

# Business / Agriculture

## Citizens upset over BMTD bill

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Board members approved to refund property owners who requested exemption.

Wallender explained that there needs to be an investigation into a possible glitch between the interaction with Chaves' database and the Assessor's Office to see why charges are on people's property taxes when they are not in the database for the district. They are not sure what has caused the problem and are working to find a solution so it does not happen again.

"If everything works right, everything has to work right, we send out our letter every year, people send them back saying yay or nay, every-

thing should work right. It didn't this year," explained Wood. "All we can do is say we're trying, we're trying very hard. And we're going to be working with Mr. Savage, who has a great department. We'll be working with Alex; he's a great employee. We don't want to have issues like this because it doesn't do us any good."

Kerry Savage explained that the problem is not from Chaves or the Baker County Assessor's Office, saying it has to be somewhere internally. He explained that it came from whatever was reported from the District to his office.

Those attending also voiced concerns regarding being told their letters had not been received.

Wallender explained that

McHaddad had stepped into a position that had been neglected and his predecessor had not collected any mail that was sent to the district and did not process letters given to the district requesting exemption.

"I think everyone should rest assured that the Board of Directors, with Alex's help, is going to make improvement," stated Wallender.

According to the board meeting packet, "The District's engineering services contractor, Mr. Rob Stilson, will complete the channel repack process by November 27th. At present he is unable to provide a timeline for the completion process to the Board. Hatfield & Dawson have provided valuable services to the District in finding

new channel space."

The Board approved the first reading of the Board Policies regarding the collection of Service Charge Fees for property entirely surrounded by the district. The ORS 354.690 authorizes translator districts to collect service charge fees from the owners of properties entirely surrounded by the district.

The proposed policies regarding the collection of service charge fees for property entirely surrounded by the district were drafted by staff and reviewed by council. They are available on the BMTD website.

They received the resignation of Board members Anna and Mike Dean.

Their next meeting will be December 5th at 12:00 p.m. in La Grande.

## Sage-grouse study focuses on raven predation

### • ASSISTANT PROFESSOR GIVES INTERVIEW

BY TODD ARRIOLA  
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This summer, Oregon State University Assistant Professor Of Shrub-Steppe Wildlife Habitat Ecology, Jonathan Dinkins, teamed with others to begin a multi-year project that includes Baker County, to study the decline in Greater Sage-Grouse numbers, with a focus on raven predation.

Dinkins said, "This study, it came together really quickly," last fall, and involves numerous stakeholders, including the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Years ago, the Local Implementation Team (LIT), basically, a "sage grouse working group," which includes private parties, livestock groups, and hunters, developed a sage grouse conservation plan, for the Baker sage grouse pack, according to Dinkins, but, because of the serious decline in numbers recently—from between 2,000 and 2,500 males, to between 100 and 110—the LIT was recruited to develop another one.

Dinkins said, "The BLM did their threat assessment—of what threats there are to the sage grouse pack, the priority areas...there in Baker...And then, because of a hard BLM trigger, we basically have to up our conservation action."

The study will include analyses of potential threats to the sage grouse, according to Dinkins, which includes weeds, fire, fragmentation from roads, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, etc. "All of those potentials are on that list, and more, so, it's very inclusive," he said.

He said that not many of the typical threats for sage grouse have changed, since the pack was around 2,000 to 2,500 males, and, now that the number is so low, nobody's bothered to ask, "Why is this occurring with what doesn't seem to

be a big habitat change?

I mean, there have been habitat changes, but, there's no one factor that everybody can point their finger at."

Dinkins thinks that there has been an increase in raven abundance (numbers), but, unfortunately, there is no reference here—no pre-data—for that. People suggest that the issue may be ravens, and Dinkins and others, including livestock producers, have seen ravens, their eggs, and egg shell remains, but, "This is all anecdotal—that could have been happening for 50 years, and was never a problem."

ODFW Sage Grouse Conservation Coordinator Lee Foster contacted Dinkins last fall about the study, because, while Dinkins is new to Oregon, as a faculty member of Oregon State University (OSU), his PhD research at Utah State University involved the study of sage grouse, raven, and raptor prey interaction, in Southern

Wyoming.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services, which lethally removed ravens from some of those Wyoming project sites, asked Dinkins what assessment would be needed for ODFW and USFWS to be able to lethally remove ravens, if considered an appropriate response, and that's when Dinkins considered a Before After Control Intervention (BACI)-style study. "It's really the best way to look at these types of resources—not removing ravens right now, until you have the status quo of what's going on in Baker," he said.

This summer, Dinkins and his team, which includes graduate students, began collecting data on ravens, and while that's the study's focus, "...the lab is taking a broader context, and saying, 'Okay, we're going to start to account for many of these other variables.' Overall, the bigger study design is, if you remove

ravens, and the sage grouse increase, and we're only looking at Baker, the problem you have is that people say, 'Well, was it just the weather that improved, or, some other factor, that has nothing to do with ravens, and, it so happens that sage grouse were increasing anyway?'"

Addressing that issue, Dinkins said, involves having reference study areas, in addition to the Baker pack. They include Bully Creek, and Crowley, two sage grouse priority areas of conservation, north and south of Highway 20. Next year, there may be an additional area, in Jordan Valley.

