

Outdoor Rec / Local

HELP WANTED

BAKER SCHOOL DISTRICT 5J is currently accepting letters of interest from community members to fulfill Board Position #4 vacated by Richard McKim's resignation. This term will expire June 30, 2017. Interested parties may pick up information for the position at Baker School District 5J, 2090 4th St. or visit our website at www.baker.k12.or.us. Letters of Interest must be returned to Norma Nemeck at the District Office no later than September 7, 2015. At 3:30 p.m. If you have any questions, call 541-524-2261.

Hunting after the fires ...



THE OUTDOOR COLUMN
By Todd Arriola

Last Saturday, as I headed over Dooley Mountain toward Bridgeport from Baker, I couldn't help noticing the still smoldering remains of the landscape, what once resembled grass, brush and trees, now blackened by Mother Nature's fury, which we call wildfire.

This isn't the first time we've experienced devastation like this, nor will it be the last. Being able to precisely place 100% of the blame in any one direction is like being able to draw and fill every big game animal tag this year, or maybe being able to recycle 144 aluminum soda cans without a single rejection or machine mal-

function.

Since last Saturday signaled the start of general deer and elk archery season (not the reason for my trip), thoughts about what effects the wildfires would have entered my mind.

Some landowners in the local communities understandably voiced concerns about the wildfires and the timing of the hunting seasons, and even more heated discussions ensued once there was talk about possibly postponing those seasons in Baker County.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) quickly ended that conversation by stating there would be no postponements.

This is not to say that there won't be complications with hunting (or another endeavor, for that matter). Although there are exceptions, animals tend to avoid volunteering to become crispy, barbe-

cued meals by staying in one place, while a wildfire is active. And, they don't exactly see charcoaled, bare trees and a forest floor covered with ash as appetizing, in the aftermath.

Because of other commitments (and my occasional lack of planning), I failed to purchase the general deer and elk archery tags prior to the opening of the season last weekend.

Generally speaking, it's advisable to purchase tags before the seasons start, but in this case, I can still purchase the tags, albeit with an additional "exception fee" of \$17 per tag, according to ODFW. Hey, it's better than no tags.

Like many, I've wondered how the hunting (and fishing, camping, hiking, etc.) seasons will fair due to the wildfires, and in reality, how much running around I'll actually accomplish. Since I at least attempt to avoid excessive selfishness regarding outdoor activities, even for game meat, I'll assume that some landowners simply wish to restrict access, and they're certainly well within their right to do so. Their land, their rules.

The public landscape has also changed, and

this requires us to adapt, even where we're "free" to roam. Wildfires don't seem to care who owns what, and they don't discriminate, and I can see plenty of public land that went up in smoke, too.

Actually, I can see more of it, because there are a heck of a lot less leaves and trees to block the view now. That's not a good thing.

Nobody has all the answers to "fix" the wildfire situation, and I certainly won't accept that it's the "new norm," because that's a poor attitude and zero management, at best. I plan on continuing to hunt, fish, etc., but awareness of my surroundings may be somewhat heightened now, which isn't a bad thing.

Regardless of the blame for the wildfires, we're now in the stage of restoration, which requires constant pressure up the chain of command, in order to repair the damage already done, and to avoid creating new issues. I should mention, I do love seeing those blue skies again, and I rather enjoy breathing on a regular basis. Now, if I can just dust off that bow and remember to buy those game tags ...

Fire: Eagle Complex still threatens area cabins



Carmelita Holland / The Baker County Press

Portable water tanks remain in front of the Holland Cabin in the middle of the Eagle Complex fire

BY CARMELITA HOLLAND
News@TheBakerCountyPress.com

One stubborn flame in the lower bottom of Sullivan Creek continues to threaten cabins two miles up East Eagle Creek.

