

## People &amp; Places

## Using grazing as wildfire tool

Kirk Davies finds that grazing can reduce fire risk

By BRAD CARLSON  
Capital Press

Kirk Davies and his fellow rangeland scientists in southeastern Oregon for years produced studies showing earlier grazing reduces future fire risk while benefiting native plants.

Now they are working to figure out how to apply these lessons on the larger scale that the vast sagebrush steppe landscape often demands.

"With these findings established, now the challenge becomes prioritizing where to apply this in land management," said Davies, lead rangeland scientist with USDA Agricultural Research Service in Burns, Ore.

Issues inherent in working on the usually large-scale range include coordinating and moving people, equipment and cattle; a limited number of cattle available; and some public opposition to public-lands grazing altogether, let alone as a management tool, he said.

"We are hoping to work with more landscape ecologists, looking at how it applies across the landscape," Davies said. That would include investigating, long-term, how rangeland plant communities respond to fire whether they are grazed or not, and deriving a grazing approach to suit a location's unique fire risk — deciding how much to graze and in which season, for example.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management Burns District has used targeted grazing to help reduce fine fuels, particularly annual grasses, District Manager Jeff Rose said. The effort is on a fairly small scale now, but the district is working with ARS to help scale it to a level that will be effective in larger landscapes, he said.



USDA ARS

Kirk Davies, lead rangeland scientist for the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Burns, Ore.

Fires haven't yet materialized on treated, grazed areas and it's hard to predict where a fire will start, Rose said. "There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that it will work," he said.

Davies and colleagues conducted research for years before publishing a 2009 paper documenting that grazing can help native plants.

"We saw that long-term ungrazed areas, when they were burned, were subsequently invaded by exotic annual grasses," he said. "We found moderately grazed areas recovered to the native plant community. They didn't have that invasion and were much better off."

The 2009 study's text said in part that even plant communities that aren't accumulating fire fuels beyond historical levels may need low-severity, fuel-reducing disturbances to improve resilience to more severe disturbances.

Researchers in turn began looking into fire severity.

In ungrazed areas, "we found we had larger and hotter fires, and those fires



USDA ARS

Fire in an ungrazed sagebrush community.

caused higher mortality of desired native annual bunch grasses," Davies said. "We also found ungrazed areas were much more likely to ignite with an ignition source and more likely to spread ... with higher flame heights and faster-moving fire."

Even areas that went ungrazed for just one or two years were found to have

greater fire risk, he said. Moreover, grazing in the fall or spring ahead of peak summer fire season greatly reduced the risk of severe fire.

Findings from the researchers' 2010 study included that moderate grazing reduces wildfire risk by decreasing fine fuels available for ignition, and limiting spread by reducing fuel

continuity, the text said in part. While moderate grazing makes prescribed burning more difficult, it can help produce a mosaic burn effect that can reduce a fire's speed and overall size.

Their other studies found that dormant-season grazing increased moisture levels to an extent that an area was at risk of fire some two months later into the summer season; and that winter grazing can reduce wildfire size, intensity and spread in shrub areas; prefire grazing increases post-fire resistance to exotic annual grass invasion and dominance for decades; and fall and spring grazing decreased ignition probability and a fire's ability to spread by increasing fine-fuel moisture while decreasing fuel mass and height.

"Essentially we are looking at the effects of grazing on fire risk, behavior and severity, and even post-fire recovery," Davies said.

He researches rangeland comprehensively, from plants, soils, grazing and fire to weeds, encroaching vegetation — like Western Juniper — and various environmental conditions.



## Western Innovator

### Kirk Davies

**Title:** Lead rangeland scientist, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Burns, Ore.

**Age:** 40

**Hometown:** Princeton, Ore.

**Education:** Ph.D., rangeland ecology, Oregon State University; dual B.S., rangeland resources, crop and soil science, OSU.

**Family:** Wife and three children

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We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.

## Eastern Oregon hunt raffle to benefit OSU ag scholarship

By KATY NESBITT  
For the Capital Press

WALLOWA, Ore. — A conservation easement in the heart of Wallowa County farmland is being managed to grow large white tail buck deer for big game hunting — and philanthropy.

Landowner Woody Wolfe said he's managed the river bottom to grow big white tail bucks for several years and with a handful of Land Owner Preference elk, buck and doe tags issued through Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, he has a few tags to share.

"In 2016 the largest white tail buck in the state was taken off my property by a neighbor," Wolfe said.

At the time, Wolfe said, the buck ranked fifth in the Oregon black powder record book.

Chad Garrett has guided hunts on the Wolfe Ranch for several years and is well familiar with the Wallowa mid-valley land with views of the surrounding mountains.

"Woody has a lot of trophy game on his place," he said.



EO Media Group File

Woody Wolfe is using a hunting raffle of Land Owner Preference tags to fund a scholarship for an Oregon State University agriculture major from Wallowa County, Ore.

As he's become known around the county, Garrett said he's been asked to help local clubs and nonprofits raise money through hunt raffles, allowable under Oregon state gaming laws.

