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INSIDE

END OF THE LINE NORPAC closing Hermiston Foods this year



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

Hermiston Foods, which is the city's ninth largest employer, will close sometime after the end of the current harvest season.

The closure of Hermiston Foods will 'help us drive efficiencies and reduce operational complexities as we invest in continued growth and innovation in our frozen product lines.'

New NORPAC CEO Shawn Campbell

Parent company will shutter Hermiston processing plant after 27th season

By **JADE McDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston will lose one of its top employers by the end of this year.

Hermiston Foods Incorporated, a subsidiary of NORPAC Foods, will close later this year as its functions are consolidated into NORPAC's facilities in Brooks and Quincy, Washington. An exact timeline has not been announced, but NORPAC spokeswoman Amy Wood said processing will proceed as normal through the end of the current harvest season.

The vegetable-processing plant is Hermiston's ninth-largest employer, according to the city's 2016 financial report.

NORPAC was not able to provide information about its number of employees and other questions submitted on Monday, but according to the city's report the plant employs 325 people, most of which are seasonal.

The plant, however, is NORPAC's smallest operation, according to the *Statesman Journal*.

The closure was listed as part of a broader announcement by NORPAC that it has sold off its canning operations to Seneca Foods Corporation and was closing its beet-canning facility in Salem as a result. New NORPAC CEO Shawn Campbell said in a statement that the sale of the canning operations and the closure of Hermiston Foods will "help us drive efficiencies and reduce operational complexities as we invest in continued growth and innovation in our frozen product lines."

Hermiston Foods opened in April 1990, and the *Hermiston*

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HERALD FILE PHOTO

Hermiston Foods General Manager Trent Waldern stands in front of the business on Highway 395 in Hermiston. New technology has made the vegetable processing plant more efficient since it opened 27 years ago, but did not save the plant from closure by its parent company NORPAC Foods.

THREE MINUTES WITH

MEET THAI IMMIGRANT ANN ONPHIAN, WHO MOVED TO THE AREA IN 1999.

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REV INTO SUMMER FUN

THE HERMISTON CLASSICS CAR CLUB PURRS INTO SUMMER WITH ITS 22ND ANNUAL COOL RIDES CAR SHOW.

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IN TAMMY'S SHOES

COMMUNITY EDITOR TAMMY MALGESINI WARNS ABOUT VISITORS COMING THROUGH TOWN ON SOLAR ECLIPSE TREK.

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BY THE WAY

City celebrates anniversary next week

Next week, on Monday, July 10, the city of Hermiston will celebrate a birthday. There are no official events currently on the docket to mark the occasion, but it will be the 110th anniversary of the city's incorporation on July 10, 1907. Just what does one get a city celebrating its 110th anniversary?

Five students from each of Hermiston's five elementary schools pedaled into summer with new bicycles thanks to **Hermiston Masonic Lodge #138**.

The **Bikes for Books** program encourages students in third through fifth grades to improve their reading skills. Students receive a chance to win a bike by completing AR Reading Goals.

Winners of the bicycles and their grade level at each school included:

Desert View: **Jared Crowther, Abby Goller, Seth Reeve**, all third graders, **Sydney Slonker-Bowe**, fourth grade, and **Guadalupe Esparza**, fifth grade.

Highland Hills: **Sienna Harsteen**, third grade; **Ashton Chairez** and **Lorelai Keefauver**, both fourth grade; and fifth graders

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Watermelon harvest to start next week

Wet spring slows growth

By **GEORGE PAVEN**
STAFF WRITER

July Fourth has passed and that means famous Hermiston watermelons — in all their sweet, juicy glory — are almost back in season.

This year's melon crop may have gotten to a slow start compared to recent years, but growers say they are making up ground quickly as temperatures have started rising above 90 degrees during the heat of day.

Jack Bellinger, owner of Bellinger Farms, said watermelons fell behind early following a cool and wet spring, which

impacted both the timing of planting and limited the number of hot days needed for the plants to absorb energy.

A recent stretch of warmer weather, including a record high of 101 degrees on Monday, has helped to speed things up, Bellinger said. Still, he is looking at beginning harvest July 12-14, which is about a week later than usual.

"The name of the game for all crops is heat units," Bellinger said. "They've been pretty hit and miss."

Patrick Walchli, of Walchli Farms, also figures to push back harvest by a week to 10 days, though he is not alarmed. Weather patterns like this aren't unheard of for the region, Walchli said, and he is not expecting any problems with yield or quality.

"The crop, for the weather we've had



STAFF PHOTO BY GEORGE PAVEN

Scott Lukas, assistant professor of horticulture at Oregon State University, checks on his watermelon trials Thursday at the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Experiment Station.

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