

Tickets now on sale for fair's main stage shows

By TAMMY MALGESINI
COMMUNITY EDITOR

Tickets are on sale now for this year's main stage concert line-up at the Umatilla County Fair. The acts include:

Country musician Tracy Byrd, who's known for "Watermelon Crawl" (Tuesday, Aug. 6); Jackson Michelson, an up-and-coming country musician from Corvallis (Wednesday, Aug. 7); Southern rock band The Georgia Satellites (Thursday, Aug. 8) Latino Night with artists still to be announced (Friday, Aug. 9); and nu metal rock group Sugar Ray (Saturday, Aug. 10).

Byrd's 1993 hit "Holdin' Heaven" soared to the top of the Billboard Country Charts — making him a household name. Byrd has continued to climb in popularity. After a performing hiatus from 2010-13, Byrd became rejuvenated, releasing a new album in 2016.

Michelson offers high-energy rhythm and is riding a wave of 150 shows last year. He opened for the likes of Blake Shelton, Lady Antebellum and the Zac Brown Band.

Founded in 1985, The Georgia Satellites cranked up their amps — performing such hits as "Keep Your Hands to Yourself," "Can't Stand the Pain" and "Hippy Hippy Shake." They continue to pack houses around

the globe with their blistering brand of Southern rock.

Sugar Ray's breakthrough song, "Fly," put them on the music map in 1997. The band continues to deliver hits — selling more than 8 million records. They've had numerous TV appearances. In addition, frontman Mark McGrath was featured in "People" magazine's Sexiest Man Alive issue in 1998.

In its third year at Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, organizers are excited to announce that concert tickets for the Wildhorse Resort & Casino Main Stage shows are on sale now. Fair-goers can sit in general admission seating for the concerts. For an additional fee, people can reserve seats in advance. The reserved ticket prices remain the same as the past two years at \$12. Also, premium seats at \$20 offer an up-close experience in front of the stage.

Reserved and premium seats for the fair concerts can be purchased at www.umatillacountyfair.net. The concert tickets do not include fair admission, which is \$10 for ages 13 and up, \$8 for seniors, \$6 for ages 6-12 and free for kids under 6 — season passes also are available.

For questions, contact 541-567-6121, fair@umatillacounty.net or stop by the fair office, located at EOTEC, 1705 E. Airport Road, Hermiston.



Contributed photos

TOP: Sugar Ray is the Saturday (Aug. 10) main stage act during the 2019 Umatilla County Fair. Reserved tickets and premium seats are now on sale for the August shows. BOTTOM (L-R) 1) Country musician Jackson Michelson of Corvallis; 2) Tracy Byrd; 3) Southern rock band The Georgia Satellites.

Water and sewer rate increases to pay for capital projects

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Capital improvements to Hermiston's water and sewer systems are moving forward as the weather warms up, but the improvements come with a price — literally.

In March, the city's increased utility rates kicked in, prompting complaints on social media and to city hall from residents on a tight budget who weren't expecting to see as much as \$40 a month added to their bill. Jerald Carlson, a Hermiston resident, wrote to the *Hermiston Herald* that his bill had increased by 50 percent.

The rate restructure for water and sewer was voted in during the Oct. 8 city council meeting.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said he's been getting phone calls asking why rates went up, and he has explained that the city had been "undercharging" for water and sewer since it opened a new wastewater treatment plant in 2014. The result was that so much of the city's water and sewer budget was going toward paying off the debt for the plant that "we didn't have any money at all" for needed improvements to the rest of the system.

"Nobody likes to see their rates increase, but costs continue to rise," he said.

Now that the city has additional revenue flowing in it has gotten started on projects, such as tearing up Southeast Seventh Street between Main Street and Newport Avenue to replace 650 feet of sewer line. The



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Southeast Seventh Street is closed as crews work to install a new, larger sewer line to serve the south side of town.

city began work last week and the project is expected to take 45 to 60 days.

The previous 8-inch sewer line there was too small to support continued development on the south side of town, according to the city, and had resulted in crews installing a temporary bypass system during the Umatilla County Fair each year.

Other upcoming projects include new pumps and lift stations, replacing the computer system that runs Hermiston's water and sewer and replacing what Morgan called the "Swiss cheese pipes" built in the 1920s.

One water project not paid for by the rate increase is a new water tower that the city plans to break ground

on April 17 at noon at the corner of Punkin Center and Northeast 10th Street. The public is invited to the event.

The tower and 2 miles of water mains surrounding it will be paid for completely by payments in lieu of taxes by Lamb Weston, which is undertaking a major expansion outside Hermiston.

The rates

The new water and sewer rates implemented in March aren't a straight percentage increase, but rather an overhaul of the entire rate structure. The city implemented a base charge of \$35 a month for sewer service plus \$3 for each 1,000 gallons of use. Previously customers paid a \$27.25 per month flat fee.

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Since the city does not have meters to measure customers' wastewater output, usage is based on an average of the customer's December, January and February water usage when all of their water is presumably going down the drain and into the city's sewer system instead of into their lawn. Each March, the city will recalculate the customer's sewer bill based on the most recent winter, meaning the sewer rate customers saw on their March bill is the one they will be paying for the next 12 months.

Water users now pay a base charge of \$30 per month, plus 50 cents per 1,000 gallons up to 15,000

gallons and \$3.50 per 1,000 gallons thereafter. Morgan said the large increase in price for gallons above the 15,000 gallon threshold means residents' water bills will go up by a larger percentage some months than others.

In a chart comparing the old rates and new rates for an "average" single family home with yard, for example, a customer using 3,850 gallons in January would pay \$21.10 under the old rates and \$31.93 now. But if watering their lawn in July pushes them up to 33,775 gallons, their bill will jump from \$60.79 last year to \$103.21 this year.

APRIL 27, 2019

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