

Native bees in Eastern Oregon face climate threats

By ALEX CASTLE
STAFF WRITER

Experts believe roughly 75% of flowering plants and 35% of crops, amounting to \$3 billion worth of production, rely on the presence of bees to pollinate them each year.

In Oregon, much of that work is done by more than 625 native bee species that equally rely on the surrounding ecosystem and their interactions with it to survive. Those bee species, including those native to Eastern Oregon, could face a litany of challenges brought by a changing climate.

Those challenges were the topic of a virtual presentation delivered by Sandy DeBano, an associate professor in Oregon State University's Department of Fish and Wildlife, during the Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition's monthly meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 22.

DeBano, who is stationed at the OSU Agriculture Research and Extension Center in Hermiston, highlighted the potential danger of warming temperatures in the region resulting in "range com-



pression" for bee species in Eastern Oregon.

"The hypothesis is that species that are adjusted to cooler conditions are going to move from lower latitudes and elevations to higher ones as the climate warms," DeBano said.

While a lack of regional data doesn't allow for definitive conclusions on how increased temperatures will impact regional bee populations, DeBano said, preliminary data alludes to the dangers they face.

At three separate locations — the Boardman Grasslands, Zumwalt Prairie in Wallowa County



Contributed photo by Scott Mitchell

A bee lands on the blossoms of a hawthorn tree in Eastern Oregon.

and the Starkey Experimental Forest — student researchers documented a variance of native bumble bee species that aligns with the difference in the average temperatures in July at each location.

This data suggests that as temperatures rise in the region, the variance and quantity of bumble bee species may decline.

"Certainly other factors are contributing to bumble bee species

richness, but a lot of these papers are consistently finding that some aspect of temperature is consistently playing a major role in determining or influencing bumble species richness," DeBano said.

The potential for earlier summers may also disrupt the phenology of bees and plants in Eastern Oregon, DeBano said, which refers to the cycles of plants' flowering times and bee activity to pollinate

them.

"The result might be less food for bees and fewer plants being pollinated," she said.

DeBano also noted concerns that perennial streams in the region, which flow throughout the year, will become more intermittent and negatively impact resources that bees need for food.

Other risks brought by climate change include exacerbated wildfires, which can kill native bees and disrupt their habitats in Eastern Oregon. These impacts and influences are still being researched and evaluated, DeBano said.

"The long-term effects are difficult to predict and are really dependent on the system," she said.

But DeBano also highlighted some actions that individuals can take to address the potential dangers of climate change on bee populations, particularly by using pesticides responsibly.

"We can conserve habitat where native bees are, we can enhance existing habitat, we can increase habitat, and I think really important is that we can reduce stressors," she said.

Umatilla Electric Cooperative goes independent

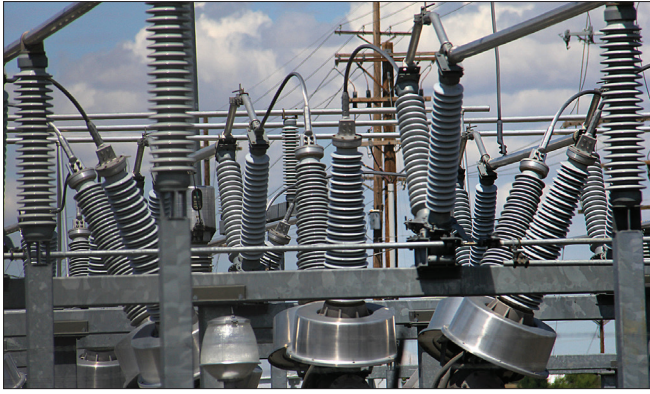
By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

After 45 years with PNGC Power, Umatilla Electric Cooperative is striking out on its own for power purchases.

UEC announced on Monday, Sept. 28, that it would be "amicably" parting ways with PNGC Power. The Hermiston-based cooperative was one of the founding members of the larger cooperative, then known as Pacific Northwest Generating Cooperative, in 1975.

PNGC is made up of 15 — now 14 — utilities across seven states, allowing those utilities to use their combined clout to better bargain for wholesale power, equipment and new technology. UEC's decision to leave means that it will be purchasing power directly from Bonneville Power Administration and other sources rather than being part of a collective purchase through PNGC Power.

Robert Echenrode, UEC general manager, said UEC's rapid growth has made it by far the largest of the cooperatives involved in PNGC, and has in some cases pushed it up into different regulatory categories. That has complicated things for PNGC, and sometimes meant that UEC is looking for different things than



HH file photo

Electrical equipment at a substation near the Umatilla Electric Cooperative office on West Elm Avenue helps supply power to Umatilla Electric and Hermiston Energy Service.

other cooperatives.

"Size isn't everything, but our needs were different than other cooperatives," he said.

Echenrode said UEC was also looking at moving to more renewable energy on a quicker time frame than some other cooperatives, located in states that didn't necessarily have the same pressures to do so.

