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Irrigon High celebrates official opening of new track



Former IJSHS athletic coaches and Irrigon community members braved the weather and joined in cutting the ribbon across the new track on Thursday, March 23. -Contributed photo

Irrigon Junior-Senior High School (IJSHS) celebrated the official opening of its new track with a ribbon cutting on Thursday, March 23.

Despite a blustery afternoon, Morrow County School District (MCSD) Superintendent Matt Combe and IJSHS Principal Rose Palmer welcomed a small crowd of stakeholders and community members to mark the occasion. Representatives from MCSD, IJSHS, the Port of Morrow and Wildhorse Foundation were all present.

Most of the crowd huddled under the concession stand roof to stay out of the

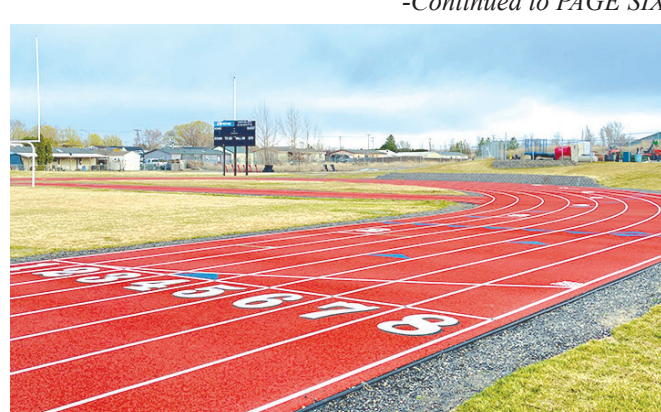


IJSHS Principal Rose Palmer was joined by Lindsey Watchman, representing the Wildhorse Foundation, which also provided grant funding to support the track. -Contributed photo

wind, but folks were happy to partake in the cookies festively iced with the Irrigon Knights' "I" in the school colors. Combe first addressed the crowd, followed by Palmer, and then key participants fanned

across the starting line to simultaneously cut the ribbon in multiple places.

The track has been in the works for almost a year, with construction starting in June 2022. The Port



The vivid red track with crisp white lane paint contrasts with a stormy sky in the late afternoon of March 23. -Contributed photo

of Morrow donated more than \$85,000 in labor and engineering, with funding also coming from MCSD, the City of Irrigon, Morrow County Unified Recreation District, Columbia River Technologies, Boardman Community Development Association and Columbia River Enterprise Zone, as well as a \$20,000 grant from the Wildhorse Foundation.

Athletic Director Mike Royer noted that the professional-grade track provides an opportunity for IJSHS athletes and the community in general.

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Ione moves forward with new wastewater system



Beverly Benson, Council Chair of the Ione City Council, and Brad Baird, President of Anderson Perry & Associates. They are signing the Engineering Construction contract for Ione's proposed wastewater system. The grant will be officially submitted to the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture on April 7 for funding of the project. -Contributed photo

The City of Ione moved one step closer to a city septic system recently when it signed an engineering construction contract with engineering firm Anderson and Perry. The contract was signed as part of a USDA grant application to help fund the redesign.

The project has been months in the making. At a public meeting in January, Ione Volunteer City Planner Jerry Rietmann told resi-

dents the project is vital to the future of the city.

Ione currently has 15-16 buildable lots—or they would be if they had septic systems. Due to the size of most of the lots, which average 50 feet by 100 feet, septic tanks can't be installed because the lot sizes don't meet the drain field requirement of 180 feet.

Since Ione has no public sewer system, this is a

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Mitchell, Ashbeck named to all-state teams



Pictured L-R: Tucker Ashbeck, Coach Jeremy Rosenbalm and Landon Mitchell. -Contributed photo

The Heppner Mustang boys basketball team had two players listed on the OSAA 2A All-State Basketball teams that were recently released. These awards are voted on by 2A basketball coaches from around the state.

Landon Mitchell was rewarded for his fine play this season by making the third team. Tucker Ashbeck received honorable mention honors for his hard work

and effort this season.

