

County bans ag burning

Agriculture burning in drought-stricken Umatilla County is prohibited until conditions improve.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners held an emergency meeting July 22, and voted for a temporary ban to all burning in areas under county jurisdiction, including agricultural burning. The ban went into effect July 23.

The ban also covers camp fires at the county-run Harris Park campsite. County counsel Doug Olsen said the board last took this action in 2012.

County commissioners cited dry conditions, low humidity and multiple wildfires as reasons to prohibit burning. County Commissioner Larry

Givens also said the county needs to be ready to help other agencies fighting fires, particularly in neighboring Walla Walla County, where an ag burn ban already is in place and a wildfire threatens the Mill Creek watershed.

The county has an agreement from 1999 with other local governments to give mutual aid for big fires, said Jack Remillard, Umatilla County emergency manager. He told commissioners the agreement still is valid, but agencies probably should renew it every five years. With any luck, he said, signatures from area department heads and officials will be on a new agreement in a day or two.

RDO offers test drives at the fair

John Deere lawn and utility tractors will be on display for customers to try out Aug. 11-15 at the Umatilla County Fair.

The event gives people a chance to get behind the wheel of the latest utility and lawn tractors, as well as see live product demos, and check out attachments and other equipment from RDO Equipment Co. and John Deere.

Attendees also receive special savings offers, and the chance to win a John Deere tractor and attachment package.

Dennis Moffit, regional sales manager at RDO Equipment Co., says this event is a great opportunity for anyone who has been interested in a new tractor or attachments to try and test different models, and find out which is right for their needs.

"The best thing about this event is that we give folks the opportunity to actually op-

erate the equipment and see how easily it is to change out attachments on the machine," he said "It's a great chance for them to get hands-on experience with the equipment before they take it home, and equips them for success."

The Drive Green event will be held at the RDO Equipment Co. booth at the Umatilla County Fair. It is open to all fair attendees, free of charge. Equipment, parts and service experts from RDO Equipment Co. will also be on hand to demonstrate and answer questions.

The first 50 adults who register at the event receive a \$500 discount coupon that can be used toward the purchase of John Deere equipment, a coupon for hundreds off attachments and a chance to win a John Deere 3032E Compact Utility Tractor with D160 Loader and Frontier RC2060 Rotary Cutter.

This is the seventh year that John Deere dealers have hosted Drive Green events.

Depot land transfer won't happen before 2016

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

It may still be another year before the land of the former Umatilla Army Depot site is returned to local control.

Greg Smith, the new executive director of the Columbia Development Authority, said it is hard to make timeline predictions when working with the federal government. But he believes it will be another 10 to 15 months before the Army is ready to transfer the land to the local reuse authority.

"The Army is just knee-deep in procedure and you have to work within that," he said.

Smith replaced former Columbia Development



Greg Smith

DEPOT

Authority director Don Chance this summer, working with the development authority in his capacity as an economic development consultant and not in his role as a state representative.

The authority's board is made up of representatives from the Port of Umatilla, Port of Morrow, Umatilla County, Morrow County and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla

Indian Reservation. Now that the chemical depot has been dismantled, the group is working with the Army on transferring part of the land to the Oregon National Guard and transferring the rest to the local reuse authority for use as industrial land and a wildlife preserve.

Smith said the Columbia Development Authority has made it clear that it is only willing to take the land off the Army's hands if it doesn't have to pay for it, if it is environmentally sound and if the necessary water rights are available to use the land for industrial purposes.

"It has to be clean, it has to have water and it has to be free," Smith said.

As part of that set of conditions, the Army is currently demolishing more

than 20 buildings on the site, several of which are visible from Interstate 84, that have asbestos in them.

It is also in the process of completing cultural and environmental studies for the site, ensuring that it is development-ready before the local reuse authority is ready to take it over. The Army can't transfer the land until it has an official Finding of Suitability of Transfer, which depends on the results of the studies.

The next meeting of the Columbia Development Authority is Thursday at noon at the Port of Morrow's Sand Hollow Conference Room. The meeting will include an overview of milestones and objectives for the coming year and approval of the budget summary for a grant.

FAIR

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