

REHAB: Ultimate cost is still unknown

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all went up in flames, along with the dried grass and sagebrush. That's forced birds and mammals to take up asylum in other nearby wildlife areas, Marvin said, such as the Umatilla or Cold Springs refuges near Hermiston. Because Coyote Springs is so small, ODFW does not expect any problems for

farmers dealing with a huge influx of wildlife. "We're talking about a pretty small parcel. The area doesn't hold that many animals," Marvin said. Coyote Springs remains open to the public, though with upland bird and waterfowl hunting seasons on the horizon, Marvin said hunters might have better luck trying elsewhere.

"Your success will likely be lower," he said. "It's value for wildlife habitat has been diminished until it can start to recover." Marvin is not sure how much money it will ultimately cost to rehabilitate Coyote Springs. In the meantime, not everything about the fire is bad; the damaged trees could actually provide some refuge

for other species of birds like woodpeckers, he said, and burned up material does introduce nutrients back into the ground. "Fire definitely has a place on the landscape," he said. "It does play a beneficial role." *Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.*

ELGIN: Fire 5% contained

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shifted their to focus to stop the fire's spread east along Middle Ridge. The blaze is just 5 percent contained, and the cause remains under investigation. Highway 204 remains open, though travelers can expect delays between miles 32 and 36 as pilot cars steer traffic around firefighting equipment. The Oregon Department of Transportation has advised travelers to consider alternative routes. Numerous forest roads have also been closed for public and firefighter safety.

"We're always concerned with protecting private land," Arnoldus said. "I think we've gained a lot of ground in the past day or so." Portions of the fire are located in steep terrain and heavy timber, Arnoldus said, which makes it difficult for ground resources to access. Air tankers and helicopters dropped water and fire retardant Monday to help slow its movement. The fire is burning mostly on the national forest, but has crossed into some adjacent private land. Fish habitat is also threatened.

Fire information officer Kathy Arnoldus said the fire is still burning actively, though cooler weather is expected to help firefighters gain the upper hand. Engines from Union County fire departments have been assigned to protect structures, property and livestock.

For more information about the fire, including road closures, visit www.bluemountainfireinfo.org. The Umatilla National Forest information hotline can be reached at 1-877-958-9663, and the Union County Emergency Center at 541-963-1049.

NIGHT OUT: Connections reduce crime



Staff photo by Phil Wright
Richard "The Reptile Man" Richey of Colton draps a young reticulated python around the neck of a volunteer Tuesday evening during National Night Out at the Pendleton Family Aquatic Center.

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South said the neighbors all keep an eye on the neighborhood, which makes it a better and safer place to live. Neighbor Virginia Hoyer agreed. She said neighbors will watch other people's houses when they travel and pick up newspapers so nobody knows they are gone. "I have never seen any (crime) happen in the 15 years I have lived here in this neighborhood," she said. "Nobody has ever hurt anybody. Nobody has ever broken into a house. And that's why I like it."

Hoye said the community held a block party about 14 years ago, but many of the residents have since moved. She said the party this year provided a great opportunity for the neighbors to interact. Hannah Garver said the neighborhood is nice because people do look out for their neighbors. "We kind of keep an eye on everything for the most part," she said. "I think because of the fact that we are out so much and we do watch, I haven't heard of anything really bad (happening here). I think just making yourself present kind of helps reduce a lot of that too."

MARIJUANA: Committee doubts OHA's abilities

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failed by at least 55 percent. Umatilla County voters trounced Measure 91 by almost 63 percent. Olsen said Umatilla is one of 12 counties that qualify. HB 3400 specifies six categories of marijuana businesses, he said, and the board can vote to ban all, some or just one sort. The draft of the county ordinance shows the ban would cover all six: medical marijuana processing sites, medical marijuana dispen-

saries, retail marijuana producers, retail marijuana processors, retail marijuana wholesalers and retail marijuana retailers. A memo from Mabbott to the board explained the committee found the Oregon Health Authority lacks the ability to regulate medicinal pot, which the state agency oversees. The county committee would reconsider its stance in the future, if the state health agency shows it can handle the job to "address local

concerns about exposure to youth, leakage to the black market, inadequate monitoring, inadequate testing, changes to federal laws" and so on. And Umatilla County, she continued, also "lacks the resources to develop and implement rules and regulations for medical marijuana dispensaries that satisfy committee members." Banning recreational pot also made sense, she stated, given how county voters said no to Measure 91.

The marijuana committee also is recommending the board adopt changes to the county's land use laws to regulate pot businesses. In other business Wednesday, the county board will consider: •A plan from the election department to install ballot drop boxes in every city with a population of at least 1,000 within the county; •And allowing all-terrain vehicles on certain county roads.

FORESTS: Fire danger 'extreme'

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only if: they are placed in the center of an area at least 10 feet in diameter and cleared of all flammable material; placed in the bed of a pickup truck cleared of all flammable material; or factory installed in a recreational vehicle, with the exhaust discharged in the center of an area at least 10 feet in diameter and cleared of all flammable material. Smoking is allowed only in enclosed vehicles, buildings and developed recreation sites, or when stopped in an area cleared of flammable material. The restrictions come as the fire danger rating has been bumped to extreme, and a 1,500-acre fire threatens homes and property on the Umatilla National Forest

near Elgin. "The forest vegetation has cured to a highly flammable condition and our upper elevations are much drier than usual due to the lack of winter snowpack," said Brian Goff, fire staff officer for the forest. "Recent fires in the area have spread rapidly and are requiring considerable effort to contain." For more information and a list of designated recreation areas where campfires are permitted, the Umatilla National Forest can be reached at 541-278-3716. The Malheur National Forest can be reached at 541-575-3000. The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest can be reached in La Grande at 541-962-8679, in Joseph at 541-426-5552, or in Baker City at 541-523-1234.

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