"I cleaned road to cabin number ten, and I could hear fire popping and snapping in timber directly below," said Mike Lattin of Eagle Telephone, on Tuesday morning. "I have all of my equipment there now. I'm taking my water truck up, wet the road and see if I can reach it," said Lattin.

"If the fire takes off again, it could wipe out all the cabins on the east side of East Eagle Creek. I'm going to stay with it and do what I can to save these cabins. I'm going to put in fire lines and doze around private properties where I can. Everybody else is gone now. The crew from Joseph named the Pat Rick Company has left too. They have released the fire to the local force. I know some of them, they are good. I have a lot of faith in them."

Chary Mires is watching the fire blazing across Lime Creek and roaring through Hudson Creek.

"I'm afraid we are still going to lose Dad's cabin," she said. She refers to the cabin built by the late Jim Weber near the west end of the Forest Service bridge located across from the mouth of Big Kettle Creek. Water used by Weber's cabin flows from the burning area.

She said the fire has already reached her timberland in three places, taking out eighty valuable large trees in one place. The fire spread to her property at the time it burned the DuMars cabin August 21st. Fire then came in from the Sheep Rock Mine area where spot fires peppered the hillside. A third wall of fire struck her timber on Sullivan Creek and part of this fire scorched the earth as it burned within one hundred feet east of the Holland cabin. The present fire threatens more of her timber on Sullivan Creek.

Lattin said he has seen only one fire-killed animal—"a cooked buck fawn. I have not been able to get anywhere to look for more because the roads are all full of downed timber," said Lattin.

There are very few of the hundreds of grazing permittee cattle appearing in lower elevations as the wildfire continues to consume the higher elevations.

—ODFW RECREATION REPORT—

BAKER COUNTY HUNTING

OPEN: COUGAR, BLACK BEAR, ARCHERY DEER AND ELK, MOURNING DOVE, FOREST GROUSE
Archery seasons opened August 29.

Hunters will face fire restrictions and some closures and they need to know what those are before they go. More info. Some good resources for fire information: Inci eb, National Forest webpages, Oregon Dept Forestry

ODFW is not closing archery season due to fires

The 39 road near Halfway is now open and only minor shoulder work remains.

The Eagle Complex fire in the Keating Unit currently has a closure associated with it but the area of closure was recently reduced. See the Wallowa Whitman National Forest website for current travel restrictions and map of the affected area.

Deer and elk: Archery hunters should find deer and elk around water and cool moist northern aspects. The continuation of warm temperatures will limit animal activity to early morning and late evening. Remember to check the regulations for the area you will be hunting.

Cougars can be found throughout Baker County but hunters should target areas with high concentrations of deer and elk. Setting up on a fresh kill or using distress calls can all be productive techniques. Hunters are required to check in the hide of any cougar taken, with skull and proof of sex attached. Remember to pick up a 2015 tag.

Bear season opened August 1. Successful hunters, remember check-in of bear skull is mandatory;

see the regulations for details. Biologists recommend propping the bear's mouth open with a stick after harvest; it makes for easier tooth collection and measuring.

Coyote numbers are good throughout the district. Try calling in early morning and late afternoon. Remember to ask for permission before hunting on private properties.

Grouse season started September 1. Blue grouse can be found in the higher elevations while ruffed grouse are more common in wetter areas. Hunters should expect an average year for grouse. Successful hunters are asked to place the tails and wings from harvested birds in the collection barrels.

BAKER COUNTY VIEWING

Bighorn sheep can be seen in the Burnt River Canyon west of Durkee or along the Snake River Road south of Richland. Young lambs can be seen this time of year with ewes across most of the bighorn sheep range. The best viewing is in the early morning and late in the evening. Please remember to leave wildlife alone. It is crucial for their survival to keep human interactions to a minimum.

Bald and golden eagles can be seen along the Snake River. Take the Snake River Road between Richland and Huntington.

NE OREGON FISHING

The 2 p.m. fishing closure for trout, steelhead, salmon and sturgeon in streams has been lifted as of Sept. 1.

