

Morrow County is seeking to contract with a water consultant to provide “technical information” for understanding and managing county water issues, it was announced.

The desire to hire a new professional, or a firm, to provide water consulting was prompted by the recent heightened awareness of nitrates contamination in north county water wells, and the job description posted by commissioners is heavily weighted towards studying this particular problem.

The description, or request for proposals as it’s called, specifies that a big part of the job will be about water quality and quantity, mainly in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (LUB-GWMA) in north county. It says the goal of the studies will be to “provide technical information to better understand water quality and quantity issues,” and “foster a sustainable supply of water for county residents and industries.”

County Planner Tamra Mabbott is handling the job posting and taking in the proposals, which are due by Nov. 7. They will then be evaluated, ranked and taken to commissioners for interviews and the contract awarded by Nov. 23 with a start date of Dec. 5.

The cost of the consultant was not mentioned in the job posting, but the amount will be determined later, and the money will come from the county general fund.

In a question-and-answer area of the county website about the contract it was asked if the county would consider it a conflict of interest for a prospective consultant to “be working directly with the Port of Morrow or similar agricultural entity of stakeholder?” The answer was “The legal basis is not apparent and the county is not aware of any potential conflicts. However, county reserves the right to address potential conflicts in the contract.”

At the Oct. 19 commissioner meeting Mabbott was told to review team to screen incoming proposals for the water coordinator contract.

Youth Elk Hunt

In other county business at the meeting commissioners approved six applicants for the annual second season Special Youth Spike Elk Hunt at the Morrow/Grant County Off-Highway Vehicle Park

(OHV).

The hunt is not a special hunt organized by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), but only provides permission to hunt on the land within the park. This hunt only gives permission to hunt for Morrow or Grant County youth. “The hunt was established as a way to give back to the communities that help make the park possible and provide an outdoor experience to local youth,” the county said.

Awarded for this year are: Riley Gregg of John Day, Darby Spivey of Ione, Rassadie Griffin of Irrigon, Katie Spivey of Ione, Memphis Jones of Irrigon and Preslie Bowes of Irrigon.

The hunt will be held Nov. 5-13 and the park trail area will be closed starting on Nov. 1 in preparation.

Loop promotion

In other action, Transportation Director Katie Imes announced Heidi Turrell has been promoted at the Loop from dispatcher, a job she has held for the past two years, to operations supervisor.

“Her new job will be to supervise and train new drivers and to assist with implementing policy and procedures,” Imes said.

Buried gas tanks in Ione

Commissioner Don Russell reported the county recently foreclosed for back taxes on a former gas station property in Ione, and it has underground storage tanks. Russell said there is a grant program available for local governments to find out if there has been leakage and contamination from underground tanks.

“Hopefully we can get it done sometime next year, and then that property can be put back into service as a productive property for someone,” Russell said.

New planning dept employee

At the Oct. 12 commission meeting it was announced that Michaela Ramirez joined the planning department staff in Irrigon Sept. 19 as the new office manager.

“Michaela has years of experience and we are very excited to have her on the team,” Planner Tamra Mabbott said. Mabbott also reported she has a student intern, Caren Cardenas, a senior at Irrigon High, working also. Cardenas’ position is paid for by the Port of Morrow/Education Service District internship program. Mabbott said

there are still two open positions at planning.

State COVID transportation grant

In other business, the county approved a \$158,529 state COVID grant to support county public transportation services through The Loop. The funding does not require any matching money from the county and will be available Oct. 1, 2022 through Sept. 30, 2024. The Loop operates various buses and vans to provide needed transportation for all of Morrow County including veterans, seniors, person with disabilities, and those with limited or no transportation.

The county transportation department also received a grant of \$45,000 with no county match from the state Department of Veteran Affairs for use in purchasing services or equipment to provide rides to veterans going to VA-approved medical appointments.

Amazon data center road agreement

In other business, commissioners approved a road agreement with Amazon Data Services for road construction at a new data center being built on Bombing Range Road one mile south of I-84. As part of the agreement Amazon has agreed to pay for construction of a turn lane into their property. Total cost of the project to Amazon is \$430,000.

