

Classifieds / Outdoor Rec

HELP WANTED

BAKER SCHOOL DISTRICT 5J is currently accepting applications for a .5 FTE **Culinary Arts** position. For a complete description of the position and the application process go to www.baker.k12.or.us. You may also call Norma Nemeec at 541-524-2260.

BAKER SCHOOL DISTRICT 5J is currently accepting applications for a **Confidential Administrative Assistant** to the Superintendent and School Board. For a complete description of the position and the application process go to www.baker.k12.or.us. You may also call Norma Nemeec at 541-524-2260. 5.2

The Baker City Public Works Department is seeking qualified applicants for the position of **Mechanic II**. Closes April 29, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. For more information and how to apply go to www.bakercity.com. The City of Baker City is an EEO employer.

REPORTER WANTED

Reporter needed. Pay per article. Approximately two articles per week anticipated. Baker City and Haines areas. Interested in this opportunity? Please email editor@thebakercitypress.com. Great supplemental income! Must be professional and have a solid grasp of the English language.

PUBLIC NOTICE: WEED SPRAY GIVEAWAY!

For 2016, Baker County Weed District will again be giving out herbicide on the following locations, dates, and times. This fully mixed, ready-to-go herbicide will be targeting whitetop and scotch thistle. Folks need to bring chemical-resistant containers, preferably gas or oil cans, and a pair of chemical-resistant gloves. Please, no food containers. There will be a five gallon limit imposed for each residence.

Note!!! New location for Baker City Giveaways!

Where	Date	Time
Huntington Service Station	April 22	8:00 - 11 AM
Richland/Halfway - Wildflower Corner	May 6	7 - 12 Noon
Baker City - Old ODOT Building 1050 S. Bridge	May 21	7 - 12 Noon
Baker City - Old ODOT Building 1050 S. Bridge Street	May 28	7 - 12 Noon
Hereford Hall /Unity Hall Hereford - Unity	June 3	9 AM - 10:30 AM

Advertise your business with us here in the Service Directory! Low monthly rates! Buy 3 months, get the 4th free!

PUBLIC NOTICE: BUDGET BOARD MEETING

A public meeting of the Budget Committee of the Medical Springs Rural Fire, Baker/Union Counties, State of Oregon, to discuss the budget for the fiscal year July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 will be held at Pondosa Station, 50393 Hwy 203 Baker City, OR. The meeting will take place on May 09, 2016, at 6:30 PM.

The purpose of the meeting is to receive the budget message and to receive comment from the public on the budget.

This is a public meeting where deliberation of the Budget Committee will take place. Any person may appear at the meeting and discuss the proposed programs with the Budget Committee.

A copy of the budget document may be inspected or obtained on or after May 5, 2016, at 50378 Hwy 203, Baker City, OR, between the hours of 9 AM and 6 PM. 150-504-073-1 (Rev 12/10)

PUBLIC NOTICE: 5J BUDGET BOARD MEETING

A public meeting of the Budget Committee of the Baker School District 5J, Baker County, State of Oregon, to discuss the budget for the fiscal year July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017, will be held at the Baker School District office at 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814. The meeting will take place on May 12, 2016, at 5:00 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting is to receive the budget message and to receive comment from the public on the budget.

This is a public meeting where deliberation of the Budget Committee will take place. Any person may appear at the meeting and discuss the proposed programs with the Budget Committee.

A copy of the budget document may be inspected or obtained on or after May 9, 2016, at Baker School District 5J between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. This notice and future notices will be posted on our website at www.baker.k12.or.us.

The extended tale of Witty and the wolf



THE OUTDOOR COLUMN
By Todd Arriola

Recent information has shed some light on the subject of the Grant County incident last October, involving Brennon Witty, and the gray wolf, known as OR-22.

The following is based on information in the official Oregon State Police (OSP) report, and from information provided by the Harney County District Attorney's office.

