

LOOKOUT

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as well as the boundary between Baker and Grant counties.

Mount Ireland is one of more than a dozen prominences in Northeastern Oregon where the traditional method of finding wildfires — a person working inside a tiny building on a high point, looking for the telltale tendrils of smoke — persists.

Several decades ago there were more than 50 lookouts in the region that were staffed each summer.

But over time, with surveillance by airplane more feasible, and a proliferation of roads making it easier for fire crews to access remote areas, most lookouts were closed, and many removed.

Mount Ireland remains a valuable cog in the fire-detection system in part because of its elevation — if you head west from the peak you won't hit a higher summit until you get to the Cascades.

But its location is also ideal, said McCraw, the fire management officer for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest's Whitman District.

From Mount Ireland's summit, the lookout can see swathes of the Wallowa-Whitman as well as parts of its neighboring national forests, the Umatilla and Malheur, McCraw said.

On especially clear days the views extend east into Idaho and north into Washington.



Wallowa-Whitman National/Contributed Photo

The lookout at Mount Ireland might see as many mountain goats as human visitors.

"It's a pretty critical one," McCraw said.

Mount Ireland also overlooks the municipal watershed for Sumpter, where a wildfire could threaten the city's water supply, McCraw said.

But of course a lookout is only as effective as the person who works there, scanning the hundreds of thousands of acres where a fire could start.

And for the past two years, McCraw has had to scramble to hire someone for the position, which pays about \$16.90 per hour.

In 2020, Mount Ireland's longtime lookout wasn't able to return to the lofty perch, but McCraw had a fair amount of time to find a replacement.

Typically the lookout doesn't start work at Mount Ireland until late June or early July, when most of the snow has melted and the wildfire risk begins to rise.

This spring McCraw's

challenge was even more acute. The lookout he had enlisted for the job backed out late in May.

Then someone suggested to McCraw that he explain his dilemma to associations of fire lookout enthusiasts, of which there are several.

The Oregon Fire Lookouts posted about the situation on its Facebook page on June 4.

McCraw said he has had a "very good response" from the post, and several candidates have been in touch.

McCraw said on Wednesday, June 9 that he will be able to fill the vacancy in time to have Mount Ireland staffed.

The person he hires will have an interesting summer, to be sure. Mount Ireland is pretty remote even by lookout standards.

You can't drive to the peak.

The roughly 3 1/2-

mile hiking trail offsets its modest elevation with a significant elevation gain of 2,300 feet — roughly equivalent to climbing the Astoria Column about 18 times.

(Except without stairs.) The nearest settlement is Granite, about eight miles from the trailhead. Sumpter is about 15 miles.

McCraw said the Forest Service each year hires a helicopter crew to haul in water, propane and other supplies to the lookout. A technician checks the radio equipment on the peak, which includes an antenna and a repeater.

The Mount Ireland lookout usually works until mid to late September, depending on the weather.

Snowstorms are possible in any month at that elevation, but McCraw said in some years dry weather persists into October so the lookout stays on duty through deer season.



The Observer, File

La Grande High School teacher John Lamoreau, left, and his U.S. government students listen to Sen. Ron Wyden's response to a question while talking to the students from Washington, D.C., via Skype in 2017.

CIVICS

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the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Lamoreau wants students to understand that it is not a coincidence that the freedom of religion is the first right listed in the first amendment. This indicates, he said, how strongly the United States' founding fathers felt about the importance of freedom of religion and how much we should value it.

He noted that when the Bill of Rights was being created, there was a move in the country to exclude people of the Jewish, Catholic and Muslim faiths from having citizenship. Lamoreau noted though that then-president George Washington and future presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison both worked hard to make sure that the Bill of Rights allowed people of all beliefs to be citizens and to be allowed to practice their faith.

When discussing the right to freedom of speech Lamoreau likes to tell his students of the visit he made in 1968 to what was then the Soviet Union. He told people there that he was opposed to the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. The young people he was talking to in the Soviet Union asked him if he feared retaliation from his government for being so outspoken. Lamoreau said they were amazed to learn that he did not fear retaliation because of his First Amendment right to practice freedom of speech.

"That really opened my eyes. Going to the Soviet Union made me love my country a lot more," he said.

Lamoreau said he believes most schools are already teaching civics. He thinks, though, that the

legislation will spur school districts to develop better curriculum for civics.

Teaching state government

He hopes that high schools, spurred by SB 513, will also teach more about state government and how Oregon's is different from many others. For example, in Oregon citizens can get measures passed using the initiative petition process. Few other states have an initiative petition process that makes it as easy for citizens to create new laws as Oregon does.

Lamoreau also hopes SB 513 makes students aware of portions of Oregon's history he does not believe many students know about.

"Many people do not realize that a United States president grew up in Oregon," he said.

He was referring to Herbert Hoover, who was raised in Newberg after moving there from Iowa when he was 11.

