

# Hermiston Farm Fair goes virtual during pandemic

By **GEORGE PAVEN**  
CAPITAL PRESS

Like many events in 2020, the annual Hermiston Farm Fair is going virtual.

Now in its 47th year, the farm fair is a signature showcase for Oregon State University's Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center, or HAREC, which serves nearly 500,000 acres of irrigated agriculture across the Columbia Basin in northeast Oregon and southeast Washington.

The three-day exposition and trade show typically draws hundreds of people to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston.

This year, however, with statewide restrictions on large indoor gath-



Hermiston Herald, File

**Juan Salamanca, left, and Antonio Echeverria, both of Hermiston, look at the front bucket on a Case tractor in 2017 at the Hermiston Farm Fair. This year's farm fair will be held online.**

erings to slow the spread of COVID-19, researchers will instead present their latest findings during a series of webinars sched-

uled for Dec. 2-4.

"Our goal is to try to reach the same audience, and maybe many more," said Silvia Ron-

don, extension entomologist at HAREC and one of the farm fair's main organizers. "People are going to be able to listen to our seminars from anywhere in the world. I think that's going to be a cool experience."

The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce normally partners with OSU on the farm fair, helping to provide a venue and sponsorships. The chamber announced in September it would not be participating this year to focus on serving its member businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

That left HAREC to organize virtual sessions largely on its own, which Rondon said has been a difficult transition.

"All of us are learning about how to move from

in-person to the virtual venue," she said. "I am confident we are going to pull it off."

The virtual farm fair will feature talks from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each morning over the Zoom video conferencing app. Each speaker will have 30 minutes, covering a variety of topics spanning the region's diverse irrigated crops, Rondon said.

Day 1, on Wednesday, Dec. 2, will kick off with the potato seminar providing updates on breeding, diseases, pest management and crop nutrition programs.

HAREC is regarded as the flagship potato research station for OSU, and figures prominently in the Tri-State Potato Research and Breeding Program with Washington

and Idaho.

Day 2, on Thursday, Dec. 3, will cover soil health and modern precision irrigation technology. Rondon said soil health has been one of the hot research topics at HAREC over the last several years.

Day 3 on Dec. 4 will focus on hemp and other horticultural programs.

Rondon said she expects the hemp session will be well-attended, as 2020 was the first full growing season for OSU researchers to study the crop after it was decriminalized in the 2018 Farm Bill.

Pesticide applicator certification credits will also be offered online during the farm fair.

There will be a fee for the Pesticide CORE Program presentations, but all other sessions are free.

# New subdivision planned for Boardman; Heppner complex gets upgrade

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
NEWS EDITOR

A new housing development in Boardman will add 30 new stick-built homes to the city's housing inventory.

George Hale, CEO of Woodhill Homes based in Bend, said the development will be the third phase of the River Ridge subdivision off Wilson Lane, but the first for Woodhill Homes.

"What drew us to Boardman was the abundance of jobs. ... What we heard is a lot of people who work in Boardman live in Hermiston," he said.

He described the new subdivision as 1,200-square-

foot homes with three bedrooms and two bathrooms, priced at about \$229,000. He said after the 30-home phase is added, they have enough land there to build approximately 70 more in future phases.

Woodhill Homes is currently in the process of laying roads and utilities for the project.

For more information, visit [woodhillhomes.net/river-ridge-estates](http://woodhillhomes.net/river-ridge-estates).

In recent years Boardman has used a number of strategies to try to attract more housing to keep up with the booming workforce growth at the Port of Morrow. Those have included cash incen-

tives, such as waiving system development charges for the first four homes a developer builds, or providing gap lending for housing development through the Boardman Housing Development Fund.

### Heppner housing

Boardman isn't the only Morrow County city that could use more housing. Heppner City Manager Kraig Cutsforth said like many Eastern Oregon communities, Heppner has a housing shortage that can make it difficult to attract people to the community.

"I don't think our vacancy rate is even 1%,"

he said. "We have trouble finding a place for people coming in."

Cutsforth said current conditions — from lumber prices to the commute for construction firms — discourage housing developers from coming to Heppner.

"The rents don't cover the cost of construction," he said.

He said the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group is working on solutions. One of the volunteer organization's goals is encouraging economic development through improved housing opportunities.

It won't result in any new

housing units added, but the Mountain Glen Apartments in Heppner are getting a complete makeover thanks to a \$7.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to support affordable housing in four rural counties.

The money will support a project by Glenhaven Park LLC to purchase four aging low-income apartment complexes, including Mountain Glen, and complete a top-to-bottom renovation. The project will include new siding, roofs, landscaping, windows, doors, lighting, floors, appliances and more.

Shelly Cullin, development director for Chris-

man Development Inc., said Chrisman will complete the renovations of the 24 units in Mountain Glen, a project with a \$4.7 million total cost.

She said the renovation will start in May 2021. A few tenants at a time will be moved out of their apartments for about three to five days to complete the interior portion of their apartment, but Cullin said contractors can usually move furniture from room to room instead of requiring the apartment to be emptied, and the developer will pay for a place for the tenants to stay during their remodel.

# U.S. Cellular expands 5G to Umatilla County

HERMISTON HERALD

U.S. Cellular announced an expansion of 5G coverage to Hermiston, Boardman, Irrigon and Umatilla. 5G — which stands for "fifth generation" — is the fastest data transmission technology

mobile companies currently offer. According to a map at [uscellular.com/coveragemap](http://uscellular.com/coveragemap), the new speeds cover most of Hermiston and Boardman, part of Umatilla (excluding McNary), and part of southern Irrigon. It does not extend to Stanfield or Echo yet.

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