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Portland Oregonian
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Thursday, March 21, 2002

SPORTS

PORTLAND MEADOWS SETTLES DISPUTE
KEN WHEELER - Special Writer, The Oregonian

Summary: The track agrees to fix drainage problems in a deal that will allow it to run for the next three years

Operators of Portland Meadows and the Environmental Protection Agency have reached agreement on the racetrack's plan for disposal of surface water runoff from the track's stable area. Work on a \$750,000 containment project began Wednesday.

In addition, track management said a settlement had been reached with three environmental groups that had announced their intent to sue the track because surface water runoff carried manure particles into the adjacent Columbia Slough.

"We plan to have the project completed by May 1," said Art McFadden, president of Magna Entertainment Corp., Oregon.

Magna leased the track last summer but ran slightly more than half of its first meet when it could not reach an agreement with the EPA. The 80-day fall and winter meet had been scheduled to close April 28 but was suspended after the 46th day of racing Feb. 10.

The agreement with the EPA and the private environmental groups assures Portland Meadows will run the next three years, McFadden said. The three environmental bodies that had announced their intent to sue were the Northwest Environmental Defense Center, the Columbia River Keeper and Don Francis, an environmental activist.

Chris Winter, an attorney representing the Northwest Environmental Defense Center and Francis, said that although agreement had been reached, official documents had not been signed. Winter did not foresee a problem, but he added that what the people he represented hoped for was that the EPA would fine Portland Meadows should any runoff overwhelm or escape the new containment system, and that the money would be used for local environmental projects. The EPA refused that request, he said.

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Magna is the largest racetrack operator in the country, operating such facilities as Santa Anita, Bay Meadows and Golden Gate on the West Coast. Magna leased the Portland Meadows operating rights from Portland businessman Tom Moyer, who has said he plans to develop the North Portland property for other purposes when the lease expires.

Magna has said it hopes to build a horse racing facility in the area and does hold an option on farmland adjacent to Interstate 5 in the Aurora area south of Portland. Construction in that area would require a variance in the state's land-use laws.

In addition to its lease at Portland Meadows, Magna also purchased the operating rights for dog racing at Multnomah Greyhound Park starting next season. The next dog racing season will start Friday, May 3, and run through Oct. 12, with the Portland Meadows meet to open Saturday, Oct. 19.

---- INDEX REFERENCES ----

ORGANIZATION: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

NEWS SUBJECT: English language content; Sports/Recreation; Political/General News; Sports & Recreation; Environmental News; Environmental News; Environment Department; Routine General News; Executive Government; Government Bodies; Domestic Politics (ENGL GSPO GCAT SPT GENV ENV GVENV NRGV GVEVE GVBOD GPOL)

SIC: 711212

GOVERNMENT: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (EPA)

REGION: United States - Oregon; United States; North American Countries; Oregon; North America; Pacific Rim; United States; Western U.S. (USOR USA NAMZ ORG NME PRM US USW)

EDITION: SUNRISE

LAYOUT CODES: (SPO)

Word Count: 435

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