

UPDATES

EOMG offering Community Marketing Grant Program

As businesses reopen, EO Media Group wants to help them spread the word.

The Oregon family-owned multimedia company has established a Community Marketing Grant Program to assist businesses affected by COVID-19 restrictions in the markets served by the company's 12 newspapers, including the *Hermiston Herald* and *East Oregonian*.

Up to \$1 million in matching advertising dollars will be available. Recipients of the Community Marketing Grant Program will be awarded a dollar-for-dollar match for print or digital advertising in EO Media Group publications.

Community organizations and locally owned and operated businesses are encouraged to apply to extend their marketing to local residents during this challenging time. Grants are available for a minimum of \$250 and maximum of \$10,000 in matching funds each month, and will be awarded between May 15 and July 31. Applications will be accepted starting May 15 and must be submitted online at eomediagroup.com/marketing-grant.

Grants will be reviewed and replied to within one to two days of application. For more information, contact Kathryn Brown at 541-278-2667 or kbbrown@eastoregonian.com.

— *Hermiston Herald*



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Toni Edmisten wipes down chairs, tables, and condiments between diners at Nookie's Restaurant and Bar in Hermiston on Tuesday afternoon.

Restaurant rebound

Local restaurants begin reopening process

By **BEN LONERGAN**
STAFF WRITER

For the first time in nearly two months, diners were able to sit down to eat at restaurants on Friday as Umatilla County entered phase one of Gov. Kate Brown's reopening plan.

Nookie's Restaurant and Brewery was among several Hermiston restaurants to close entirely for the duration of the stay home order, a period of time that owner Mitch Myers said he used to recondition his restaurant and complete a few long term maintenance projects, such as upgrading lighting and replacing the aging flooring in the kitchen.

Myers said that he spent a lot of time thinking about what he would need in terms



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Kitchen staff wear masks while prepping meals at Nookie's Restaurant and Brewery in Hermiston on Tuesday afternoon.

of staffing and product once the restaurant was able to reopen. He said that when they closed, the business had to donate nearly \$30,000 in perishable inventory and clear

out stock, leaving the restaurant mostly devoid of food by the time he began thinking about reopening.

"We knew that we needed to get the kitchen back

retooled up and functioning, even if it was at a smaller level," Myers said. "Once we got all of our remodeling done and everything ready to go, we went ahead and opened for takeout for eight or nine days."

Despite Myers' worries about how to reopen, he said he was overwhelmed with how well the first weekend went. The restaurant did three days of record sales over the weekend when compared to the same days in years past.

"It makes me so optimistic — as a business person — to see the fact that it rebounded not only to previous numbers, but better than pre-COVID closure numbers every single day for the first three days that we opened," he said.

See Restaurants, Page A8

Long-awaited West Project finally complete

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Area farmers have cause for celebration after completion of a major water supply project known as the West Project.

The project, which the Columbia Improvement District successfully tested on May 5, will add about 30,000 acres of irrigated cropland near Boardman to the Columbia Basin's agricultural region. It is one of a package of three pipeline projects that together could add billions of dollars to the area's economy.

The win for Eastern Oregon has been decades in the making. J.R. Cook, president of the Northeast Oregon Water Association, said after 19 years working on water issues in the area he's "still a rookie" compared to many of the growers, politicians and organizations who have all worked together to make the West Project happen.

"We get to see the fruits of past generations' labors," he said.

The difference in value between an acre of dryland wheat and an acre of a high-value irrigated crop is a difference of thousands of dollars. But large swaths of farmland between Boardman and Hermiston were reduced to dryland farming or



Contributed photo by NOWA
An aerial view shows the recently completed West Project near Boardman.

taken out of production altogether in the 1980s and 1990s as the Oregon Water Resources Department

designated critical groundwater areas, which came with restrictions on how much water could be



Contributed photo by NOWA
Irrigation water pumped from the Columbia River flows through a canal during a test of the new West Project.

pumped out of the ground.

Growers' other option for water — the Columbia River — would let the aquifers recharge, but incredibly strict restrictions on taking water from the river made the three pipelines they wanted to see built seem like, well, a pipe dream.

Now, the West Project is a reality, and the East Project and Ordinance Project are in progress.

Jake Madison of Madison Ranches is a board member of the Columbia Improvement Dis-

trict, which will own and operate the project in partnership with the Port of Morrow. Madison said in a statement that the West Project took "a great deal of team effort and persistence to pull off."

In addition to putting 30,000 acres back into production as irrigated farmland, the project also generates significant energy savings over the district's old system.

"In all, this project is a huge win for the energy goals of the state of Oregon, our rural economy and drought resiliency for our future generations," he said. "It took several generations, three locally developed plans, and multiple relationships forged across the state and nation to get here. We could not have done it without the legislative and executive leadership of Oregon who stepped in from day one to ensure these projects got constructed."

Tom Byler, director of the Oregon Water Resources Department, said the project is a "significant step forward to address the basin's water needs now and in the future."

According to a press release put out by the Northeast Oregon Water Association, the West

See Water project, Page A8

INSIDE

A3 ▶ Essential workers plan counterprotest to Reopen Hermiston rally

A6 ▶ New Vietnamese restaurant to open mid-June

A7 ▶ Bealls parent company declares bankruptcy

A9 ▶ Most Umatilla County Fair events canceled