Both of these players helped lead the Mustangs to the state championships, where they finished with a fifth-place trophy and the sportsmanship award. The team had an overall record of 21-7 this year.

The player of the year in the state was Gianni Altman of Gold Beach, and the coach of the year is Ben Brown from Salem Academy.

MCSD approves new calendar, adopts new math curriculum

By Andrea Di Salvo
Morrow County School District will no longer have Friday school on weeks with Monday holidays due to a change in the school district calendar for the upcoming year. The MCSD board approved the new calendar, which had previously been voted on by staff, at its March 13 meeting in Boardman.

MCSD Human Resources Executive Director Erin Stocker informed the board that around 80 percent of district staff had voted for that school calendar option for the 2023-24 school year. The school calendar will still include four optional STEAM Fridays.

The option includes

150 student days with a pre-Labor Day start on Aug. 28 with school extending to June 13. Even though there would be no school on any Friday after a Monday holiday, there would be one early-release Friday the week before winter break, Dec. 15.

Stocker had told the board at a previous meeting that both student and staff attendance was low on Friday school days, and said she hoped the change would have a positive impact on the district.

"I think that the staff voice is pretty clear," said Stocker. "As a district-level team, we're pretty excited to see how our families

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Army transfers thousands of acres of land to local Oregon communities



Present at the signing ceremony at the Pentagon were (Back L-R): Lt. Gen. Kevin Vereen, Sherri Smith, Jerry Healy, Joe Taylor, John Shafer, Lisa Mittelsdorf, David Sykes, Kat Brigham, Greg Smith, and (Front L-R) The Honorable Rachel Jacobson and CDA Chair Kim Puzey. -Contributed photo

WASHINGTON—On March 3 the Army transferred former Army Depot land to the Columbia Development Authority (CDA) in Boardman. This is the fourth largest real estate transaction in the Army's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) history, and the first in nearly 20 years.

The official transfer was followed by a ceremonial signing at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., March 20. The Hon. Rachel Jacobson, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment, hosted the ceremony at the Pentagon with Lt. Gen. Kevin Vereen, the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations (G-9), to cel-

brate the transfer of more than 9,500 acres of land associated with the former Umatilla Chemical Depot.

"Today in a signing ceremony at the Pentagon in Washington D.C., the United States Army and the Columbia Development Authority memorialized the fourth largest closure and realignment in history and the largest transfer in 20 years," said CDA Chairman Kim Puzey, Port of Umatilla General Manager.

"Completion of this transfer represents new opportunity not only for Morrow County, but for the entire region with job creation for our citizens, new opportunities for our young people and enhanced income for county, schools and districts that provide services to our citizens," added Morrow County Commission Chair David Sykes.

The CDA is made up of five partners through an intergovernmental agreement that includes Morrow County, Umatilla County, Port of Morrow, Port of Umatilla and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR).

Jacobson explained that the "conveyance will place part of the ~9,500 acres of property into productive re-use for the community. Another part will become an important cultural site for the beneficial use of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. A third part will contribute to the historical preservation of the Oregon Trail. The proceeds the Army receives from CDA will be re-invested into environmental cleanup activities across our remaining BRAC sites."

"It's truly a win-win-win outcome for all parties," she added.

"This transfer represents what can be accomplished when partners come together for a mutually desired outcome," said Greg Smith, Executive Director for the Columbia Development Authority. "To be authorized to execute such an agenda is a privilege."

The Umatilla transfer is a culmination of a 35-year effort that started with realigning the installation under BRAC 1988 and continued with the closure of the installation under BRAC 2005.

"Umatilla has been a very complex conveyance requiring cooperation and coordination between many local, state, and federal organizations and agencies," Vereen said. "This milestone is a tribute to the many individuals, organizations and agencies that made this day possible."

In 1991 and 1993, the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START I and II) to bring an end to the generation-long Cold War.

In November 1990, the President had signed the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990, establishing an independent commission known as the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission. The commission created the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) to more efficiently realign and close military installations following the end of the Cold War.

That, in turn, began the process of returning the former Umatilla Chemical Depot to the Columbia Development Authority.

Puzey noted that a large

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