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Grant County does better with sales tax revenue

By CHERYL SCHWEIZER
 Staff Writer

EPHRATA — With three-quarters of 2020 in the rear-view mirror, Grant County is collecting more sales tax than it did in the same period last year. But the county government's income picture is not all sunny.

Grant County Treasurer Darryl Pheasant said sales tax collections are 12 percent higher in the first nine months of 2020 than they were in the first nine months of 2019.

Also, the real estate excise tax, collected on real estate sales, is 9 percent higher through the first nine months of 2020 than the same period in 2019.

The county government's increased revenue from sales and real estate taxes has helped offset a revenue decline from the cancellation of the concert season at the Gorge Amphitheatre. The county collects a fee on tickets and other sales at the Gorge. Pheasant estimated the lack of a concert season will cost the county about \$1.4 million.

"We have a big hole to fill," he said.

Property tax revenues are slightly lower than the budget projection, he said. More county residents have been paying their property taxes on time in 2020, so the county has collected less in interest and penalties on delinquent accounts.

With historically low interest rates available these days, the county's investment fund is generating less than the budget projections. Pheasant said it has been a struggle to find investments that yield sufficient return.



Casey McCarthy/Columbia Basin Herald

Kekuni Robello attempts the kick flip off the halfpipe at the skate park in Moses Lake on Tuesday afternoon. The Rotary Club of Moses Lake is working on raising funds for renovations and a possible remodel for the park in the near future.

Ramping up to a remodel

Rotary Club raises funds to renovate skate park in Moses Lake

By CASEY MCCARTHY
 Staff Writer

The Rotary Club of Moses Lake is currently raising funds for its annual community service project, with eyes set on the skate park in Moses Lake this year.

The club has raised about \$31,000 for the project and plans to launch a GoFundMe page to go toward the club's ultimate goal of raising \$300,000 for the remodeling. A large chunk of that money was raised from the recent joint golf tournament with the Rotary Club and

the Kiwanis Club of Moses Lake.

The Kiwanis Club donated half of its money raised from the tournament toward the skate park remodeling project, making \$6,700 each from the Kiwanis Club and Rotary Club. Rotary Club President Steve Ausere said he was thankful for the Kiwanis Club contributing so much to this community project.

Another \$6,800 was funded through the Rotary Foundation, with the final \$11,000 being raised from an auction put on by the club.

The city of Moses Lake has applied for a capital budget request to go toward the project as well, but Ausere said they are still waiting to hear on that.

As president of the Rotary Club this year, Ausere said, he was tasked with coming up with a project.

"I have friends that have kids who come down to the park, and I was down here with him and his son who was out skateboarding," Ausere said. "He looked at me and said, 'Somebody should do

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File photo

A collection of federal agencies have agreed on a plan for managing the Columbia River's dams and water.

Columbia River management plan completed

By CHARLES H. FEATHERSTONE
 Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — After an in-depth review ordered by President Donald J. Trump nearly two years ago, the federal agencies responsible for overseeing the Columbia River have agreed on a management plan that will balance power generation and the needs of wildlife.

In a 94-page Record of Decision issued Monday, senior officials with the Bureau of

Reclamation, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bonneville Power Administration agreed to manage the Columbia River's dams and water in a way that will both optimize electricity generation and provide enough spillage for salmon and lampreys while also ensuring that Pacific Ocean orcas have enough to eat.

"Federal water infrastructure makes our way of life possible throughout the West," said Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., in a press release.

"Central Washington boasts one of the most productive agricultural regions in the country, and our farmers and ranchers would not be able to produce food and fiber for the world without a reliable supply of our most precious resource: water."

The Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision is the final step in the Columbia River System Operations National Environmental Policy Act process,

according to the press release.

The announcement of the plan signed Monday was met with favorable comments also from Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., Jaime Herrera Beutler, R-Wash., Rep. Russ Fulcher R-Idaho, and Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore.

In October 2018, Trump ordered a review of all western water projects to "address water infrastructure challenges in the western United

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