

Echo seeks \$1.5M to help with river flooding

BY MARCO GRAMACHO
Hermiston Herald

The city of Echo is requesting \$1.5 million in state and federal funds for restoration work and protection of the southern part of the town and northern part of the shoreline caused by the high waters in the Umatilla River last June.

"If we don't get protection by the end of this year, and if we get a normal high water event, next spring we can have significantly more damage," warned Echo City Administrator David Slaght. "And we won't have a way to stop it."

He submitted two permits to work on three areas developed by the engineering company Anderson Perry & Associates.

"Oregon Emergency Management has championed our projects and



Slaght

took them to the Emergency Board in Salem when they meet in late September to decide on approving them or not," Slaght said. "If we get \$1.5 million, we are planning to return \$475,000 to Umatilla County that funded the emergency repairs last June, and use the remainder to finalize the first phase of the project."

To combat rising water, approximately 560 feet of riprap was placed on the shoreline. The rocky material was put on the west bank to protect homes. In the next phase, large logs will be placed under the rocks. This will involve first pulling the rocks up and



Mackenzie Whaley/Hermiston Herald

The Umatilla River runs low through Echo on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2022. The small city is seeking \$1.5 million in state and federal money to help abate the river's annual spring floods.

placing the logs at the riverbank and then setting the rocks on top.

According to the city administrator, this setup will protect the habitat of fish. Other structures, Slaght added, may be constructed on the river to divert flows. These structures, and the log setup, will be the first stage. There are other actions to be taken, though, he said.

The project also will repair prop-

erties, shoreline and river area to the north of the bridge, the eastside of the river and the south end of Echo, Slaght said.

In addition to these goals, the city administrator said the project will increase plantings in the area of the river. Different plant species, including willows and cottonwood, are planned.

The second phase is the construction of a levee system. The engineers

of Anderson Perry are working on the project. Slaght said there are federal funds for the construction of levees.

"The team effort to protect Echo city involves Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, Rep. Bobby Levy, Umatilla County administration, local landowners, engineers, such as Kyle Wagner, and Echo City Council members," he said.

According to engineers working

in the project, a levee system is a long term solution for the flooding.

"It takes a lot more money and a lot of design to make a functional levee to protect the city," explained Slaght.

Besides threatening residential areas in Echo, the flooding and high water of the Umatilla River has eroded the signs of the archaeological site of Fort Henrietta.

"Several artifacts were damaged and new ones were found by archeologists in the area," Slaght said.

Fort Henrietta Park is on Main Street adjacent to the Umatilla River and it is on private property. One of the few public access points to the river in several miles is in the park. The park was named for the Fort Henrietta Militia stockade which was located across the river from the park site in 1855-56.

The National Park Service has listed the park as a National Historic Trail Site because it was a campsite and river crossing for Oregon Trail emigrants. The river ford, known as the Lower Crossing (Pendleton was the site of the Upper Crossing), was at the south end of the park. The crossing also was used later as a stage and freight road.

The park includes several historic displays, including a covered wagon museum and antique fire equipment museum. The museums are unmanned with push button recorders that provide information to visitors. The first Umatilla County jail is in the park as is a replica blockhouse. Interpretive panels provided by the National Park Service and story boards with information on Echo history also are in the park.

Echo students take to first day of school



Photos by Mackenzie Whaley/Hermiston Herald

Echo School students on the first day of fall term Monday, Aug. 29, 2022, talk with their teacher about what activities they participated in during the summer.



Students settle in to a new classroom Monday, Aug. 29, 2022, on the first day back to school in Echo.



Echo grade school students find the playground hot spot Monday, Aug. 29, 2022, on the first day of school.



Students get ready to line up Monday, Aug. 29, 2022, after recess gets called to an end in Echo.



Echo School students spend some time on the playground Monday, Aug. 29, 2022.



Students run to the playground Monday, Aug. 29, 2022, for the first day back to school in Echo.

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