

HABITAT

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provide a lot of cover and good rearing opportunities,” Frenyea said. “This project could also help lamprey, if they decide to use it,” Nez Perce Fisheries biologist Montana Pagano said. The NPTF already has reintroduced lamprey into the Wallowa River System, releasing adults at the Wallowa’s confluence with the Minam River for at least the past two years.

The quiet water in deeper alcoves would trap fine sediment and provide places for young lamprey to spend up to their first seven years as ammocoetes — larvae that live in soft sediments as filter feeders — before transforming into eel-like fish and migrating to the ocean, she said. “Potentially, the NPTF lamprey program may consider releasing lamprey directly into this project reach,” Pagano said. Today the newly excavated channels look barren. But when the project is completed, the 120 Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir trees that are now stacked at the east end of the project will be secured in the channels to provide both short-term bank stability and fish habitat. Smaller woody debris will be added as additional channels provide hiding cover and quiet waters for juvenile fish. “It’s not a place you’ll really want to use as a



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain
Nez Perce Tribal Fisheries biologists Montana Pagano, left, and Kate Frenyea look at the “supersacks” of soil and gravel to construct temporary cofferdams in July 2021 when the side channels are connected to the Wallowa River.

swimming hole,” Frenyea said. “There will be lots of wood in the channels, especially in the deeper alcoves.” Other logs and smaller debris will be placed on the project’s higher ground, termed a “roughened floodplain.” The topography and location of woody debris on the floodplain have been carefully designed by project engineer Jeff Fealko, of Rio Applied Science and Engineering. He also designed the side channels. The larger logs on the floodplain will be partly buried to help anchor them in place, and their orientations will help slow and direct overland flow of any floodwaters. The roughened floodplain also will be the likely place to propagate camas, Frenyea said. Wetland areas adjacent to the floodplains will be home to native cattails

and tule reeds. The woody debris and large wood placement will occur in the first phase of construction, Fealko said. This summer, during the second phase from July 15-Aug. 15, log structures will be placed at the side channel inlets where they interact with the main Wallowa River. The side channels will be connected to the Wallowa at that time, Fealk said. He said these structures are important, providing near bank cover and inviting fish to explore the slower water and protective habitat within the side channels. “Boulder clusters placed in the river at channel entries will also help break up the river’s flow and help the fish find this new channel,” Frenyea said. Fealko noted that the project will help reconnect the Wallowa River with its floodplain.

“It will allow the groundwater from the base of Tick Hill to interact with the channels and provide thermal buffering,” he said. “And this means that in the winte, the channels will be warmer than the river, and in the summer they’ll be cooler, which are both beneficial to juvenile salmonids.” The side channels and floodplain are designed so that there is no overall impact on flooding in the Wallowa River, Fealko said. “We modeled flow for a 100-year flood event (a flood volume that has a 1% chance of happening in any given year) before and after the channels are constructed,” he said. “There’s no effect on flood-water elevations.” But, he added, allowing Wallowa River floodwaters to cover the project area might help decrease the impact of short-term floods farther downstream. “This project has been a long time coming,” said Angela Bombaci, Homeland Project executive director. “We’ve done some restoration, including plantings along the former irrigation ditch with the help of volunteers Wylie Frei and Craig McKienney. But this work by the Nez Perce Tribal Fisheries is a huge step toward bringing this place back to its potential as habitat for plants, animals and fish — the Wallowa Homeland grounds are offered as a peaceful refuge for all species, including people.”

CASES

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— the B.1.1.7 variant from the United Kingdom — has been confirmed in the state. The Oregon Health Authority had reported four total cases of B.1.1.7 in the state as of Wednesday, Feb. 3. Several variants carry mutations in their spike proteins, which are the part of the SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) particle that vaccines teach the body to recognize and attack. Changes to that part of the virus’ surface raise questions regarding a vaccinated or previously infected body’s ability to recognize and react to infection caused by the variant strain. Early indications are that COVID-19 vaccines do provide sufficient, if diminished, protection from severe illness and death from such variants as those from the U.K. and South Africa, and there has been no clear indication that vaccine efficacy is significantly lessened when deployed against the variants. Perhaps most concerning among the variants is the P.1 variant, first detected in Brazil. P.1 has shown indications that it may be sufficiently different from the base SARS-CoV-2 virus to not trigger an antibody response, meaning that vaccines, prior infection or even herd immunity may not protect a population or individual from infection by that variant. The OHA had not reported any cases of P.1 in Oregon as of Thursday, Feb. 4. However, little is known about the variants at all, including whether they are circulating in Union County. Identifying COVID-19 variants requires sequencing