On October 6, 2015, at about 8:50 a.m., reporting officer and case lead OSP Trooper Patrick McCosker was dispatched by Southern Command Center (SCC), to a wildlife violation, making contact with Sergeant Brown, of OSP Pendleton, at about 9:08 a.m. Brown told McCosker that OR-22 had been killed shortly before that, and that Witty (unnamed at the time), had reported the incident to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) in Canyon City. Brown then requested that McCosker contact Wolf Coordinator Russ Morgan, and to initiate an investigation.

McCosker contacted Morgan at about 9:20 a.m., and Morgan told him that OR-22 was in the area where Witty said he had shot the wolf.

Morgan asked McCosker to secure the wolf, and the collar, and to meet with John Day Watershed Assistant Biologist Angelique Curtis.

McCosker arrived at the Canyon City ODFW office, and Curtis informed him that Witty had shot the wolf, and that Witty had called that office at about 8:15 a.m., stating, "I

shot a wolf." The location where the wolf had been shot was Crane Prairie, in Grant County, about 38 driving miles southeast of John Day, near the intersection of United States Forest Service (USFS) Road 16, and USFS Road 14.

Curtis contacted Witty via telephone, and Witty agreed to meet Curtis and McCosker at the intersection of Grant County Road 62, and USFS Road 16.

The three met at the location agreed upon, and Witty led Curtis and McCosker to where OR-22 had been shot, which was at the end of the 1400-660 Spur Road. McCosker informed Witty, after they all exited their vehicles, that McCosker started filming with his body camera, and that their conversation was being recorded.

There were scattered Juniper and Pine trees where they parked, on the western edge of an irrigated meadow, over 400 yards wide, which had scattered patches of sagebrush, and grass.

The grass had been grazed short by cattle, which were in a herd, about 200 yards from where they were, but the sagebrush was between about eighteen inches, to two feet tall.

A barbed wire fence ran approximately north to south, adjacent to where they had parked, and a forested hill, with Pine trees, climbed above the eastern side of the meadow.

Witty indicated that the wolf was in the meadow, on the other side of the fence, and Curtis determined, with GPS, that where the wolf had been killed was on private property, owned by Prairie Wood Products, and managed by Dan Bishop. McCosker spoke with Bishop in a separate conversation

in the afternoon of October 6, and Bishop said that Witty was neither an agent for Prairie Wood Products, nor did he have permission to be on the property, however, Prairie Wood Products did not wish to pursue charges. McCosker noted that the Weather Underground website showed sunrise at 6:59 a.m. on October 6.

Witty said he parked about 50 yards west of the fence, and then he crossed the fence, to set up to call coyotes, about 50 yards east of the fence, in a patch of young Ponderosa Pines, with an electronic caller, with cottontail distress sounds, to attract coyotes to his location.

He was equipped with a Savage bolt-action .223 caliber rifle, a bi-pod, a 3x9 Nikon scope, and 60-grain, lead-core bullets.

Witty sat between two small Ponderosa Pines, facing east, and activated his caller, shortly before 7 a.m., with adequate light to shoot, though, the sun had not yet risen above the hills in front of him.

After about seven or eight minutes of using the caller, he saw what he believed to be a coyote, coming through the sagebrush, from the east, and it continued to approach from that direction, moving slightly, from left to right, as viewed from Witty's perspective.

The animal then moved behind a small patch of trees, obscuring it from Witty's view, and he prepared to shoot, because he expected it to emerge from the right side of the patch. When it didn't emerge from that direction, Witty looked to the left side, and he noticed the animal, believed to still be a coyote, at a distance of about 150 yards, on the edge of the sagebrush, walking from right to left, with a slight limp.

Witty aimed and fired his rifle, and the bullet struck the animal in its hindquarters, causing it to settle on its haunches, after which, the animal was reaching around, and nipping at where the bullet had

struck. Witty's estimate of the time was about 7 a.m.

He aimed and fired a second shot, but he didn't see any indication that the bullet had hit the animal. He aimed and fired a third time, and the animal settled to the ground, having apparently been hit.

Witty waited for about five minutes, before he approached the animal.

He came to within about ten yards of the downed animal, and he noticed it was still breathing, and for the first time, that it appeared to be too large to be a coyote.

