

# Local

## Wolf Depredation: Producers may do their own range riding

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The Baker County Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee met on Tuesday, July 25, 2017, 3 p.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, to discuss implementation of a reimbursement program this year, which would pay participating livestock producers up to 50% of the costs associated with employing their own Range Rider, in the continuing battle to curtail wolf depredation in the region.

Present were committee chair and Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett, committee members Tom Van Diepen and Curt Jacobs, Baker County Commission Executive Assistant Heidi Martin, Chad Del Curto, George Rollins, Fred Phillips, and Deven Thompson.

Bennett opened the meeting, and explained that the Baker County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), which has historically handled recruitment and contract of a Range Rider in the past, was unable to work out the details for that position this year, which prompted the idea of producers using their own riders (no employees or family members) to track and deter wolves.

The producers would be reimbursed, on a first-come, first-served basis, for payments made to the riders, up to the limit of available funding.

Bennett said, "The goal...is to have somebody out there with a set of eyes on the ground..." in an efficient way, but if the County takes over the contract for a rider, "We'll eat up all the money right away, because of our insurance, and all of our policies...this way, at least, we can give an opportunity..." for producers (Phillips, Jacobs, Del Curto, Rollins, and Thompson, in this case) to participate in the program, and to be at least partially compensated for their efforts.

Rollins asked if the riders will be allowed to use the County-owned or SWCD-owned radio receivers, which pick up wolf radio collar location signals, and Bennett said yes, if the producers wish to use that tool (the County owns two, and SWCD owns one).

Bennett asked if the producers would consider participating in the program, and generally, the answer was yes, and he asked Jacobs, who raises sheep, what methods he currently uses to deter wolves. Jacobs said he uses an elec-



Tom Van Diepen (left) and Mark Bennett with a hand-held antenna.

trified net fence, several feet high, "that's guaranteed to stop a grizzly," that's relocated every four days. Bennett, speaking of tailoring compensation on a case-by-case basis, said, "Maybe we could, in your case, absorb some of that cost."

Jacobs said, "I was hoping Union County or Umatilla County would have, but I haven't gotten any money from them, either," though he emphasized that other producers have more issues to deal with than he does.

Bennett said the County has bought enough fladry (line mounted at the top of a fence, with colored strips of fabric or flags that flap in the breeze) that "you could run a line from here to Halfway." Jacobs said he has an extra roll, if the County wants it.

Rollins asked, "So, (from the rider) you want documents, tracks, pictures—anything you can get?" Martin said, "There's a map attached... You can use this as a general idea of where he rode..." referring to copies of an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) State Area Of Known Wolf Activity (AKWA) map she provided to the producers, attached to informational sheets to be filled out, regarding pastures and herds. She said, "Any documentation you have..." that would help reach the goal, such as enlarging areas of the maps to indicate with greater accuracy where riders have been, what signs of wolves there were, etc.

Bennett, voicing praise for Martin and her efforts with the program, and wanting to lessen her workload, said that pay-

ments from the County to the producers would be made once, and not on a continuous basis throughout the season.

Phillips said, "I just question the effectiveness of it," referring to the riding, as a means to deter wolves, Bennett said he's not sure, either, and others added their opinions about the difficulties involved.

The subject of how many radio-collared wolves are in Baker County came up—only three, according to ODFW, which the committee disbelieves. Bennett said, "It doesn't matter—we don't seem to be making a lot of headway on that discussion."

Bennett, referring to the copies Martin provided, said that the State requires more detailed information for submitted applications for compensation for livestock losses, including the number of head of cattle turned out versus the number collected, the cattle's status, methods used to deter wolves, and range riding activity.

Van Diepen said, "The more stuff you can give us, the easier it is to convince..." the State of the validity of the losses claimed due to wolf depredation.

Van Diepen said that this was not fully accomplished for last year's losses.

In response to a question from Rollins about whether it matters where cattle are located, as far as potential compensation for losses, when they're not on National Forest land, Martin said, "If it's a confirmed depredation, it doesn't matter if it's in an area of known wolf activity or not...But, if you're missing cattle, it has to be in an

area of known wolf activity, to be compensated."

Bennett said that a representative from Robbins Farm Equipment saw benefits to the committee using Robbins' drone and had spoken to Bennett about it, but that there are issues to consider, such as with privacy, and there would still need to be someone monitoring the use of the drone.

Bennett mentioned the radio receivers again, and he asked the producers about using them, to which they answered yes, so Bennett and Martin left the meeting, and returned with the two receivers owned by the County. Bennett displayed one of the receivers, a Communications Specialists, Inc. VHF (very high frequency) model, and its various accessories, including a hand-held, direction-finding antenna he assembled for the group to see, as he demonstrated its basic operation. The radios were issued to the producers, and Bennett asked them to speak with Baker District ODFW Wildlife Biologist Brian Radliff, or Assistant Wildlife Biologist Justin Primus, for more instructions on the receivers' operation.

