

# Bill to ratify wolf delisting slated for Thursday hearing

By **GEORGE PLAGEN**  
East Oregonian



Hansell

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— **Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena**

A bill that would ratify the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission's decision to remove gray wolves from the state endangered species list is up for debate in Salem.

Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, and Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, initially submitted slightly different versions of the bill in both the House and Senate, asking for the legislature to back up last fall's controversial wolf delisting.

HB 4040 will receive a hearing Thursday in the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, part of the short legislative session that kicked off Monday. This comes as environmental groups filed a lawsuit in December to keep wolves endangered in Oregon.

Most of Oregon's 81 documented wolves are concentrated in Hansell's and Barreto's districts in the northeast corner of the state. Local ranchers have argued for years they should be able to kill wolves that make a habit of preying on their sheep and cattle.

Delisting does not immediately change how wolves are managed in Oregon. The

state's wolf conservation plan still prohibits killing wolves except under very specific circumstances. Wolves also remain federally listed as endangered in western Oregon.

Oregon's wolf plan — which was developed in 2005 and amended to include a compromise between cattlemen and conservationists in 2013 — stipulated wolves could be delisted after establishing four breeding pairs for three consecutive years. That benchmark was reached for the first time last year.

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife recommended delisting, and the commission followed suit in November. By ratifying the decision, Hansell said the legislature can help shore up ODFW's defense against a new legal challenge.

"If someone were to argue

ODFW did not follow what the legislature asked them to do, this type of action would help them diffuse that particular argument," Hansell said.

Hansell further criticized the environmental groups that have already filed suit, saying they are unwilling to follow a plan that they themselves helped create.

"It's frustrating to reach out and try to include everybody, and then when the state agency uses the best science and justification, support for the plan suddenly vanishes and we have a lawsuit," Hansell said.

However, groups like Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands and the Center for Biological Diversity disagree that ODFW used the best science in delisting wolves. They contend the agency willfully ignored evidence from independent experts who say the species is far from recov-

ered. Rob Klavins, northeast Oregon field director for Oregon Wild, said that by reaching Phase II of the wolf plan, ODFW was still legally obligated to use the best available science in recommending whether to delist wolves. They did not do that, he said.

"The concern is the state did their own analysis with what appears to be a pre-determined outcome," Klavins said. "The state ignored the best possible science. In ignoring the best possible science, they broke the law."

Asking the legislature to ratify the decision is an unprecedented and concerning move, Klavins added. Conservationists have not asked for an injunction while a legal review is underway, he said.

"This is simply piling on," Klavins said.

The bill does not address any other legitimate concerns regarding wolf management, Klavins said.

A five-year review of the ODFW wolf plan is expected later this year, he said.

Contact George Plagen at [gplagen@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplagen@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0825.

## PENDLETON

# Councilman Young won't seek reelection

Only one incumbent commits to running

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
East Oregonian

Of the five people who won Pendleton City Council seats in 2012, only one is running again.

Ward 3 Councilor Tom Young announced on Facebook late Monday night that he would not be seeking a second term.

In his post, Young cited several reasons for his decision not to run in 2016.

Elaborating on these reasons in an interview, Young said his employer, Keystone RV Co., has doubled in size in recent years.

The workload from his job as Keystone's finance manager and his regular duties as a city councilor meant more late nights for Young, something the 67-year-old found increasingly difficult to endure.

Young also intends to retire in the next few years and has long planned to travel the country and visit family and friends, which include five children, 13 grandchildren and one great-grandchild in Michigan and Indiana.

Young said it would be unfair to ask voters to elect him to another four-year term, only to quit midway through for his travels.

Those factors aside, Young said the tipping point was Mayor Phillip Houk's announcement that he wouldn't seek a fourth term and leave the city council after 2016, with whom he had a strong rapport and comfort level.

Young was appointed by the council to the finish Dan Ceniga's term in 2011 and ran unopposed on his way to winning a full term in 2012.

Young's ward covers the southern portion of town, including the Southgate, Tutuilla Road and McKay Creek areas.

Ward 1 Councilor Becky Marks, 67, will be the lone representative from the current set of incumbents to seek another term, filing her paperwork with the city Friday.

While running for a second term four years ago, Marks said she hadn't intended to run again, but the initial lack of interest from community members for the seat changed her mind.

"You can't leave the seat vacant," she said. "That was a real tipping point."

A retiree who worked for Umatilla County and the Service Employees International Union, Marks

won her seat in 2008 by besting Connie Wright, a former councilor looking to return to city politics. She won reelection four years later, turning back a challenge by Joan Escudero, a former supervisor at the Eastern Oregon Training Center.

Marks' ward includes South Hill, the downtown area and Riverside.

Young joins Houk and Ward 2 Councilor Chuck Wood in declining reelection bids. Former at-large councilor Jane Hill resigned in January and the council will consider an appointee to finish out the rest of her term.

After the council vacated Hill's seat Tuesday, Houk said until Feb. 15 at 4 p.m. the city will accept letters of interest from people who want to fill the rest of Hill's term.

