

# Outdoor Rec / Local

## County

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Harvey opened the session, and Ratliff began an ODFW update, with Primus seated next to him. In referencing a letter sent from ODFW to the Board, Ratliff said that there was great fall green-up, but observations of significant deer mortality began around two to three weeks ago, whether it was deer wintering on natural forage, on hay stacks, or from being fed by landowners, for example.

In explaining this, Ratliff said, “What it boils down to is, you and I, we can go to bed with a full belly, but, if you make me stand out in the cold for two months solid with sub-zero temperatures, somebody’s going to get sick...In this winter, we had a lot of deer down low...I guarantee you, we’re going to have higher mortality rates this year...My biggest concern is, if this snow doesn’t stay warm, and we hit a cold snap, it’s just going to turn to concrete, and it’s impossible for deer to get through it all...” He said that ODFW hasn’t seen much elk mortality, throughout the County, because, “...you talk about tough; elk are really good at surviving winters.”

Harvey asked about wolf kills associated with the mortality, and Ratliff said that the wolves have been staying up high, picking out little pockets in which to winter across Northeast Oregon, where many deer and elk have chosen to winter, though there is unrelated mortality happening down below.

Ratliff said that, with a winter like the one this year, agricultural and other damage from deer and elk increases significantly, and Nichols commented about the rarity of seeing deer mortality such as during this season.

Nichols said he agreed with what ODFW said in its letter, as far as elk being able to survive from being fed, but that it’s more difficult for deer to survive, when they venture down from the mountains, to do the same thing.

“The amount of deer you’re going to affect by feeding is negligible... You’d be far better off to spend your money creating forage that exists above the snow level...” Ratliff said.

He said that that is a driving factor with a winter like this—what feed can the animals get to.

Harvey said that private landowners don’t have the capacity to create those areas, and Ratliff said that ODFW programs, including the Mule Deer Initiative (MDI), can help fund and implement those projects, and that Ratliff and others have been working on projects through different programs.

Harvey said that, while ODFW has feed sites, the feeding some citizens have been practicing this winter includes small amounts, spread over the region, and doesn’t tend to draw a large number of deer together in one place on a permanent basis.

“It’s just someone’s personal attempt to help, and, you agreed...at least, it helps some, and it’s made awareness of more need of different types of forage for the future...” he said, and he pointed out that there would probably be more public support for feeding projects in the near future. “That is totally correct; that awareness is what really drives the forces of creating better habitat...” Ratliff said.

Ratliff said that, with easier winters, “We forget...” to prepare for the harsher ones by pursuing projects and solutions, and Harvey said, “That’s where we count on you to design programs that we can be a part of now, for the upcoming future-education (Harvey noted that ODFW experiences budget issues, and tough decisions, too).” Ratliff agreed and he said that his door is always open, and working with landowners to mitigate for habitat loss is very important.

Harvey asked about upland game birds, and Ratliff said that spring hatch is what really drives the population, which may be difficult to accept, since increased mortality is noted during harsh winters. He noted the resiliency of birds, and he said that, looking at chukar mortal-

ity graphs for the County, one can see that, following harsh winters, there is a “boom” sometimes, with the population, but in general, the population does recover (this was covered in more detail, in the Friday, January 13, 2017 issue of *The Baker County Press*).

Nichols asked about the deer feeding issue, and the related damage (this topic was covered in more detail, in the Friday, January 27, 2017 issue of *The Baker County Press*), and Ratliff said that he’d spoken with landowners, and that sites were moved, eliminating most of the resulting damage.

He said, though, that the elk, for example, will return next winter to the same spots, because they’d been fed there this season, and they’re aware of the “easy meal.”

Ballard said that she remembered a fish tagging program last year in Phillips Reservoir, and she asked Ratliff whether this program will continue this year.

He said that it will, and he explained the process, including the possible future use of cameras to gauge angler numbers, to reduce budget costs. Nichols expressed disappointment at the amount of trash that’s left by citizens, in fishing spots and in other places, and he asked Ratliff about the possibility of using cameras to assist with enforcing laws.

