# Cleanup effort


Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

A log truck takes its load through Enterprise on Monday, Jan. 4, 2021. Although actual logging has ceased for the season, log trucks still haul timber to the Integrated Biomass Resources mill in Wallowa from the site of the 2015 Grizzly fire west of Troy.

## Public/private partnership works on remains of Grizzly fire

**By BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — A combined effort of public agencies and the private timber industry are in the process of cleaning up the remains of the 2015 Grizzly Bear fire that burned more than 74,000 acres west of Troy.

Wallowa County Commissioners Todd Nash and John Hillock were instrumental in prodding the U.S. Forest Service to sell what it initially considered a nearly worthless timber sale, said David Schmidt, of Integrated Biomass Resources in Wallowa.

"Commissioners Nash and Hillock invited the Forest Service to see what needs to be done," Schmidt said Wednesday, Dec. 30. "It's a good example of everyone working together to make it happen."

IBR produces firewood, fenceposts and poles at its mill in Wallowa, employing 25 people full time, Schmidt said.

"It's a really positive contributor to keeping 25 full-time jobs going," he said.

He also spoke highly of the project as beneficial for the forest environment in northern Wallowa County.

"This is a really cool timber sale in that it was dead wood that was going to be burned," he said.

The timber sale sold for $11,264.28, according to Darcy Weseman, public affairs officer for the Umatilla National Forest in Pendleton. She estimated 2,532 million board feet of forest products would come from the sale on the 181 acres designated for treatment.

Schmidt said the dollar amount of the timber sale was just the stumpage fee paid to the Forest Service, but the full cost of the effort would be between $400,000 and $500,000 by the time the trees were logged, hauled to the mill and processed, as well as any road maintenance costs incurred.

Weseman said the actual logging is taking place in the Hoodoo Ridge/Cross Canyon area, about 1-2 miles west of the Long Meadows Guard Station. It's an intricate maze of Forest Service roads that leads to the area.

Jim Zacharias, of JayZee Lumber Inc., in Joseph, said Pro Thinning, the logging operation of his sons, Tom and Seth, was contracted to do the actual logging. They employ a five-man crew in the woods and contract six log truckers.

"The trickle-down effect is the jobs created at IBR," Jim Zacharias said, who also serves on the board of Wallowa Resources, another agency involved in the effort. "It's great that the Forest Service is being proactive with these things."

He said actual logging has halted for the season, but timber is still being hauled to the mill.

Weseman said the job won't be done overnight. The contract termination date is March 31, 2024, but they may finish anytime between now and that date. The timber sale contract also allows for additional time if circumstances warrant the extension, none has yet been requested.

Everyone involved seems pleased with the multiple positive aspects of the sale.

"It's a good thing the Forest Service is being proactive in doing this for fire prevention and salvaging burned wood instead of letting it fall over and go to waste," Zacharias said. "It's just a real salvage sale."

# Feds backpedal on fee for distillers who made hand sanitizer

**By GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

WASHINGTON — No good deed goes unpunished.

That is how dozens of Northwest distillers felt after rushing to make hand sanitizer in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, only to be slapped with unexpected fees by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for their efforts.

The FDA announced Dec. 29 it would charge distilleries across the country $14,060 under a newly established fee program for "monograph drug facilities" producing over-the-counter drugs, including hand sanitizer.

Two days later, the Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees the FDA, decided to withdraw fees for distilleries after receiving blowback from industry representatives and lawmakers. Payments for fiscal year 2021 had been due Feb. 11.

"We are incredibly grateful to HHS for opening a dialogue with us, and look forward to working more collaboratively together in 2021 with FDA to ensure our members are treated fairly for the challenges they face to support their hometowns via hand sanitizer production in the wake of COVID-19," said Becky Harris, president of the American Craft Spirits Association.

According to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, 67 craft distilleries in Oregon, Washington and Idaho have produced hand sanitizer in response to the pandemic.

In Spokane, demand for hand sanitizer was so great that hundreds of cars lined up outside Dry Fly Distilling at a time when store shelves were virtually empty.

Terry Nichols, co-owner and vice president of sales for Dry Fly Distilling, said the idea to make hand sanitizer was spearheaded in March by head distiller Patrick Donovan. The distillery switched one of its vodka column stills over to making 190-proof ethanol, which was mixed with hydrogen peroxide, glycerin and distilled water — a formulation recommended by the World Health Organization.

Nichols estimates they made about 32,000 gallons of hand sanitizer in total. The first 5,000 gallons were donated to first responders and social service providers, including hospitals, police and nursing homes.

