

Grant will help ranchers develop nonlethal wolf deterrents

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

SALEM — The USDA has awarded a \$100,000 grant to the nonprofit Western Landowners Alliance to test new nonlethal tools ranchers can use to protect their livestock from wolves.

Funding comes from the Natural Resources Conservation Service through its Conservation Innovation Grants program, which supports the development of new management strategies to improve natural resource conservation on private lands.

The alliance will work with four ranchers and three county wolf committees in Oregon, evaluating different approaches to minimize wolf-livestock conflicts — including range riders, high-tech cameras and composting dead animal carcasses.

“My goal, or my biggest hope, is that this project is going to help working lands remain viable,” said Ellie Gage, who is administering the NRCS grant. “The deck is already stacked against these producers.”

Gage and her husband, Mark, ranch in Central Oregon, where they run a small herd of cattle near Prineville and Powell Butte. She is also chairwoman of the Crook County wolf committee.

For the last several years, Gage



Wallowa County Chieftain, File
An Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist uses shears on the carcass of a calf that was killed by a wolf. Using an NRCS grant, ranchers will be testing nonlethal means of keeping wolves away from livestock.

said she has been involved in the alliance, participating in the group’s Women in Ranching program. In May, she was asked to

do outreach for the NRCS grant proposal, recruiting partners interested in studying non-lethal deterrents.

“The response was really overwhelming,” she said.

Four livestock producers signed up — two in Wallowa County, one in Baker County and one in southwest Oregon.

Wolf committees in Wallowa, Baker and Grant counties agreed to collaborate, as well as Prairie City in Grant County, which has a site for composting roadkill and dead livestock.

The grant was awarded July 15, and will reimburse ranchers for half their costs as they implement nonlethal methods aimed at keeping wolves away from sheep and cattle.

Gage said two producers will experiment with high-frequency radio ear tags on their cattle. The idea is that will allow range riders to locate herds more quickly and efficiently in large pastures, lowering costs and maintaining a more consistent human presence among herds to scare off wolves.

“Some of these allotments might be several thousand acres,” Gage said. “If you can spend less time looking for your cows, and locate them quickly with the help of ear tags, then you can get to them ... more efficiently.”

Another piece of technology that Gage said she is excited to try is a new game camera being developed with artificial intelligence that can be programmed to iden-

tify specific animals and notify producers.

“There is a huge need for the producer to have real-time information on where the predators are, and when they are there,” she said. “They can go and incorporate their non-lethal tools and human presence when they need to be there. Hopefully, it will make non-lethal tools that much more effective.”

In Prairie City, Gage said composting dead livestock may prove to be an effective technique for ridding ranches of carcasses that might otherwise attract wolves.

“If we can minimize those attractants, everybody wins,” she said.

The NRCS grant is meant to build on similar livestock-predator conflict prevention work the alliance is undertaking in other states, including Washington, Idaho, Montana, California, New Mexico and Arizona.

By proving which tools are most effective in different areas and terrain, Gage said it could lead to a more permanent source of funding to assist ranchers.

“The end goal of this project is to provide durable funding for producers who are facing the challenges of sharing working lands with wildlife,” she said. “The work that they’re putting into preventing conflict with their livestock is not sustainable financially.”

East-West All-Star Shrine Game back on schedule

Events begin Aug. 4 in Baker City with barbecue

By **LISA BRITTON**
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Events for this year’s East-West All-Star Shrine Game will be back to normal — the normal of 2019.

The football game was canceled in 2020, and 2021 was hampered by restrictions that kept players from visiting Baker City prior to the game.

This year, for the 69th edition, traditional events are coming back.

The Shriners are encouraging the community to take part in the festivities — especially a barbecue on the evening of Thursday, Aug. 4, that brings players, coaches, co-captains, queens and cheerleaders to Geiser-Pollman Park. Cost for dinner is \$25 a plate.

“We’re back with that program,” said Randy Guyer, a member of the Baker City Shrine Club.

The community barbecue begins at 5 p.m. in the park with speeches, including a talk by Travis Bloomer, who played in a past Shrine game and whose



The Observer, File

Often lining up in the secondary, Heppner’s Jayden Wilson came in to relieve Mazama’s Tristan Lee for a few snaps, getting East on the board first with a 30-yard touchdown pass to Mazama’s Cole Brosterhous en route to an East victory in the 68th Oregon East-West Shrine Game on Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021.

son, Gauge, was selected for this year’s game, along with fellow Baker Bulldog and 2022 graduate Alex Ritter. Another BHS grad, Alexis Conant, will be a cheerleader for the East squad.

Both queens are from the Baker City area. Hannah Cartwright is the East Queen, and Poppy Ann Jones is the West Queen.

La Grande graduate Cole Jorgensen was selected to play for the East team, and La Grande’s Brody MacMillan was selected as an alternate. Powder Valley’s Reece Dixon also earned a spot.

Background

This annual Shrine Game is a fundraiser for the Shriners Children’s Hospital in Portland.

From its inception up to 2021, the game has raised \$2,910,218.

It moved to Baker City in the mid-1970s.

In 2021, the game and associated fundraisers raised \$47,000 for the hospital.

Guyer said the volunteer hours and community support help make the Baker City event one of the most successful fundraising games for the hospital.

“It’s the rural mentality

and all the supporters,” Guyer said. “That’s what makes the game successful.”