The project will include construction of a right-hand turn lane on Bombing Range to minimize traffic hazards. Signage will be installed including flashing signals during poor visibility conditions. Lights will also be installed. All costs of the project will be paid by Amazon.

Benefit Dinner and Event for Sharon Miller

Come and enjoy a pasta bar dinner and watch a cornhole tournament with a calcutta auction of the teams and bid on silent auction items on Friday November 4th at the Elks Lodge.

Dinner will be at 6pm

Calcutta Auction at 6:30pm with tournament to follow.

Please join us as we show our support for Sharon and her family as she continues her battle!

If you cannot make it or would just like to leave a donation, you can do so at the Bank of Eastern Oregon.

4-H holds awards night



Mitch and Tag Ashbeck received this year’s Friends of 4-H Award. -Contributed photo

The Morrow County 4-H program presented several prestigious awards during its annual awards program held Oct. 16, at the SAGE Center in Boardman. More than 160 people attended. The county 4-H Association collected donations from area citizens and businesses, allowing them to present more than \$7,200 in awards.

Eric Orem from The Farm Kids 4-H club in Ione was recognized as the Morrow County 4-H Leader of the Year for 2022.

Leaders are nominated and then voted on by the 4-H Association. As a 4-H leader he has helped 4-H members learn skills in a supportive and hands-on environment. Eric has shown the importance of teaching 4-H members how to think through the development of critical thinking and decision making skills.

The All-Around Achievement Award junior recipient was Mikalie Duncan of the Heppner Grow Em’ and Show Em’ club. The intermediate recipient was Ellie Sak of Boardman’s Boots n’ Buttons. The senior recipient was Isabella Orr of the Ukiah Community Club.

The All-Around Achievement Award is designed to recognize a 4-H member who is involved in all aspects of 4-H. Requirements for applying



Torrie Griggs representing the SAGE Center, another Friends of 4-H Award recipient. -Contributed photo

for this award include the following four categories: participation in public speaking and demonstrations at the county contest held before fair, exhibiting projects at fair, completing and turning in their record book, and participating in an exit interview at the conclusion of the 4-H year. The award is broken down into the three age groups: junior, intermediate and senior. This award is a great accomplishment in a 4-Her’s career and is one that should receive special recognition for the hard work that the members put forth, not only in order to apply for, but also to receive.

This year’s Friends of 4-H Award was presented to Mitch and Tag Ashbeck by their grandchildren. Mitch and Tag Ashbeck are lifelong 4-H supporters. Through the years they have provide and assisted youth in and outside Morrow County. They truly embody the 4-H motto and strive to make youth

better.

The second recipient of the Friends of 4-H award was the SAGE Center. The SAGE Center is a constant supporter of Morrow County 4-H, giving members a unique opportunity to learn about local industries and the technology used at the Port of Morrow and surrounding area, and providing our youth with great learning opportunities and working together to truly make the best better. Representing the SAGE Center was Torrie Griggs.

Justice Court

Morrow County Justice of the Peace Glen Diehl has released the following report:

Donita E. Counsell, 47, of Heppner, was cited for Violating the Basic Rule (VBR) and was fined \$265.

Donald A. McElligott 24, of Ione, was cited for Failure to register Vehicle and was fined \$115.

Joshua L. Brown, 36, of Gresham, OR was cited for VBR and was fined \$1150.

David M. Padilla, 60, of Hermiston, OR was cited for VBR and was fined \$165.

Eneida Jamie Navarrete, 28, of Umatilla, OR was cited for VBR and was fined \$265.

Saul N. Lopez, 18, of Heppner, was cited for VBR and was fined \$165.

Ubaldo Davila Alegria, 42, of Portland, OR was cited for VBR and was fined \$165.

Every auction, our amazing community comes together and generously supports our Mustangs at the Booster Club Dinner and Auction! Thank you to the donors for their cash contributions and items! Thank you to the bidders for joining us and purchasing raffle tickets, dinner and bidding on silent and live items! Thank you to Bucknum’s for providing drinks and the Heppner Community Foundation for the use of their facility. Finally, thank you to all the volunteers for their hard work, time and talents!

Our Mustangs are loved.

Heppner Jr Sr High Booster Club Auction Committee

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