Mark Mulvihill, superintendent of the Inter-Mountain Education Service District, said civics is already embedded throughout the curriculum of Oregon's public schools. However, he also believes the added emphasis on civics SB 513 calls for is a positive step.

The superintendent said it will be constructive at a time when our society is so polarized. Mulvihill said boosting students' understanding of how our government works will result in people being better listeners and reducing this divide.

"It will pull us together more," he said.

The superintendent also believes SB 513 may result in more students later participating in government.

"The more involved people are, the more enlightened they will be and the better government will be," he said. "That is what the intent of the bill is all about."

PRIDE

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from local organizations. One of them was Shelter From The Storm, which provides education and advocacy services to victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Executive Director Jamie Landa hopes that this event continues to grow each year.

"I got in touch with Brittany because I was actually planning a Pride event at Shelter From The Storm," Landa said. "I'm glad that we were able to make it out and show our support for such a valuable organization. I hope it continues to grow each year and that we'll be able to have a parade one day."

Shelter From The Storm will hold its Pride event on June 25 from 1-5 p.m. at its



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Eve and Dora Koltuv color in pride art at the Pride Family Fun Day held in Riverside park on Friday, June 11, 2021.

Island City location.

Other booths included the Oregon Family Support Network, posters with LGBTQ resources in the area and several small business owners.

Kelly Fry, owner of Handcrafts by Kelly in

La Grande, sold custom designed glassware at a table, with all proceeds going to the Trevor Project, an organization dedicated to LGBTQ youth suicide prevention.

According to Brittany Cambell, the event means a

lot to her because growing up in La Grande, she had no space to reflect on her own identity and sexuality.

"Growing up, I didn't know anyone else like me," she recalled. "I love La Grande. I've never wanted to live anywhere else and I just want everyone else to feel the same."

Now that Pride is a city-recognized event, Cambell hopes that more people will reach out for resources in the future and come to events such as this one.

"I just want to see it keep growing and become more of a normal thing in the area," Cambell said. "I can't stand the thought of anybody feeling so alone. I just want as many people to know that you are wanted, you are loved, you are important and there is always help."

GRADS

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usually holds a separate commencement ceremony.

In total, 745 students graduated from EOU this academic year, many of whom could not attend the ceremony. According to Seydel, this will likely be the last graduation restricted in size due to COVID-19.

"In previous years, this is normally a huge event, there's thousands of people that come to the stadium, and it's just a really overwhelming and fun experience," he said. "We're hoping that next year we'll be able to do it normally again, with families and students in the stadium."

MJ Mori, who graduated with a degree in psychology, said she is thankful for the university community for helping her throughout her four years on campus.

"It was a lot of fun. People here enjoy helping others and as long as you reach out, there are always

people to help you," Mori said. "I love EOU, thank you for teaching me so much and helping me whenever I needed it."

Last fall, the university resumed some in-person instructions, with about half of the classes for the 2020-21 school year taking place in classrooms, according to Seydel.

"I think what's special about this class is that they've gone through a lot," he said. "Last spring, they found out they weren't going to be able to return to the in-person experience that they were so used to, so that's why we pushed so hard to return to in-person

programming over the last year."

Brandon Porter, who plans to return next year to earn his master of arts in teaching, said he is thankful for the school's efforts to organize a live commencement.

"I'm feeling excited and fortunate to have an actual graduation ceremony," he said. "I'm just thrilled to be here and see my accomplishments pay off. I've found such a close-knit family here, and that's what I love about the community."

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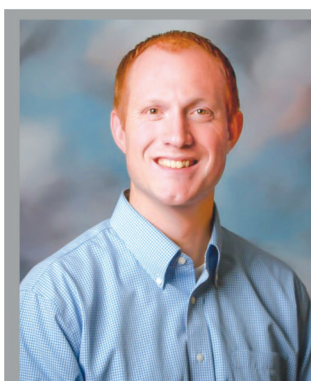
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2021 EASTERN OREGON PHOTO CONTEST

Official Rules:
 Photo Contest open now and closes at 11:59 pm Sunday, June 20, 2021.
 Staff will choose the top 10. The public can vote online for People's Choice from 12:01 am Monday, June 21 through 11:59 pm Thursday, June 30.
 Digital or scanned photos only, uploaded to the online platform. No physical copies.
 Only photographers from Oregon may participate.
 The contest subject matter is wide open but we're looking for images that capture life in Eastern Oregon.

Entrants may crop, tone, adjust saturation and make minor enhancements, but may not add or remove objects within the frame, or doctor images such that the final product doesn't represent what's actually before the camera.
 The winners will appear in the July 8th edition of Go Magazine; the top 25 will appear online.
 Gift cards to a restaurant of your choice will be awarded for first, second and third place.

Submit all photos online at: lagrandeobserver.com/photocontest



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