Ratliff, who said that people leaving trash behind is one of his pet peeves, said that, though it’s difficult to identify offenders with cameras sometimes, he’ll look into that idea.

On the agenda also was the topic of Commissioner response, during an emergency, such as summer wildfires. Harvey noted that, there isn’t really a written policy to address who would represent the County, in the case of the Chair’s absence.

Harvey and Nichols understood that, in the case of Harvey’s absence, Bennett would take his place, and, in the case of both Harvey’s and Bennett’s absences, Nichols would take over. Harvey said that he would speak to County Emergency Manager Jason Yencopal, and Yencopal

could assist with forming a draft of the policy.

Another item was a review of the Wednesday, February 1, 2017 meeting regarding the City/County Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement For Dispatch And Record Keeping Services, which has been a continuing discussion, between Baker City Council, and the County Commission Board, as the two entities have yet to resolve all issues, and to finalize the agreement.

The Board also discussed County budget concerns, including potential cuts and major reductions in spending.

Nichols said that, if this topic is discussed with Department heads, and information is exchanged on a regular basis, the heads will be more informed and prepared for possible cuts, and in turn, the Board will be the same.

Bennett noted that he hopes community groups that rely on the County will continue to read about issues in local media, and begin to look for ways of raising funds, or reducing programs.

The last item, brought up by Bennett, is the continuing issue of the Board receiving documents for County Commission sessions too late to properly prepare for decisions associated with those documents.

In some cases, he said, the Board has received documents on the day of the session, even during the session, without a chance to speak with associated persons, and to make a more informed decision.

Bennett said that this isn’t Martin’s fault, but rather, whoever is originally submitting the document, and an improvement in the process would make Martin’s work more streamlined.

He said there should be an executive summary, similar to a staff report, and that documents should be in no later than the Monday of the week before the session. He said that there should be a written policy in the future addressing this issue, and Martin said that she could form a draft of that.

## Reward increased for Wallowa moose poacher

The OSP Fish & Wildlife Division is asking for the public’s help to identify the person(s) responsible for the unlawful killing of a cow moose in Wallowa County. The Oregon Hunter’s Association has increased the reward to \$6,250 for information leading to an arrest or citation in this case. The reward is offered by the Oregon Hunters Association Turn-In-Poacher (TIP) program.

On December 2, 2016, OSP was notified of one dead cow moose approximately 20 yards off of Coal Docks Road, which is located northwest of Wallowa in Wallowa County. OSP Fish and Wildlife Troopers responded and found a cow moose had been shot and some of the meat left to waste. The subsequent investigation revealed the moose was most likely shot in the late evening hours of December 1, 2016 or early morning hours of December 2, 2016. Evidence was collected at the scene.

There are no lawful hunts that allow the harvesting of moose in Oregon.

Anyone with information regarding this case is asked to contact OSP Senior Trooper Brian Miller through the TIP hotline at 1-800-452-7888 or email at Brian.Miller@state.or.us.

The T.I.P. reward is paid for by the Oregon Hunter’s Association, for information leading to the issuance of a citation to a person(s), or an arrest made of a person(s) for illegal possession, killing, or taking of bighorn sheep, mountain goat, moose, elk, deer, antelope, bear, cougar, wolf, furbearers and/or upland game birds and water fowl. T.I.P. rewards can also be paid for the illegal taking, netting, snagging, and/or dynamiting of game fish, and/or shell fish, and for the destruction of habitat.

In addition rewards may be paid for information leading to the issuance of a citation to a person(s), or an arrest made of a person(s) who have illegally obtained Oregon hunting/angling license or tags. People who “work” the system and falsely apply for resident license or tags are not legally hunting or angling and are considered poachers.

