



# the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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## Port of Morrow & Morrow County Grain Growers take on future of grain delivery



Aerial photo of the 134 car 8,500ft train unloading corn along the Columbia River at the Port of Morrow Nov. 15th. - Contributed Photo

By Chris Sykes

Morrow County Grain Growers has achieved a significant milestone in the grain transportation industry by receiving the first-ever 8,500-foot unit train in the United States. On Wednesday, November 15, 2023, the train was unloaded at the Morrow County Grain Growers facility located at the Port of Morrow. This accomplishment establishes the Boardman facility as the sole West Coast location capable of unloading a unit train of this size in one pass. It marks a major advancement in the next generation of grain transportation.

In 2018, Canadian Pacific (CP) began investing in the development of a new high-capacity hopper car designed specifically for grain transportation. These innovative hopper cars, known as High-Efficiency Product (HEP) cars, feature a shorter, wider,

and lighter design. These design improvements have increased weight capacity by 10% and cubic volume by 15%. While the current unit trains are 7,000 feet long, consisting of 112 cars and hauling approximately 10,400 tons of wheat, the HEP train model is 8,500 feet long, with a minimum of 134 cars and the ability

to carry 12,000 tons of wheat.

Compared to the standard hopper cars built decades ago, which had a carrying capacity of 4,550 cubic feet, weighed 62,000 lbs., and were about 60 feet long, the newer hopper cars can carry 5,431 cubic feet of grain. Despite their larger capacity, these new-

er cars weigh 2,000 lbs. less and are over four feet shorter. The use of the same number of train engines for the HEP train model means that less fuel will be consumed in transporting each tonne of grain. Additionally, with investments in new and expanded rail sidings, the railways anticipate a 25 to 30 percent increase in speeds in certain corridors.

Notably, in the 1990s, during the concrete elevator building boom, it was considered cutting-edge to have a 100-car siding to accommodate full trains. These new HEP cars will replace the cylindrical hoppers built in Canada during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s for transporting Canadian grains.

The three-compartment covered hopper cars, with a capacity of 5,431 cubic feet, have been specifically designed to handle a gross rail load of 286,000 pounds. Equipped with continuous troughs and standard 30-inch by 30-inch gravity outlet

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This is a similar graphic pointing out the difference between a standard capacity train hopper and the new train hopper used at the POM. - Contributed Photo

## ODFW's Private Forest Accord Grant Program is ready to support landowners

SALEM, Ore. - ODFW's Private Forest Accord (PFA) Grants Program is now accepting applications as the first-ever round of grant funding from the program becomes available for landowners to protect salmon and other aquatic species.

"The PFA Grant Program is an important complement to the expanded protections that the Private Forest Accord established for Oregon's aquatic species and the accompanying habitat conservation plan for working forests under development by the Oregon Department of Forestry," said Chad Washington, Manager of U.S. Sustainability for the Timberland Group with Nuveen Natural Capital and Chair of the PFA Grants Mitigation Advisory Committee. "Native trout and salmon recovery efforts are important to all Oregonians and we're proud to help support projects that benefit these species not only on private forestlands but across the state," added Washington.

The Private Forest Accord Grant Program was established in the 2022 Legislative Session (Senate Bills 1501 and 1502; House Bill 4055) as an outcome of a collaborative agreement between timber and conservation groups to recommend the most comprehensive changes to the Forest Practices Act in fifty years.

"The PFA Grant Fund provides an unprecedented opportunity to invest in the recovery and sustainability of salmon, steelhead and other aquatic species that are critical to all Oregonians," said Chrysten Rivard, Oregon Director of Trout Unlimited (TU) and Vice-Chair of the PFA Grants Mitigation Advisory Committee. "These investments will create and sustain jobs in both restoration and the timber industry across Oregon, building a strong future for our state," added Rivard. The Private Forest Accord made significant changes to forest practices that dramatically expanded

environmental regulations for aquatic species while also providing economic certainty for rural communities and the timber industry. It is anticipated that these changes will also secure endorsement by federal wildlife agencies for a state-wide Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). Such a plan would provide long-term conservation benefits to designated wildlife species while providing operational flexibility and regulatory assurance to forest landowners.

The changes include larger stream buffers during harvest, increased regulation of harvests on unstable slopes, and improvements to forest roads to enhance fish migration. The agreement also included the creation of a PFA Grant Program that provides funds for projects that help aquatic species and habitats covered by the HCP. "ODFW is in charge of administering PFA funds and our staff look forward to working with partners

and forestland owners to get money out the door and create some real conservation action for Oregon's fish and wildlife," said Sarah Reif, ODFW Habitat Administrator. "The PFA Grant Program will accept grant proposals each year as we work to distribute the \$22 million already allocated to the fund, as well as future investments," added Reif. For more information on how to apply, visit [www.PFAGrants.com](http://www.PFAGrants.com).

## New flavors in town



The Taste of the South food truck, located on Main Street, dressed up for the holidays. - Photo by Daniel and Deborah Ficek

By Annalynn Black

Daniel and Deborah Ficek have taken the food scene by storm with the opening of their new food truck in Heppner 'Taste of the South.' The couple's venture had a memorable soft opening on October 1st, as their delectable dishes sold out by midday.

Although originally from different parts of Oregon, Dan hailing from Salem and Deborah having roots in Portland, the couple found their way to Heppner in their quest for a fresh start. With a combined 20 years of experience in the food service industry, their decision to open a food truck seemed like a natural fit.

The Ficeks are not new to entrepreneurial endeavors, as they previously

ran a successful photography business specializing in headshots. However, the move to Heppner put an end to that venture, prompting them to explore other possibilities. It was during this exploration that they realized the potential in the local food scene, particularly in the realm of barbecue.

Deborah, with her background in cooking and restaurant work, decided to dedicate her time to the food truck, leaving behind her position at the local clinic. She has held various roles in the kitchen, ranging from prep cook to assistant manager at a chain restaurant. "I've had a lot of experience in the kitchen," she states.

Dan's journey in the kitchen, she states. Dan's journey in the

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## Town & Country Awards Banquet Feb. 1st

The Annual Town & Country Awards Banquet has been changed back to February for 2024. On Thursday, February 1, local community members will be honored at the banquet held at the Gilliam & Bisbee Building at 6:00pm. A tri tip dinner will be catered by Chef Alvin Liu for \$28. A change in menu with a lower price will be sure to attract more community members this year! Nominations for Man and Woman of the

Year, Lifetime Achievement, Business of the Year, and the Youth Award will be accepted until January 12. Nomination forms are available at the Chamber Office, MCGG in Lexington, or online at <https://heppnerchamber.com/our-events/town-country-awards-banquet/>. Tickets will go on sale January 1st. For more information, contact the chamber office at 541-676-5536 or email [heppnerchamber@gmail.com](mailto:heppnerchamber@gmail.com)

## The Morrow County Republican Party to meet Dec. 7th

The Morrow County Republicans will meet at 6:30 pm, Thursday, December 7th at the Don Adams Conference Room, Irrigon, Oregon. PCPs and anyone interested in the county Republican Party are encouraged to come and join the discussions. This month MCRP will review the bylaws and continue planning for the upcoming election year.

PCP positions are open for Heppner, Lexington,

Boardman, and Irrigon. Individuals interested in one of these positions are encouraged to attend this meeting to learn about the positions. PCP appointments can be made during MCRP meetings.

The Republican Party platform can be found at <https://oregon.gov/>. For more information on the Morrow County Republican Party, contact [mcoreps@gmail.com](mailto:mcoreps@gmail.com).

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