Those factors over time caused UEC to begin discussions with PNGC about possibly leaving when PNGC's fiscal year ended at the end of September. Echenrode said the past 18 months have involved careful conversations with the two organizations, along with Bonneville Power Administration and other potential suppliers, to make sure the move didn't hurt PNGC or UEC

customers.

"We did not want to cause financial hardship to the group or any members of the group," he said.

He said while UEC's customers shouldn't notice any difference after the change, on UEC's end it will allow for more flexibility and a more tailored strategy for purchasing power.

Roger Gray, CEO of PNGC Power, said in a statement that all parties have been working for a smooth transition.

"While it is always disappointing to lose a member, I think early termination is fair to all concerned," he said. "PNGC has valued UEC as a member and they leave PNGC in good standing. I wish the UEC organization and team all the best in their new journey."

SAIF plans online ag safety sessions

By BREEN WIEGAND
FOR EO MEDIA GROUP

SAIF online safety training

When: Oct. 28 and 29

Cost: Free

Register: Online at saif.com/agseminars or by calling 800-285-8525

SAIF's preparation for its 2020-21 agricultural safety seminars has been more challenging than in years past.

SAIF has provided farm safety seminars for more than 20 years but this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is unable to offer in-person fall sessions. Instead, SAIF will host two separate two-hour webinars on Oct. 28 and 29 that between them cover the four hours of content normally provided in a live session.

Attendees need not be insured by SAIF to attend the free training, which is geared toward owners, operators, supervisors and foremen of agricultural operations.

Each year SAIF determines the seminar topics based on what is happening

in the industry. This year, the sessions are:

- Emergency first aid on the farm.
- Ag hacks and other useful tools and innovations.
- Making the most of safety committee meetings.
- Choosing the right personal protective equipment.

In the past SAIF has offered both online and in-person training.

"Our big focus right now is on making sure we are meeting people where they are with the pandemic and wildfires by providing timely information to help keep them and their employees safe," said Lyn Zielinski-Mills, SAIF mar-

keting manager. "This includes regular updates on our coronavirus safety page and increasing the number of online trainings we're offering, both in English and in Spanish."

Though overall claims are down compared to last year, the state-chartered workers' compensation company said all types of claims and injuries caused by existing or known hazards remain prevalent.

Small agricultural employers who attend all four hours of the webinars will meet one of the four requirements that exempt small ag operations from random OSHA inspections.

Farm fair to go virtual this year

The Hermiston 2020 Farm Fair will take place Dec. 2-4 in a digital format, according to the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce.

The farm fair is hosted each fall by the chamber and the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center, but the chamber announced that it will not participate in the 2020 fair in order to focus on serving its member businesses who have been facing "unforeseen challenges" in 2020.

According to the news release, HAREC will host

virtual training sessions on Dec. 2-4 on subjects ranging from soil health to modern irrigation technology. CCE and pesticides credits will be available. There will not be a trade show at Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center as in years past.

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JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WALLOWA COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

APPLICATIONS DUE: September 28, 2020 at 5pm at Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce Office

COMPENSATION: Range \$42,000 - \$52,000

POSITION TITLE: Executive Director

STATUS: Full Time and reside in Wallowa County

COMPENSATION: Salary Range \$42,000 - \$52,000

BENEFITS: Vacation, Holiday, Sick Leave, and Simple IRA

SCOPE: The Executive Director is the face of the Chamber and is responsible for implementing the mission and work plan of the organization. This individual provides leadership within the Chamber and the community, helping create a favorable "business and living" environment in Wallowa County.

ACCOUNTABILITY: The Director is responsible to the Board of Directors and reports directly to the President.

APPLY BY RESUME: Please include a letter of introduction and resume. Resume is to include contact information, education, work history (including starting and ending dates), and three references (2 professional and 1 personal). Send resumes to: Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce PO Box 427, Ste B, Enterprise Oregon 97828 Email: info@wallowacounty.org, 541 426-4622

The Wallowa County Chamber Board of Directors is looking for a special individual to fill this unique opportunity. Desired professional attributes include but are not limited to:

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Dynamic approach to creativity, initiative, collaboration, and leadership.
- Enthusiasm to effectively work in a community and regional partnerships.
- Exceptional customer service skills.

OVERALL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

- Strong leadership and organizational skills.
- Strong verbal and written communications skills.
- Knowledge of financial processes used in non-profit organizations.
- Skilled with various computer programs.
- Strong marketing and promotional skills.

QUALIFICATIONS

College degree in business administration, marketing, planning and/or other related field, or equivalent experience.

"We, as small business owners make adjustments daily to serve our customers during this pandemic. Wearing our masks is a small requirement to get us through these unprecedented times"

PAULETTE DUFLOTH
THE BRIDGE BISTRO & BREWS

Please,

- Wear a mask in public
- Avoid indoor gatherings
- Stay 6 feet away from others
- Wash your hands frequently

Help Reopen Umatilla County

Wearing a mask saves jobs and saves lives