Rewards:  
Bighorn sheep, mountain goat, moose \$1,000  
Elk, deer, antelope \$500  
Bear, cougar, wolf \$300  
Habitat destruction \$300  
Illegally obtaining Oregon hunting or angling license or tags \$200  
Game fish, shell fish \$100  
Upland birds, waterfowl \$100  
Furbearers \$100

## House’s attic fire contained quickly



Photo Courtesy of Baker Fire & Rescue.

Firefighters worked Wednesday morning on a house fire near South Baker School.

Wednesday at 7:16 a.m., Baker City Fire Department and Baker Rural Fire Department firefighters responded to a house fire at 1304 3rd St. in Baker City, near South Baker School. They found a fire burning in the attic of the two-story home.

It took firefighters about 30 minutes to extinguish the fire. The fire needed extensive overhaul requiring crews to climb ladders and remove sections of the roof to ensure the fire was out. Firefighters saved two cats and several birds.

Bus delivery and student entrance to the school were delayed.

Disaster responders with the local American Red Cross responded as well. The fire affected five people, including three adults, two children and pets. The Red Cross provided resources to help address the immediate basic needs of those affected such as temporary housing, food, clothing, comfort kits with toiletry items, information about recovery services, and health and mental health services.

## BLM to hold sage-grouse open houses

The Bureau of Land Management today announced it will be holding eight public open houses throughout the West in February to gather input on the agency’s proposal to withdraw a subset of lands that are sage-grouse strongholds from future mining claims. This is the next step in a process that started in September 2015 with the efforts of the BLM and its state and federal partners to prevent the Greater Sage-Grouse from being listed under the Endangered Species Act. The nearest meeting is February 24 at the Best Western Vista Inn, 2645 W Airport Way, Boise.

## Forestry cost-share meeting scheduled

A Cost Share Programs for Family Forestland Owners meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 16 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the OSU Extension Service 2600 East Street, Baker City.

Jana Peterson, Field Forester for the Oregon Department of Forestry, will provide an overview of the cost share programs that are available for fam-

ily forestland owners in 2017, what they can be used for and how landowners can apply.

Jana will highlight the “new” cost share model. In the past, many cost share programs had relatively small amounts of money available and focused on smaller parcels of land (150-300 acres), limiting their overall impact.

Over the last 5 years

however, agencies have shifted towards “landscape scale” projects that seek to treat significant portions of both private and public lands within a watershed, such as the East Face of the Elkhorns project.

The advantage of this approach is that by leveraging the technical and financial resources and coordinating activities on adjacent public and private

lands, conservation work by Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest Service will be more efficient and effective.

Watersheds can now be better protected from and resilient to the negative impacts of the uncharacteristic, catastrophic type wildfires such as seen the last few years.

## BLM, USFS announce 2017 grazing fee

The Federal grazing fee for 2017 will be \$1.87 per animal unit month (AUM) for public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management and \$1.87 per head month (HM) for lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The 2016 public land grazing fee was \$2.11.

An AUM or HM—treated as equivalent measures for fee purposes—is the use of public lands by one cow and her calf, one horse, or five sheep or goats for a month. The newly calculated graz-

ing fee, determined by a congressional formula and effective on March 1, applies to nearly 18,000 grazing permits and leases administered by the BLM and nearly 6,500 permits administered by the Forest Service.

The formula used for calculating the grazing fee, which was established by Congress in the 1978 Public Rangelands Improvement Act, has continued under a presidential Executive Order issued in 1986. Under that order, the grazing fee cannot fall below

\$1.35 per AUM, and any increase or decrease cannot exceed 25 percent of the previous year’s level.

The annually determined grazing fee is computed by using a 1966 base value of \$1.23 per AUM/HM for livestock grazing on public lands in Western states. The figure is then calculated according to three factors: current private grazing land lease rates, beef cattle prices, and the cost of livestock production. In effect, the fee rises, falls, or stays the same based on market conditions, with

livestock operators paying more when conditions are better and less when conditions have declined.

The 2017 grazing fee of \$1.87 per AUM/HM applies to 16 Western states on public lands administered by the BLM and the Forest Service. The states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.