

Chinese delegates will return to region

No business deals so far; river tour, Crater Lake on tap

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A delegation from the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C., is headed to Southern Oregon to take part in the fifth Oregon-China Investment, Education, Culture and Tourism Conference.

The three-day event gets under way Friday, May 30, with a luncheon at the Fiesta Restaurant and Event Center, 1016 N. Riverside Ave. The keynote speakers will be Li Jie from the Chinese Embassy, former director general of the foreign affairs office in the Ningxia Hui region, and Jackson County Commissioner Doug Breidenthal.

The delegation will go on a farm tour, attend the Wild Rogue Pro Rodeo, tour the Rogue River on a Hellgate Jetboat, visit Harry & David, and view Crater Lake.

Among the leaders of the delegation are Fang Maotian, who heads up the embassy's educational affairs office and was previously the secretary general of China's UNESCO commission; Gao Yuan, the embassy's press secretary; and Deputy Consul General Song Ru'an from the Chinese consulate in San Francisco.

The annual visits began in 2010.

David Wick, vice president of the Southern Oregon China Connection Committee of the Oregon-China Sister State Relations organization, said this is the first time staff from the Chinese Embassy have taken part in the annual conclave, although previous delegations included members of the San Francisco consulate staff.

"The first part is getting recognized and for them to see that we exist," Wick said. "The big deal now is that we're getting people from the embassy, and they're coming to discover what we have to offer firsthand. They're still learning who's who, but there is a very serious economic factor."

So far, no deals have been struck that would provide new employment in the area.

Irene Kai, SOCC president, said earlier Chinese delegations had manufacturing sites in mind but later realized that wouldn't work.

"We are trying very hard to find a match," Kai said. "We're talking high-tech right now, but it takes time to build relationships."

For more on the conference, see www.socc-ofssa.com.

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