The council will interview the applicants Feb. 16 from 6:30 to 7 p.m. and will vote to select a candidate at the end of the session, requiring at least five votes for approval.

Although two people have filed for the seat, they would need to send a letter to Houk to be considered for appointment through 2016.

Vying for a full four-year term for Hill's former seat is Jim Swearingen, the owner of an auto repair shop, and Rick Rohde, a former reserve in the U.S. Air Force and a retired employee of the Wal-Mart Distribution Center.

City Recorder Andrea Denton said no other candidates have filed yet, meaning no one has entered into the Ward 2, Ward 3 and mayoral races.

Al Plute, the other at-large councilor, quashed rumors that he was going to run for mayor.

Plute said he once had mayoral aspirations, but the failure of the 5-cent gas tax made him realize that voters didn't want a leader who supported new taxes.

According to Plute, this anti-council sentiment was the real reason incumbents weren't seeking reelection.

"This council is wasting their time," he said. "That's why they're bailing."

Plute said the next mayor needed to be a Pendleton native with business experience, a thick skin and the ability to "tell it like it is."

A committee is currently circulating a petition to recall Plute from office.

The filing deadline for May 17 municipal elections is March 8.

Contact Antonio Sierra at [asierra@eastoregonian.com](mailto:asierra@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0836.

## HERMISTON

# Beach & Beef Dinner benefits students

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**  
East Oregonian



EO Media Group file photo

**Judy Bracher of the Hermiston Education Foundation restocks food during a past Beach & Beef Dinner and Auction. The event, which is Saturday at the Hermiston Conference Center, provides money to enhance student educational opportunities in the Hermiston School District.**

said many of the groups have benefited from grants provided by the foundation.

Bracher said a variety of items are up for bid, including a \$500 Visa gift card, a cabin getaway in Hood River, a pair of handcrafted end tables by

inmates at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, box seats and four dinners for the Farm-City Pro Rodeo, family passes to the Hermiston Family Aquatics Center, local wines, a flat of blueberries, photo sessions as well as

dinner vouchers. In addition, each of the schools in the district put together a spirit basket.

The fundraiser provides money that the foundation awards as grants to staff members of the Hermiston School District to enhance the educational experience of students. Grant applications are accepted twice a year — funding things like musical instruments, field trips, technology equipment, special curriculum and books.

"Money raised by the foundation helps provide opportunities for students," Bracher said.

For more information about the Hermiston Education Foundation, visit [www.hermistoneducationfoundation.org](http://www.hermistoneducationfoundation.org).

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at [tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com](mailto:tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4539

## BRIEFLY

### The Q moving to a new frequency

HERMISTON — Radio station The Q is moving to a new frequency this week.

The station will change from 100.1 FM to 93.7 FM sometime mid-week, depending on weather, due to a frequency reassignment by the Federal Communications Commission. The AM station, KOHU 1360 AM, will not change but will be off air for a day while the work required to change the FM frequency is being performed. The FM station will be off air for a couple of days, according to the station.

For more information contact the radio station at 541-567-6500.

### Good Shepherd offers Healthy Fridays

HERMISTON — Free health screenings are offered twice a month at Good Shepherd Medical Center.

Beginning Feb. 5, people can have free cholesterol, blood sugar, body mass index and blood pressure checks and receive health information at the hospital. Healthy Fridays is the first Friday of each month from 9:30-11:30 a.m. or the third Friday from 2-4 p.m. It's held in Conference Center 7 at the hospital, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston.

For more information, call 541-667-3509.

### Meeting focuses on Wallowa Lake Lodge

PENDLETON — A community effort to keep the Wallowa Lake Lodge locally owned is nearing completion.

A presentation to discuss the lodge will be presented Saturday from 2:30-3:30 p.m. at Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main. Ellen Bishop will present "Saving the Lodge." Refreshments will be served.

More than 100 investors have joined together as Lake Wallowa Lodge LLC to purchase and retain Wallowa Lake Lodge as a profitable, family-friendly inn at the head of Wallowa Lake, while protecting the lands around the lodge and Wallowa River from development. The future conservation easement for

this open ground is a key element of the acquisition, said James Monteith, managing member. The easement will likely be held in perpetuity by the Nez Perce Tribe, Monteith added.

For more information, contact Katy Nesbitt at [katynesbitt@gmail.com](mailto:katynesbitt@gmail.com) or visit [www.lakewallowalodge.com](http://www.lakewallowalodge.com).

### Review scheduled for ag water plan

MILTON-FREEWATER — A biennial review of the Walla Walla Sub-basin Agriculture Water Quality Management Area will be Tuesday, Feb. 16.

Agricultural producers and residents interested in water quality within the basin should consider participating in the review, which will run from 9-11 a.m. at the Walla Walla Watershed Council conference room, 810 S. Main St., Milton-Freewater.

For more information, contact Tom Demianew with the Umatilla County Soil and Water Conservation District at 541-278-8049, ext. 134.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to [news@eastoregonian.com](mailto:news@eastoregonian.com)

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