Bennett reminded the producers of the importance of contacting him if they suspect or see obvious depredation due to wolves, and he and Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash would be present as soon as possible to investigate the scene.

Bennett said, in reference to showcasing the issues with wolves, "The more we can expose—call the press and everybody else, get as much as we can, and start to push back."

## Local DMV to close for floor replacement

The Baker City DMV will close the week of Aug. 7-11 to replace carpet and front lobby tile. This is the office's first floor covering replacement since DMV moved to the location in 2001.

The office, located at 3370 10th St. Suite A, will close at 5 p.m. Friday, Aug. 4, and reopen at 9 a.m. Monday, Aug. 14. Office hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday with a midday closure from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

If you need to visit a DMV in person during the Baker City office closure, the nearest DMV offices are in La Grande and Ontario. Wait times for those offices are posted at OregonDMV.com.

If your driver license, instruction permit or identification card is expiring in August, you may want to go to DMV well before the Aug. 21 solar eclipse.

An estimated one million people are expected to visit the zone of totality in Oregon, and the expected traffic will slow travel for everyone – for days before and after the event. DMV plans to be open, but some offices may open late or not at all if staff cannot reach them due to traffic.

ODOT advises visitors and residents to arrive early, stay put and leave late: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/Pages/Eclipse.aspx>

Any time you need to visit a DMV office, first check OregonDMV.com to find office hours and locations, and to make sure you have everything you need before your visit. You also can do some DMV business from home at OregonDMV.com.

You can renew your vehicle registration, file a change of address or file notice of the sale of your vehicle online without getting in line at an office.

## County to test notification system

Baker County will be conducting a test of its mass notification system. Currently this system is used to notify the public of emergency situations happening in your area. The test will occur sometime during the week of July 31st through the August 4th and between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

The notification will say: "This is a test of Baker County's mass notification system. This is only a test."

No response or action from you will be necessary upon receiving the test notification. In the event that an actual emergency occurs during this week the notification will be different and contain information relating to the emergency.

## Chinook fishery to close July 30

The spring Chinook fishery on the Snake River below Hells Canyon Dam will close at sundown (8:18 p.m.) on Sunday, July 30.

Idaho Fish and Game, who monitors the Snake River fishery for both states, noted that angler interest and catch rates have dropped dramatically during the past two weeks. Last week, they documented only a few people fishing and an estimated harvest of two Chinook salmon.

The Snake River fishery stood out as a highlight in an otherwise poor year for salmon fishing opportunities in Oregon's Snake River basin. "Despite a very low return, salmon fishing below Hells Canyon Dam has offered some of the best opportunity in the Snake River basin this season," said Jeff Yanke, District Fish Biologist in Enterprise. "During the past month catch rates were on par, or better than even the most abundant return years."

The closure on the Snake is concurrent with fishery closures ordered by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

## Senior pass rates increase

On August 28, 2017 the price of the America the Beautiful—The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Senior Pass will increase from \$10 to \$80 as result of the National Park Service Centennial Act P.L. 114-289.

The National Park Service Centennial Act raised the price of the senior pass (currently \$10) so that it is on par with the cost of a regular annual pass (currently \$80). It also authorizes a \$20 annual pass for senior citizens. Increasing the onetime cost for those 62 and older to the current level of the annual pass is a reasonable way to help insure our parks and federal recreation areas will remain available for future generations. As stewards, the BLM manages public lands for the benefit of current and future generations, supporting conservation.

Senior passes purchased before August 28 are still good for life. The current \$10 Senior Pass will continue to be sold until the \$80 senior pass is implemented August 28.

## Wolf injures calf in Wallowa Co.

On July 21, a livestock producer was moving cattle and noticed injuries on the hindquarters of a 250 lb. calf. The cow and calf were removed from the public land grazing allotment in the Harl Butte area and hauled to the home ranch.

Wolf depredation was suspected and ODFW examined the calf the following morning. The calf was alert and responsive; the injuries were estimated

to be seven days old.

Bite wounds were found on the right flank and both hindquarters above the hocks. Exposed tissue damage was evident on the left hind leg. These injuries are clear indicators of predator attack.

The injured calf had an open wound four inches long and three inches wide with deeply damaged muscle tissue on the posterior medial portion of the hind left leg above the

hock. There were multiple bite scrapes (up to 3/8 inch wide and 5 inches long) above the hocks on both legs. There were bite scrapes and an open wound (1 by 1/2 inch) on the right flank. The size, location, and direction of the bite scrapes and location of the tissue damage on both hindquarters are consistent with wolf attack points.

The calf's exact location at the time of injury is unknown. GPS radio-collar

data shows wolf OR50 was within this grazing pasture near the time the calf was estimated injured.

The size, directionality, and location of the bite marks, coupled with the severity of tissue damage and location of open wounds, are consistent with wolf depredation. This evidence is adequate to confirm the injuries as wolf depredation attributed to a wolf or wolves of the Harl Butte Pack.