As he approached closer, he noticed that the animal had ear tags, at which point, he realized he had shot a wolf.

He fired a fourth time into the back of its neck, killing the wolf, because he didn't want it to suffer, and he believed that death was inevitable.

Witty approached the wolf, and he noticed that the length, and the thickness of its hair made it difficult to see that it had a collar, which Witty confirmed, by using the barrel of his rifle to make it more visible.

He drove back to his home in John Day, researched briefly what the possible consequences of the incident might be, and then he called the ODFW office in John Day, at about 8:15 a.m.

The call was unanswered, so he called again a short while later, this time reaching Curtis, whom Witty informed that he had shot a wolf.

The cattle in the meadow gathered around the wolf carcass, as Witty was concluding his description of events to McCosker, and McCosker placed plastic over the wolf, to protect it. McCosker took pictures of the scene, and established a GPS location, and then he removed the carcass, because the warm weather, and direct sunlight threatened potential accelerated decomposition.

He could not locate the .223 cartridge case from the final gunshot, as the cattle may have pressed it

into the soft, damp soil.

Before removing the carcass, McCosker noted that it was lying in the middle of several short sagebrush bushes, with the head aligned approximately to the north, its legs facing to the east, and its back to the west.

One of the legs was in an unnatural position, and it appeared to be broken.

Curtis confirmed that the animal was a wolf, and that it was OR-22, in a location that was 967 yards from the last signal emitted by the collar, at 6 a.m.

Witty showed McCosker where he had shot from, between two small Ponderosa Pines, about 150 yards west of the location of the carcass, and where he placed the caller, about ten yards south of the shooting position. McCosker recovered three .223 caliber casings off of the ground.

McCosker seized Witty's rifle, which was still in Witty's truck, as evidence, and Witty also provided McCosker with one round of ammunition from the same batch of ammunition he had used earlier in the morning.

Before leaving the scene, McCosker told Witty that he would be submitting a report to the Grant County District Attorney, for consideration.

McCosker reviewed the ODFW purchase history for Witty, once McCosker returned to the OSP office in John Day, and he learned that Witty did not have a valid deer tag for the Beulah hunting unit, in 2015, but that he did have a valid hunting license for 2015, which was purchased on December 26, 2014.

McCosker noted that Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 635-065-0740(1) prohibits the use of a centerfire rifle to hunt coyotes during the buck (deer) season, if the hunter does not have a buck tag. He noted that the rifle Witty had been using to hunt coyotes is a centerfire rifle.

McCosker also noted that Witty's knowledge of the

location, his statements, and the physical evidence corroborate his confession, that he had shot the wolf, while hunting coyotes.

McCosker noted that Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 498.026 prohibits the take of any threatened or endangered species, and wolves (at the time) were listed as an endangered species in Oregon.

The case was ultimately handled by the Harney County District Attorney's office, because the Grant County District Attorney's office cited a possible appearance of a conflict of interest (staff are acquainted with the Witty family). Witty was represented by John Lamborn, of Burns.

Witty was charged initially with Taking a Threatened or Endangered Species, and Hunting with a Centerfire Rifle Without a Big Game Tag, he entered a guilty plea of Taking a Threatened or Endangered Species, and was convicted solely of that charge, on February 23, 2016.

Part of his sentencing included fines and fees, in the amount of \$2,150, and the forfeiture of his rifle.

I've presented the facts, as I know them.

Details seem to indicate that Witty was no poacher, as local and national media first jumped on the case, and led one to believe, but a coyote hunter, who accidentally shot a wolf, believing it to be a coyote, and who "did the right thing," with zero indication of dishonesty, or evasiveness, when it came time to inform the authorities, something almost no one in this 26-year-old's position would have done.

In my humble opinion, the end result is a far cry from being hailed as a "victory," considering court time, the loss of thousands of dollars, the forfeiture of a rifle, and the history of wolf management in Oregon.

I wonder, if the situation arises, whether anyone will report accidentally shooting a wolf ever again.

My guess is that they'll get out the shovel instead.