In addition to the fundraisers during Shrine weekend, the Haines Stampede Rodeo donates gate sales to the hospital for the first night of the rodeo, on July 3. This year that raised \$3,000.

“We had the biggest crowd we’ve ever had,” Guyer said.

The first Shriners hospital opened in Louisiana in 1922.

Now the system has 24 hospitals, plus two new ones coming to Mexico and Canada.

Guyer said the Portland hospital is also expanding to include a walk-in clinic and outreach areas with telemedicine.

“We have the top orthopedic surgeons in the world,” he said.

And the Shriners hospitals provide care regardless of ability to pay or insurance status.

Player visits

On Thursday, Aug. 4, the East and West teams arrive in Baker City at 2 p.m. Half will tour Baker Heritage Museum while the others wander around downtown to see the player window displays.

At 3:30 p.m., the two

groups will swap places. Then, at 5 p.m., they’ll converge at the park for the barbecue.

Saturday, Aug. 6, events

The Baker County Livestock Association and Baker County Cattlewomen get Saturday, Aug. 6, started at 7 a.m. with breakfast in Geiser-Pollman Park.

This is part of the Gridiron Tailgate and Grill, which raises money to purchase a 4-H or FFA steer that is auctioned during halftime of the football game.

Breakfast is from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. Cost is \$10 for steak, eggs and pancakes, or \$7 for just eggs and pancakes.

The annual Hoofin’ It To Beef Fit 5K/10K fun run and walk starts at 8 a.m. Entry is \$25 for the 5K or \$35 for the 10K.

For more information, contact Wendy Bingham at 208-850-3803.

The Gridiron Tailgate includes vendors in the park throughout the day and a silent auction that runs from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

At 1 p.m., two signed Shrine footballs will be auctioned live.

Lunch will be served from noon to 2:30 p.m. Hamburgers are \$8 single or \$10 double, and hot dogs are \$7.

Parade

The parade, Guyer emphasized, is a community parade that includes Shrine clubs.

Lineup is at 10 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 6, by Baker Middle School.

The parade starts at 11 a.m. The route goes east on Broadway Street, then south on Second Street to Valley Avenue, where it turns east to Main Street. It then goes north on Main to Baker Street.

To enter the parade, contact Fred Warner at fwarner6196@gmail.com or 541-519-8866.

The game

Pregame events begin at 6 p.m. at Bulldog Memorial Field, and kickoff is at 7 p.m. on Aug. 6.

Tickets are \$15 for reserved seating (on the covered side) or \$12 for general admission.

Purchase tickets online at www.eastwestshrinefootball.com, at the Aug. 4 barbecue, on Aug. 6 at Geiser-Pollman Park, or at the gate.

The game will be aired by EO Alive TV and archived on its website afterward.

The steer, donated by the Baker County Cattlewomen, will be auctioned at halftime, along with several signed footballs.

One year later, Pendleton suspects in Walla Walla group attack still await trial

By **JEREMY BURNHAM**
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — It’s been a year since police investigated an alleged group attack involving Pendleton residents in Walla Walla that Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Jennine Christensen compared to an “old western.”

Five adult suspects still await trial in Walla Walla County Superior Court. Two minors also have been charged, and a sixth adult had his charges dismissed.

According to court documents, on July 5, 2021, Charles Thompkins Jr., 63, and a group of people, including his sons, drove from Pendleton to the 100 block of Prospect Avenue and confronted a man he claims stole a vehicle from him.

The group then allegedly beat the man and two other men after intimidating them with loaded guns, according to the documents.

One of the alleged victims had to have surgery for multiple breaks and fractures on his face and skull, documents noted.

Charles Thompkins, his son Habukkuk Thompkins, 21, Ira O. Toledo, 21, Santiago R. Lara, 21, and Carlos R. Johnson, 22, all face charges of first-degree robbery, three counts of first-degree assault with a deadly weapon, first-degree burglary with a deadly weapon and criminal mischief with a deadly weapon.

All those charges are Class A felonies — with a maximum penalty of life in prison — except the criminal mischief charge, which is a Class C felony with a

maximum penalty of five years in prison.

In addition, Charles Thompkins, who police said was the leader of the group, faces a charge of harassment, which is a gross misdemeanor.

Meanwhile, charges against Jeremiah A. Thompkins, 19, have been dismissed.

A trial date of Oct. 18 has been set for Charles Thompkins, who is representing himself, and Toledo, who is represented by Jason R. Wargin of Wenatchee.

This does not mean the two trials will happen at once though. Walla Walla County Superior Court is scheduling multiple trials for the same day in case one or more of the cases gets postponed or settled.

The trial for Johnson,

who is represented by Julie E. Karl of Waitsburg, is set for Nov. 29.

Lara was the last of the adults arrested in connection with the case. While he had charges filed against

him in August 2021, he was just arrested this month and had his first appearance in court on July 18. No trial date has been set yet.

He’s also the only defendant still in jail, as the

others have all posted bail. Lara’s bail is set at \$150,000, with no reduced cash equivalent. Normandy Park attorney Christopher Swaby has been assigned to represent him.

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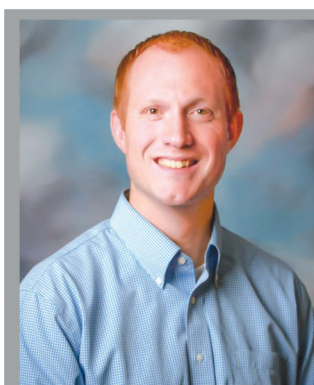
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