

## DAILY PLANNER

### TODAY

Today is Friday, May 17, the 137th day of 2019. There are 228 days left in the year.

### TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT

On May 17, 2004, Massachusetts became the first state to allow same-sex marriages.

### LOTTERY

**Megabucks:** \$1.8 million  
9-21-23-26-35-43

**Mega Millions:** \$339 million  
11-59-66-67-68-18-x4

**Powerball:** \$270 million  
7-17-33-61-68-PB 4-x2

**Win for Life:** May 15  
4-26-39-50

### Pick 4: May 16

- 1 p.m.: 6-4-9-8
  - 4 p.m.: 8-1-6-6
  - 7 p.m.: 9-8-3-8
  - 10 p.m.: 7-0-8-9
- Pick 4: May 15**
- 1 p.m.: 2-1-1-9
  - 4 p.m.: 1-8-4-1
  - 7 p.m.: 2-9-9-8
  - 10 p.m.: 9-4-6-4

### ROAD REPORT

Numbers to call:  
• Inside Oregon: 800-977-6368.  
• Outside Oregon: 503-588-2941.

### NEWSPAPER LATE?

Every effort is made to deliver your Observer in a timely manner. Occasionally conditions exist that make delivery more difficult.

**If you are not on a motor route,** delivery should be before 5:30 p.m. If you do not receive your paper please call 541-963-3161.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Always dream and shoot higher than you know you can do. Don't bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself."  
— William Faulkner, American author (1897-1962)

## Nobody injured in house fire Tuesday in Baker City

By Jayson Jacoby  
WesCom News Service

**BAKER CITY** — When Stephenie Murdock learned the house where her neighbor lived was on fire Tuesday afternoon she couldn't simply run out the front door to safety.

Murdock and her husband, Steven, operate an adult foster care in their home at 2355 Baker St., just south of St. Elizabeth Towers between Fourth and Fifth streets.

The couple care for two people in their home, one of whom is immobile and the other nearly so.

Stephenie Murdock said she initially heard a loud "pop," which she thought might have come from a different neighbor who has been doing some construction work.

But a few minutes later someone pounded on her front door. It was her neighbor, Michelle Budd, alerting her to the fire.

Murdock credits Budd, who knows the Murdocks care for people confined to wheelchairs, with acting quickly to alert the couple. "She did a fantastic job," Murdock said of Budd. "Her priority was to get everyone out of our home."

No one was injured in the fire, said Baker City Fire Chief John Clark.

He said the cause of the fire is undetermined and under investigation.

The blaze started in the rear of Budd's home near the ground level, Clark said.

The fire caused structural damage but Clark said it's not clear whether the

home can be repaired.

The 1,200-square-foot home, built in 1930, is owned by Alan and Linda Schmeits, according to Baker County Assessor's Office records.

Clark didn't know whether the home was insured.

He said Budd and her son, the only two people living in the home, were both in the house when the fire started.

Clark said about 10 people from the Baker City Fire Department worked on the blaze, along with four from the Baker Rural Fire District, four each from Haines and North Powder, and two from the Greater Bowen Valley Fire Protection District.

Murdock praised the rapid arrival of fire crews.

"I'm very, very happy with the fire department," she said Wednesday morning. "They did an awesome job. If the fire people weren't there so quickly our house would have been up in flames too."

Murdock said that while she was evacuating along with her husband and their two residents, she could see flames on the ground near the fence between the two homes.

But the fire didn't cross the property boundary.

Murdock said she was able to return to her home, with her two residents, on Tuesday evening. The couple also has three children.

"Thank goodness they were at school during all this," Murdock said. ■

## Wolf's comeback in US triggers debate on protection levels

By Andrew Selsky  
The Associated Press

**SALEM** — The gray wolf is on track for a remarkable comeback after being almost exterminated in the contiguous United States, but a Trump administration proposal to take the iconic symbol of the wild off the endangered species list has exposed divisions among states.

California says it opposes delisting the wolf, while Washington state said it agrees. The federal proposal also exposed a rift among top officials in Oregon — one of several states where wolves have established breeding packs after wandering across state lines.

The debate highlights clashing interests and differing philosophies, with ranchers fearing more livestock will fall prey to wolves and conservationists worrying that wider hunting of the predators might be around the corner. Hunting and trapping wolves is already allowed in Montana and Idaho.

At the center of the debate is the question: "How much more help do wolves need?"

Washington Fish and Wildlife Director Kelly Susewind told the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently that protecting thriving wolves could expose the Endangered Species Act to legislation weakening protections for species in actual danger of extinction.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said Thursday it's critically important to maintain wide-ranging recovery areas

for wolves across the West.

"The challenge is, it's not like wolves pay attention to statewide boundaries," Brown said.

Her comments came a day after she slapped down a stance by Curtis Melcher, director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. He wrote to federal officials on May 9, saying his agency supports delisting wolves because the animals no longer meet the definition of an endangered or threatened species.

