



Tales from a Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

Wolves in the classroom

Last week, I got a note from Sisters Middle School Teacher Susie Werts inviting me to a presentation by two biologists, one of whom worked in Yellowstone during the reintroduction of the wolves.

Well, of course I went, and I'm glad I did. The biologists did a wonderful job of presenting what's going on with wolves and the public since the Yellowstone reintroduction, focusing on herbivore overgrazing, balance-of-nature and habitat considerations, and citing the impact of the wolves of Isle Royal as an example.

They also presented a clear picture of how wolves have wandered through the Northwest, discussing the famous — or infamous, depending on your point of view — Wolf OR-7.

Again and again student hands shot up for questions, and after each answer everyone began to see the scope of ecological events that took place for the good of the land and all the species that lived in it with wolves back in the Yellowstone ecosystem again.

Susie told me, "We studied the wolf in context of different habitats (arctic, temperate forest) and expanded our study to literature ("Julie of the Wolves"), art, science, and music (our choir teacher weaved in a song about wolves). We also approached this particular study with

a balanced lens — discussing different perspectives on wolves (ranchers, hunters, and scientists) — but all the while keeping in mind the ecological story — that the wolf is a keystone species, an apex predator, and is critical in preserving nature's balance."

One of her students, Josiah, wrote, "I was really surprised to learn that wolves do not howl at the moon, but are more active when there is a full moon. Coming from Idaho, I felt sympathetic about the wolves killing their livestock, but I did not know that the reintroduction of wolves was that important to Yellowstone Park. Compromise has been key in supporting both sides."

Another student, Hunter, had this to say: "Without wolves, coyotes overpopulate and that means that the elk overpopulate because coyotes are not predators of the elk. Aspen/willow trees become overgrazed and then beavers have no materials to build their dams, and then dragonflies don't have puddles to lay their eggs. Wolves primarily hunt the elk, but only eat 20 pounds of meat at a feeding. There are a lot of animals that benefit from a wolf kill and who scavenge on the leftovers — magpies, grizzly bears, wolverines,

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Low-income housing project filled up

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

Ponderosa Heights apartments, located on the corner of Brooks Camp and McKinney Butte Roads, is built out and fully occupied, with 30 percent of the 48 units awarded to Sisters residents.

The City had a large stake in the apartments, having provided \$300,000 toward the project.

According to Mayor Chuck Ryan, "The City is very pleased to see the final completion and full occupancy of the new Ponderosa Heights affordable housing apartment complex in Sisters, in cooperation with HousingWorks."

Of 125 applicants who applied for one of the 48 units, 46 were from Bend, 15 from Redmond, 28 from Sisters, 12 from other Oregon cities, three from out-of-state, and 21 were previously unhoused.

The residents were determined by a lottery system of the 125 applications. Despite the fact that 36.8 percent of the applicants were from Bend and 22.4 percent from Sisters, Sisters residents ended up with the largest number at 29.2 percent of the units and Bend only one-quarter of the units.

"I was encouraged that a significant portion of the final residents were young, single-parent families along with the homeless (seven or 14.6 percent) who now have permanent homes," Ryan added.

Mayor Ryan expressed surprise that only 28 of the 125 applicants were Sisters residents. He surmised one reason could be the requirement that the apartment residents cannot earn over 60 percent of the median family income (MFI) for Deschutes County, which amounts to a family income of less than \$35,000 a year.

"I think this may indicate

that the next affordable housing need for Sisters will be in the category of 'workforce housing' or those families or individuals who cannot afford most market-rate housing but cannot qualify for 60 percent MFI-type housing. In other words, the need for more apartment-type housing and/or subsidized housing such as Habitat for Humanity units," Ryan concluded.

Ryan offered that perhaps some of the out-of-town residents (mostly Bend and Redmond) "that were awarded the balance of the units may, in fact, be current workers in Sisters who had to previously commute to Sisters and can now live and work here."

Ryan is hopeful that some of the apartment residents can try to find permanent jobs in Sisters, "bringing more workforce availability to Sisters."

"The City is very proud of this project and its favorable impact on the community," said the mayor.

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