When Wolfe was approached by Wallowa County Center for Wellness for a donation he looked for advice from staff at The Nature Conservancy's Zumwalt Prairie Preserve,

which offers raffle hunt opportunities to local nonprofits. Then he turned to Garrett for help.

With a website and a PayPal account 100 tickets were sold at \$100 apiece in six days. Garrett was paid for his effort, Wolfe said, and \$8,500 went to the Center.

According to Garrett, the winner of that raffle was a man looking to kill his first white

tail buck to qualify for the Super Slam of North American Big Game — the legal taking of all 29 of the traditionally recognized species of big game animals native to North America.

Wolfe said the experience got him thinking. With such a rapid response to the first raffle, what other worthy causes could he support by raffling some of his Land Owner Preference tags?

"If I could raise that money with one tag or two, I thought about what cause do I feel is the most valuable to me?" Wolfe said.

The answer was a scholarship for a Wallowa County high school graduate pursuing a degree in agriculture at Oregon State University. As a sixth-generation Wallowa County farmer, Wolfe says agriculture is close to his heart.

"I think an education can facilitate people who want to go into agriculture, whether in ag service or production," Wolfe said. "Ag is what has paid me back for the efforts I put forth — if it is a passion for

someone else, I want to help create a return for that passion."

Again Wolfe turned to Garrett for help. He set up a website and a PayPal account to facilitate raffle hunts and serves as the guide. After Garrett's time, Wolfe said each scholarship award will be around \$7,500.

This year two raffles are offered to raise money for the scholarship. Garrett said 100 tickets are available for \$100 apiece for each hunt. The winner of each of the two raffles will receive a three-day guided hunt and lodging.

Garrett said the first scholarship will be awarded in 2019, but the money will not be available until the winner's junior year, when he or she declares a major. The winner must also have maintained a 3.0 grade-point average those first two years of college to claim the scholarship.

Tickets are available at www.biggameafflehunts.com through Jan. 1. The raffle drawing will be held Jan. 10. For more information, call Garrett at 503-367-0207.

## Calendar

To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on "Submit an Event." Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301 or emailed to newsroom@capitalpress.com. Include "Calendar" in the subject line.

### Friday-Sunday

#### Oct. 12-14

Hood River Valley Harvest Fest. 1-6 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday. Hood River Event Site, North of Exit 63 off Interstate 84, Hood River, Ore. Celebrate Hood River's harvest season. This old-fashioned fall festival brings together more than 120 vendors offering local produce and food products, plus arts and crafts, wine, cider and beer tastings. Held along the scenic

Hood River waterfront, this is the Columbia River Gorge's biggest celebration of the region's incredible fall bounty. Website: http://hoodriver.org/harvest-fest/

### Monday, Oct. 15

Beekeeping Workshop. 6-8 p.m. Columbia County OSU Extension, 505 N. Columbia River Highway, St. Helens, Ore. Topics include how to build a bee house and how to fight varroa mites.

### Thursday, Oct. 18

Balancing Profitability and Access in Local Food Systems. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. The Riverside Hotel, 2900 W. Chinden Blvd., Boise, Idaho. In a state that comprises big ag, small ag and highly motivated food system stakeholders, how can we bring more locally produced foods into

mainstream markets and strengthen the economics of small- to mid-sized farms? This one-day conference will explore, through an economic lens, ways to cultivate a local food economy to create jobs, invigorate small farms and businesses and keep precious dollars in our Idaho communities. Hosted by the University of Idaho Extension, the conference is made possible with a Western Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (WSARE) grant. Cost: \$45 Website: https://idahofood2018.eventbrite.com

### Saturday, Oct. 20

Preparing for Winter on Horse Properties Workshop. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District, 7175 NE Evergreen Parkway No. 400, Hillsboro, Ore. Join the Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District and Horses for Clean Water

for a free workshop about managing mud, manure and pastures along with winter health care for horses. Website: https://www.swcd.net/event/preparing-winter-horse-properties/

### Saturday-Sunday

#### Oct. 20-21

All About Fruit Show. Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Clackamas County Fairgrounds, 694 NE Fourth Ave., Canby, Ore. The show offers hundreds of varieties of heirloom fruit to see and taste. Types of fruit include apples, pears, quince, grapes, kiwis and more. Custom-grafted fruit trees are also available. Bring unknown apples for sleuthing by the Apple ID team. Website: http://www.homeorchard-society.org/contact-us/

### Sunday, Oct. 21

AgroFiesta. Noon-4p.m. O'Con-

nor Field House, 2207 Blaine St., Caldwell, Idaho. Families and individuals who show proof of agricultural employment, such as a pay stub, will get in free. The event will feature food, entertainment and booths with information about various programs that may benefit farmworkers and their families.

### Tuesday-Wednesday

#### Oct. 23-24

Nutrient Management Conference. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Embassy Suites, 1441 Canyon Del Rey, Seaside, Calif. The agenda will focus on the latest FREP-funded research results and practical applications of fertilizing materials for agricultural production in the state of California. Grower, CCA, and PCA credits will be requested. Website: https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ls/ffdrs/frep/FREPConference.html