Trout fishing in Wallowa Lake has been very good thanks, in part, to additional stocked trout diverted from nearby ponds too warm to

receive fish

Crappie fishing continues to be good in McKay Reservoir, with the best catches coming early and late in the day.

Walleye fishing continues to be excellent on the Columbia River from McNary dam downstream to Boardman.

GRANDE RONDE RIVER: trout, whitefish, bass. The river remains open for trout whitefish and bass. However, the 2:00 p.m. closure for trout due to drought conditions is in effect. Fishing for smallmouth bass will be good with lots of fish in the river, warm temperatures and low flows. Steelhead season will open on Sept. 1, however few fish will be in the river until later in the month.

HOLLIDAY PARK POND: rainbow trout. Pond has been stocked with both legal and trophy-sized trout. Fishing has been fair. Pond does have an ADA fishing dock for anglers with disabilities.

JOHN DAY RIVER: smallmouth bass. Smallmouth bass fishing is good with many being caught. There also has been a fair number of catfish being caught. Bass anglers may try their luck higher in the North Fork below the town of Dale. Bass are present up to Dale but in lower numbers.

LUGER POND: hatchery rainbow trout. Fishing restrictions will be relaxed on Luger Pond in preparation for an upcoming fish removal project. Starting Sept. 1, fish may be harvested by hand, dip net, or angling. Daily bag and possession limits will also be lifted. Luger Pond has been stocked with 500 legal-sized rainbow trout.

MORGAN LAKE: rainbow trout. The City of La Grande has closed access

to Morgan Lake due to extreme fire danger.

WALLOWA COUNTY PONDS: rainbow trout. Fishing restrictions will be relaxed at Kinney Lake in preparation for an upcoming fish removal project in October. Starting Sept. 1, fish may be harvested by hand, dip net, or angling. Daily bag and possession limits will also be lifted. These relaxed regulations will be effective until Sept. 25, when the ponds will be closed to all fishing through Dec. 31, to prevent public exposure to rotenone.

Due to potentially lethal water temperatures, trout stocking in Wallowa County ponds was suspended during June. Ponds affected by these changes are; Salt Creek, McGraw, Honeymoon, Teepee, Victor, Weaver, Marr, and Kinney Lake. Trout that would have been released in these ponds were stocked in Wallowa Lake in addition to scheduled trout stockings.

These ponds are traditionally stocked through July with Honeymoon, Teepee, Salt Creek and McGraw also receiving trout in late September to benefit deer hunters. With moderating temperatures managers have determined if these ponds will receive these traditional fall stockings.

WALLOWA LAKE: rainbow trout, kokanee, lake trout. Trout fishing has been good at Wallowa Lake. The lake has received additional rainbow trout stocking due to other area water bodies being too hot to receive fish. This means the lake has been heavily stocked with both legal-size and trophy trout. Kokanee anglers have found some recent success, however the fish are still running on the small side.

West Nile virus found in Baker County

Mosquitos in Baker County tested positive for West Nile virus from two samples collected last Monday and Tuesday in the Keating area. This brings the total infected pools up to four.

Dead bird surveillance has been ongoing in the district. People who notice sick or dead birds such as crows, magpies, jays and robins should contact the vector control district so that they can be picked up for testing.

The Baker Valley Vector Control District sets 30 adult mosquito traps baited with CO2 weekly in Baker, Bowen and Keating Valleys each year. The mosquitoes caught are then identified to species, counted and pooled into groups of 10-50 and sent onto the Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Corvallis for testing.

No cases of human illness have been reported this year in Baker County.

Most people who become infected with West Nile Virus do not become sick. Some may develop mild flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, and occasionally swollen lymph glands or rash. In some cases, West Nile may cause encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain.

Information about West Nile virus, including what to do if you believe you're infected, is available at: <https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/DiseasesAZ/WestNileVirus/Pages/survey.aspx>.