Dinkins said that OSU will monitor and research what sage grouse management is occurring, but OSU won't be involved with the lethal removal of ravens.

SEE SAGE GROUSE PAGE 5

### — WEEKLY HAY REPORT —

Friday, November 3, 2017 — Eastern Oregon

Prices trended generally steady in a limited test. Retail/Stable type hay remains the largest demanded hay. Many hay producers have sold out for the year.

**Tons Price Range Wtd Avg**

Alfalfa Large Square Premium  
350 175.00-175.00 175.00

Barley Large Square Good / Premium  
70 115.00-115.00 115.00

USDA Market News Service—AMS.USDA.gov

### — CATTLE MARKET REPORT —

Wednesday, November 1, 2017  
Vale, Oregon

Cattle sold through the auction: 1,977

#### Steer Calves

300-400# Bulk 172.00-195.00 Top 200.00  
400-500# Bulk 162.00-194.00 Top 199.50  
500-600# Bulk 132.00-160.00 Top 162.25

#### Heifer Calves

300-400# Bulk 130.00-149.00 Top 153.00  
400-500# Bulk 125.00-146.00 Top 149  
500-600# Bulk 120.00-145.00 Top 149.25

#### Yearling Steers

600-700# Bulk 131.00-155.00 Top 157.25  
700-800# Bulk 125.00-154.00 Top 157.25  
800-900# Bulk 122.00-138.00 Top 142.50  
900-1,000# Bulk 120.00-128.00 Top 133.00

#### Yearling Heifers

600-700# Bulk 130.00-145.00 Top 148.00  
700-800# Bulk 128.00-136.00 Top 138.50  
800-900# Bulk 115.00-134.00 Top 137.50  
900-1,000# Bulk 106.00-119.00 Top 124.00

Thin Shelly Cows 42.00 - 55.00  
Butcher Cows 55.00 - 65.00  
Butcher Bulls 65.00 - 77.00  
Stock Cows N/A  
Younger Hfrts. 75.00 - 100.00  
Stock Cows Young - N/A  
**ProducersLivestock.com**  
541-473-3136

### — LOG PRICE REPORT —

Prices are based on the majority of saw mills in Northeastern Oregon and Central Idaho. The prices listed below are a composite prices of various sawmills willing to visit with me about this topic.

Ponderosa Pine—small diameter class 8-11 inches diameter class \$250 per mbf. Only one sawmill was willing to buy small diameter pine at this time.

Ponderosa Pine—medium diameter class 12-17 inches diameter class \$300 to \$350 per mbf

Ponderosa Pine-large diameter class 18 plus inches diameter class \$380 to \$410 per mbf

The Pine prices are still approximately \$40 per mbf below average lumber/log market due to 2017 fire salvage

Doug Fir & Western Larch—\$380 to \$420 per mbf. Normal prices typically ranged between \$425 to \$475 per mbf.

White Fir—\$300 per mbf. Normal prices typically ranged between \$340 to \$360 per mbf.

Engelmann Spruce—\$350 at one Idaho sawmill, other sawmills including with White fir prices.

In general, the log prices still impacted from 2015 fire season and fire salvage that resulted. Sawmills are starting to get log yard inventory in line with sawmill production needs. With a new Administration as of 1/20/2017, a more normal economic environment should result and hopefully a more healthy housing situation will result in a better climate for Northeast Oregon Sawmill and private forest land-owners.

Courtesy of Arvid Andersen,  
Andersen Forestry Consulting

### — PRECIOUS METALS REPORT —

**Price per ounce, USD**

**Gold:** \$1,281.70

**Silver:** \$17.40

**Platinum:** \$930.35

**Palladium:** \$1017.49

Bloomberg.com

### — AG COMMODITIES —

**Corn:** \$348.25/bu/USD

**Wheat:** \$426.75/bu/USD

**Soybeans:** \$998.50/bu/USD

**Oats:** \$269.50 bu/USD

**Rough Rice:** \$11.41/cwt/USD

**Canola:** \$520.80 CAD/mwt

**Live Cattle:** \$122.93/lb./USD

**Feeder Cattle:** \$156.90/lb./USD

**Lean Hogs:** \$63.53/lb./USD

Bloomberg.com

Saint Alphonsus Foundation—Baker City Invites you to . . .

## Festival of Trees 2017

### Preview Among The Trees

Thursday, November 30, 2017

6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$15 per person

Hors d'oeuvres

No-host Bar

Silent Auction

### Gala

Friday, December 1, 2017

5:30 p.m.—11:00 p.m.

Cocktails 5:30 p.m. ~ Dinner 6:30 p.m.

Tickets: \$55 per person

Buffet Sit Down Dinner

No-host Bar

Silent & Live Auction

Following the auction, dance to the live music of "Colorblind"

Events are held at the Baker County Event Center  
2600 East Street  
Baker City, Oregon

☞ Tickets Available at Betty's Books,  
The Sycamore Tree and  
Saint Alphonsus Medical Center—Baker City

### Family Day—Saturday, December 2, 2017

Admission: Can of Food/Unwrapped Toy

Viewing of the Trees

"Make It, Take It" ~ Sponsored by Crossroads Art Center

Photos with Santa ~ Sponsored by Baker City Kiwanis

For more information contact  
Laura Huggins at 541-524-7732



BAKER CITY