



StoryWalk stretches legs, minds

The new installation combines exercise and literacy in Umatilla

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Outdoor picture books known as StoryWalks are popping up in Umatilla County, as the latest tool in helping promote literacy.

The city of Umatilla celebrated its new Storywalk on Wednesday, April 14. The new installation features metal stands spaced about 200 feet apart along the trail from Hash Park to Kiwanis Park in McNary. Each stand contains a large replica of a page from a children's picture book, allowing children to read the story while going for a walk.

Sierra Dugan took her three children to the grand opening, and her daughter Elina Dugan, who will turn 4 in a couple of weeks, studied each plaque as they walked.

"She loves outdoors and reading, so this is perfect," Sierra said.

She said she liked that the trail was wide and paved, making it easy for toddlers to walk on, or to push a stroller along.

"I like that you kind of go at your own pace," she said.

Amber Dixon, who brought her 3-year-old granddaughter along, watched as she ran up to each page eagerly, waiting for Dixon to read it to her. Dixon said she lives nearby, and will probably visit the new feature often.

The Umatilla Public Library plans to swap out the book on a monthly basis. This month's book is "I Can Save the Earth" by Alison Inches.

Bella Oloendorff, 10, said she had fun reading the book as she walked, and plans to come back every time there is a new one.

"It taught you how to recycle and turn off the lights," she said, describing the book.

At the end of the trail, participants were given their choice of free books to choose from, a snack and an opportunity to make a bird feeder out of pine cones, peanut butter and bird seed.

Since "I Can Save the Earth" was shorter than some books that will be featured, the last few plaques featured information about Citizen Science Month, celebrated in April. Citizen science refers to public participation in gathering scientific data, such as precipitation monitoring for the National Weather Service. It encouraged people to download the iNaturalist app, which helps people from all over the world upload photos

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Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Amelia Schell-Murphy, 3, points to a sign along the StoryWalk in McNary as Amber Dixon reads the sign to her on the first day of Umatilla's StoryWalk on Wednesday, April 14, 2021.



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Walkers stroll down the path between Hash Park and Kiwanis Park in McNary as they participate in the StoryWalk on Friday, April 16, 2021.

"SHE LOVES OUTDOORS AND READING, SO THIS IS PERFECT. I LIKE THAT YOU KIND OF GO AT YOUR OWN PACE."

Sierra Dugan, who brought her three children to the StoryWalk grand opening last week

Plans for natural gas plant may have been abandoned

Perennial Power Holdings signals intent to stop work on power plant outside Hermiston

By JADE MCDOWELL AND BRYCE DOLE
STAFF WRITERS

Perennial Power Holdings appears to have abandoned plans to build a natural gas power plant outside of Hermiston amid litigation brought by environmental groups.

Columbia Riverkeeper and Friends of the Columbia Gorge announced on Tuesday, April 15, that counsel for the Perennial Wind Chaser Station, a proposed 415-megawatt natural gas power plant, sent an email to the Multnomah County Circuit Court on April 5 stating the project would cease construction and the company would ask the Energy Facility Siting Council to terminate the project's state-issued permit.

"We think this is a huge win for the climate," said Erin Saylor, an attorney for Columbia

Riverkeeper. "Hopefully it shows developers that Oregon is just not a place for new fossil fuel infrastructure."

The subject of the groups' lawsuit, Perennial-WindChaser LLC, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Perennial Power Holdings. Perennial Power Holdings did not return an email requesting confirmation of its plans to cancel the project.

Court records available online regarding the lawsuit do not include the letter, but do note that a hearing on the company's motion to dismiss the lawsuit was canceled on April 6 as "stipulated by parties."

The hearing on April 6 would have presented oral arguments before the Multnomah County Circuit Court, where Columbia Riverkeeper and Friends of the Columbia River Gorge had filed a petition for judicial review against Perennial

and the Oregon Department of Energy.

The groups alleged the state violated its own rules by allowing Perennial to begin construction without obtaining proper permits and approval from the Energy Facility Siting Council, which is staffed by the ODOE.

Critics say the company rushed to begin construction and meet the regulatory deadline to avoid millions of dollars in emissions fees under Gov. Kate Brown's latest executive order on climate change.

The plant would have emitted more than 1 million tons of greenhouse gases per year, according to news reports, making it one of the state's largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Only a few other power plants produce more.

Saylor said that environmental health in Eastern Oregon will benefit from Perennial's decision to



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A cleared section of dirt marks the beginnings of a roadway on the site of the future Perennial Wind Chaser plant on Oct. 22, 2020.

abandon the project.

"Not just the greenhouse gas emissions associated with it, but all the particulate matter and other associated pollutants that would have come out of this facility are not going to be happening now," she said.

And for Hermiston residents, Saylor said the change means that "their city won't become a dumping ground for these plants."

The project was proposed in an area outside of Hermiston near where two gas power plants currently stand — the Hermiston

Power Project, owned and operated by Calpine Corporation, and the Hermiston Generating Project. Perennial Power Holdings is a co-owner and operator of Hermiston Generating Project, a 474-megawatt natural gas plant.

In an interview with the *East Oregonian* in 2015, David Daley, speaking as Perennial Power Holdings' senior vice president of operations and development, said while the proposed Perennial Wind Chaser project was a natural gas

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