their whole genome with sophisticated lab equipment. That work is being done at just three labs across the state: at Oregon State University, the University of Oregon and Oregon Health Sciences University. In the meantime, the Center for Human Development maintains that the best way for Union County residents to protect themselves, their loved ones and their community from the pandemic is to get vaccinated when they are able. “We all want to return to normal life as soon as possible,” CHD said in a statement. “Safe and effective vaccines are the key to how we will slowly but surely achieve community immunity from COVID-19.” To that end, CHD is asking people to help spread the word to members of the community and families that may have difficulty accessing vaccine information. People can sign up for email updates on vaccination from the Center at chdinc.org/subscribe or they can call 541-962-8800 for up-to-date information. Questions about vaccines can also be directed by email to vaccine@chdinc.org. Those eligible to be vaccinated can schedule an appointment at chdinc.org/gv. People can also sign up their loved ones for appointments if they need assistance doing so, as long as that person is eligible to receive a vaccine. Under Oregon’s vaccine sequencing plan, those age 80 and older are set to become eligible for vaccination beginning on Monday, Feb. 8. For more information on the order in which people will be vaccinated in Oregon, see the Observer’s previous reporting or go to covid-vaccine.oregon.gov.

BENTZ

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Her defense included statements that hinted at how far she had gone in the past. “I also want to tell you, 9/11 absolutely happened,” she said. Also real: Mass shootings at schools. Democrats said the vote was about blocking an advocate of bizarre conspiracy theories from a key role on legislation. Republicans said while Greene’s comments were odious, racist and bizarre, Georgia voters sent her to Congress. Democrats were overstepping their authority of how elected Republican members serve in the House. Oregon’s four other House members, Suzanne Bonamici, D-Beaverton; Earl Blumenauer, D-Portland; Peter DeFazio, D-Springfield; and Kurt Schrader, D-Salem; voted in favor of her removal. “This is not about policy disagreements, which are expected in Congress” Bonamici said after the vote. “This is because espousing violence and

spreading harmful lies is dangerous.” The showdown over Greene was the second major test of Republican unity in less than 24 hours. The House Republican Conference on Wednesday night turned back an effort by some members to remove Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyoming, as its chair. Some Republicans wanted to punish Cheney for being among 10 GOP House members who voted for the impeachment of President Donald Trump. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-California, asked members during the closed-door vote to retain Cheney. He also advocated for them to oppose the Democratic-lead effort to remove Greene from committees. Bentz declined to say which way he voted in the Cheney matter. NBC News, citing House members at the meeting, reported Cheney won 145-61 in the secret ballot. Greene had a long history of statements advancing conspiracies and questioning whether major events actually hap-

pened or were staged. She had backed the conspiracy group QAnon, which has been linked to violence. She had posted her approval online of a post calling for the murder of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., with a “bullet to the head.” She has called the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon a hoax and speculated that “space solar generators” were used to ignite wildfires in the western United States. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, made a rare comment on a House member, saying Greene would damage Republicans’ credibility. “Looney lies and conspiracy theories are cancer for the Republican Party and our country,” McConnell said Monday. Democrats called on McCarthy to remove Greene, but when he refused, they made the rare motion on the floor to have the entire House vote on her assignments. Democrats were especially enraged by Greene’s appointment to the House Education and Labor Committee, which helps set

national policy for schools. Greene harangued David Hogg, a survivor of the February 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida that killed 17 people. Greene also said the December 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, that killed 26 people, including 20 children, was a hoax.

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Jacob McGinnis, AGACNP-BC

Nurse Practitioner (NP) Hospitalist

Jacob McGinnis, AGACNP-BC, joins the GRH Hospitalist team from Boise, Idaho area. He has previously worked as a perioperative nurse, med-surg nurse, and operating room nurse. Jacob has special interests in inpatient, critical care, and emergency medicine, and enjoys building relationships with his patients and their families while caring for them in the hospital setting. For the past 11 years, he has served in the Idaho Army National Guard, most recently as a combat engineer with a rank of Sergeant. Jacob has also coached high school and middle school wrestling since 2005, and was the 2004 Heavyweight Pac 10 Wrestling Champion while completing his undergraduate degree at Boise State University. He later went on to complete several other degrees, including his Masters of Nursing in the Adult Geriatric Acute Care Nurse Practitioner program from Walden University. Jacob is married with three children and a Great Dane, and enjoys spending time with his family and all things outdoors, including watersports, hiking, camping, and hunting. Recently, he’s taken an interest in triathlons, and has completed two Olympic distance triathlons, and one sprint distance triathlon. Join us in welcoming Jacob and his family to Union County!



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