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INSIDE

KICKOFF TO THE 2022 FOOTBALL SEASON



State opens inquiry into Anthony Lake fish deaths

Hatchery-raised rainbow trout died in July soon after release

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

NORTH POWDER — A state fish biologist is trying to figure out what killed about 200 of the 2,000 hatchery rainbow trout released in Anthony Lake in late July.

The incident was unfortunate because the alpine lake, at an elevation of 7,100 in the Elkhorn Mountains northwest of Baker City, “is one of those places where people really enjoy going to fish during the hot summer months,” said Joe Lemanski, district fish biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s La Grande office.

The trout are considered “trophy” fish, as they average about a pound and a half, he said.

Lemanski sent several fish carcasses to ODFW’s fish pathology lab for examination. He said he hopes to have results within a couple weeks.

There are several potential cases, he said, any of which alone, or a combination, could have killed the trout, which were released in the 22-acre lake on Tuesday, July 26.

Possibilities include accidental injuries during loading, transporting and releasing fish, mechanical failure of instrumentation on the transport trucks, shock from the difference in water temperature between the truck and the lake, and possible infection or disease exacerbated by any one of these factors.

“We’re trying to piece it together,” Lemanski said.

He said it might not be possible to pinpoint the cause of the fish deaths.

Lemanski said there is no evidence, however, that the problem is not solely with the lake conditions, or any mechanical failures or issues during transport — the die-off seems to have been limited to some of the fish released July 26, and is likely a combination of a few factors.

He said ODFW didn’t receive any reports of dead fish following a release of 2,000 trophy rainbow trout in Anthony Lake, from the same hatchery, three weeks earlier, on July 5.

Nor were there any reports of dead fish at nearby Grande Ronde Lake, where rainbow trout were also released during July.

Anglers have continued to catch fish in Anthony Lake, Lemanski said, and he said the lake remains a good place to hook rainbow or brook trout.

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“We were already dealing with the crisis. We are now having a problem where, rather than increasing attorneys, we have gone backward here locally.”

— Attorney Jared Boyd, pictured in front of the Union County Courthouse on Monday, Aug. 29, 2022



Shannon Golden/The Observer

FOR THE DEFENSE

Oregon Public Defense Services firing sends ripple effects through Union County

By SHANNON GOLDEN
The Observer

LA GRANDE — When the commission of the Oregon Public Defense Services met Thursday, Aug. 18, to vote on the fate of director Steve Singer, Jared Boyd, a local attorney, kept tabs on the hearing from hundreds of miles away. Boyd was in agreement with the final verdict — to fire Singer.

Although the decision occurred in the state’s capital, Singer’s directorial decisions and work conduct made waves in the halls of the Union County Courthouse — and brought Oregon’s crippling public defense service shortage into the limelight.

“We were already dealing with the crisis,” Boyd said. “We are now having a problem where, rather than increasing attorneys, we have gone backward here locally.”

According to a two-year American Bar Association study released in January, Oregon Public Defense Services

is deficient 1,296 full-time equivalent attorneys for its adult criminal and juvenile caseloads. The study estimated that the 592 attorneys would have to take on 26.6-hour work days each week to meet counsel assistance needs.

Oregon is the only state that uses a contracting system to provide nearly all of its public defense work. OPDS relies on more than 100 public defender offices, law firms, consortia, nonprofit organizations and individual attorneys to provide services for clients who cannot afford private counsel.

Oregon’s public defense system has less than one-third of the attorneys it needs to sufficiently represent the state’s criminal defendants.

Contract challenges

There are two delivery systems for public defense services in Oregon — the state either contracts attorneys from nonprofit law firms or private attorneys. There are some nonprofit public defense offices in rural areas, but most rural judicial districts use private attorneys



The Oregonian, File
Oregon Office of Public Defense Services Executive Director Steve Singer speaks during a virtual meeting earlier this year. Singer was fired on Thursday, Aug. 18, 2022, after less than a year on the job.

under contract with OPDS.

Boyd — a private, for-profit attorney — and other attorneys in Wallowa County and Union County have contracts with the state to handle public defense cases.

Eastern Oregon Public Defenders — a consortium that Boyd was a part of

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Dick Mason/The Observer

Steve Witty examines a 1906 Oregon Trail marker on Walnut Street in La Grande while making a concrete form for it on Thursday, Aug. 25, 2022.

Time capsule gets extra layer of security

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Union County residents will likely have reason to celebrate 100 years from now when the time capsule in the Ezra Meeker Oregon Trail marker at 110 Walnut St., La Grande, is reopened.

Steve Witty, of Cove, the owner of Witty’s Concrete, dramatically increased the odds that a time capsule filled with items from 2022 will be found. On Thursday, Aug. 25, Witty, volunteering his time and donating his resources, poured a concrete form

for the base of the stone Oregon Trail marker.

This will make it much harder for the maker to be moved between now and when the time capsule, whose contents were installed in late June, is set to be opened.

“Anyone who wants to move it will have to deal with hundreds of pounds of extra concrete,” Witty said.

Preventing the marker from being moved will protect the contents of the time capsule from falling out, said La Grande historian Ronnie

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