Brown said her office had not been informed that Melcher would take the stance. When she learned of it, she put on the brakes.

"The state of Oregon and its agencies do not support the delisting of wolves from the federal Endangered Species Act across their range in the 48 contiguous states," Brown wrote in a letter to U.S. Interior Secretary David Bernhardt.

A total of 6,500 wolves are believed to roam Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Rocky Mountains and Pacific Northwest. Additional wolves inhabit Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maine, Missouri, Ohio, Utah and Vermont.

Collette Adkins, carnivore conservation director at the Center for Biological Diversity, said more than a half-dozen states have no wolf protections on the books.

In his letter, Melcher said Oregon had 137 wolves at the end of 2018 — a 10% increase over 2017. He also said Oregon is committed to ensuring the progress of the species while minimizing livestock losses.

However, his advocacy of federal delisting of wolves brought howls of complaint when it was publicized.

U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, an Oregon Democrat, told Melcher in a letter that he was "shocked and appalled."

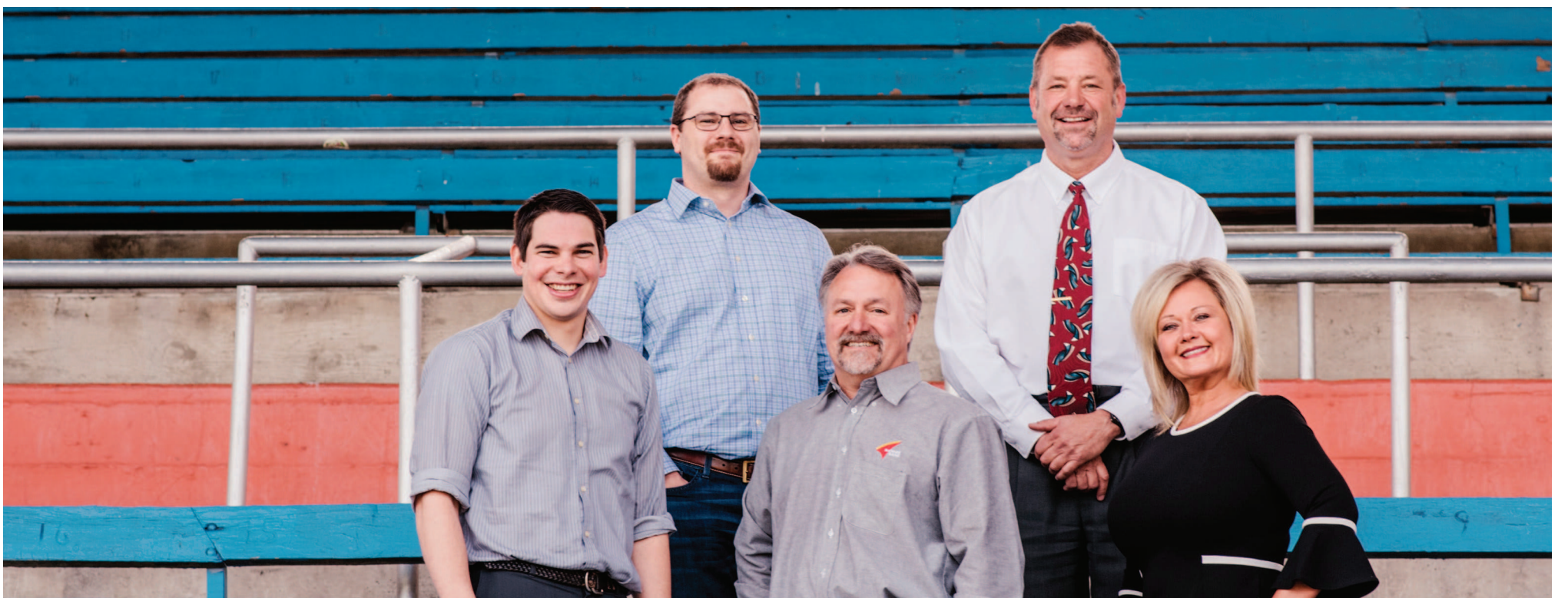
"I am ashamed by your willingness to throw an incredibly important predator species under the bus in favor of a few private interests that clearly have a different mission than your agency," Blumenauer wrote.

Noah Greenwald, endangered species program director at the Center for Biological Diversity, said: "Lifting federal protections now would hamper further wolf recovery in Oregon and expose the animals to killing by the state."

The federal government has already delisted wolves in the eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon, as well as in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. It contends that gray wolves no longer qualify for federal protection as an endangered or threatened species.

Oregon officials have drafted a new state wolf plan aimed at ensuring "the conservation of gray wolves as required by Oregon law while protecting the social and economic interests of all Oregonians."

Oregon removed wolves from its state endangered species list in 2015. A prime objective of the draft plan is to promote a naturally reproducing wolf population connected to a larger population of wolves and allowing for expansion into other areas of the state. ■



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