Dry Fly Distilling also organized 10 community distribution events, held over a series of Saturdays, which proved popular. Police directed traffic to where volunteers stood ready on both sides of the street, handing out 4- and 8-ounce bottles.

Nichols said they had as many as 3,000 cars drive through during the events.

"I never thought I'd see so many people so thankful for hand sanitizer," Nichols said. "People were scared. There was a need, and they couldn't find it on the store shelves. They were just grateful."

Nichols described the FDA fees as a slap in the face for distillers who were just trying to do the right thing in a time of crisis.

John Ufford, CEO of Rose City Distilling in southwest Portland, said it was actually the U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau that put out the initial call for distillers to make hand sanitizer, and even provided the recipe.

Rose City Distilling continues to make hand sanitizer as part of its operations, albeit at a smaller scale.

## Ranchers whose case sparked standoff may get grazing rights

**By ANDREW SELSKY**
Associated Press

Beth Nakamura/Associated Press, File

Rancher Dwight Hammond Jr., left, greets his wife, Susie Hammond, after arriving by private jet at the Burns Municipal Airport in Burns on July 11, 2018. Hammond and his son Steven, convicted of intentionally setting fires on public land in Oregon, were pardoned by President Donald Trump. The federal government has proposed awarding grazing allotments to the Hammonds, whose case sparked the takeover of a federal wildlife refuge by right-wing extremists in 2016.

SALEM — The federal government has proposed awarding grazing allotments to an Oregon ranching family whose members were convicted of arson in a court battle that triggered the takeover of a federal wildlife refuge by right-wing extremists.

The Dec. 31 action by the Bureau of Land Management in favor of Hammond Ranches angered environmental groups.

"Giving the permit to the Hammonds shows a flagrant disregard for the rule of law ... and is clearly a political move rather than a responsible allocation of public lands," said Erik Molvar, executive director of Western Watersheds Project.

Steven Hammond, co-owner of the ranch, and his father, Dwight, were both convicted of arson for setting fire to range land and sent to prison for mandatory five-year sentences.

That led to the armed occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon for 41 days in 2016. One occupier was shot dead by Oregon State Police. They say he reached for a pistol at a roadblock.

President Donald Trump pardoned the Hammonds in 2018, freeing them from federal prison.

In a proposed decision made on Dec. 31, the BLM said Hammond Ranches should be apportioned all available forage in the Bridge Creek area grazing allotments in the high desert of Eastern Oregon, covering about 26,000 acres.

The federal agency cited the Hammonds' "historic use of these allotments, past proper use of rangeland resources, a high level of general need, and advantages conferred by topography."

But in 2014, when Barack Obama was president, the BLM denied Hammond Ranches, Inc. a grazing permit renewal, saying it "does not have a satisfactory record of performance" and cited numerous incidents of arson.

At the Hammonds' trial, witnesses testified that a 2001 arson fire occurred shortly after Steven Hammond and his hunting party illegally slaughtered deer on BLM property. One said Steven Hammond handed out matches with instructions to "light up the whole country." The jury also convicted Steven Hammond for a 2006 blaze.

Western Watersheds Project and WildEarth Guardians said they plan to protest the proposed decision.

"With one foot out the door, the Trump Administration is trying ... to allow these bad-actor permittees to run roughshod over public lands," said Sarah McMillan, Conservation Director for WildEarth Guardians.

Any protest by an interested party should be made within 15 days of being advised of the proposed decision, with a final decision issued thereafter, said BLM spokeswoman Tara Thissell.

## Burger King closes in LG

**By PHIL WRIGHT**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The home of the Whopper is no more in La Grande.

Burger King at the intersection of Adams Avenue and North Oak Street shut its doors just before the end of the year.

"Due to our new franchisor requirements, we will be closing our store on Dec. 30, 2020," according to memos on windows at the establishment.

Restaurant Brands International owns Burger King, Tim Hortons and Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen. Multiple news sources in 2019 and 2020 reported Restaurant Brands International was closing hundreds of underperforming franchises, including up to 350 Burger Kings. Business Insider in mid December 2020 reported Burger King was launching a "$1 Your Way" menu in late December, a move to appeal to Americans struggling financially during the pandemic-induced recession.

Whether any of this played a role in the closure of the La Grande Burger King or what new franchisor requirements are remains unclear. The Observer called the business, but no one would return calls.

According to the company's online information, the franchise fees in the United States are $50,000 per restaurant per a 20-year term, a royalty of 4.5% monthly gross sales and 4% of monthly gross sales for an advertising fund, plus $250 for the background check per person.