

Bighorns poached in Gilliam County

Two men arrested by OSP

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Oregon State Police arrested two men on Sunday who are charged with poaching two bighorn sheep along Interstate 84 in Gilliam County.

Fish and Wildlife troopers received a tip at about 9:45 a.m. that someone appeared to be gutting a big game animal along the highway east of Biggs Junction. The area is home to a herd of about 80-100 California bighorns, which have become a popular viewing attraction for drivers.

When troopers arrived on scene, they found Justin Samora, 32, of Layton, Utah, sitting in a vehicle. While speaking with Samora, the troopers also heard from passing motorists that a second man was off somewhere hiding in the brush.

Troopers found Cody Plagmann, 37, of Albany, hiding along the railroad tracks two miles east of the scene at about 4 p.m. In the course of their search, they also found the severed heads of two bighorn sheep. An investigation later determined Plagmann and Samora worked together to shoot the animals and remove their heads.

The carcasses were later recovered, but could not be salvaged. Plagmann was booked into Northern Oregon



Samora



Plagmann



The heads of two bighorn sheep were removed by poachers Sunday east of Biggs Junction in Gilliam County.

Photo contributed by OSP

Regional Correctional Facility in The Dalles on charges of illegally killing a bighorn, wasting a game animal and hunting on closed land. Samora was also charged with aiding in a game violation.

Bighorn sheep were wiped out in Oregon in the mid-1940s, and were not reintroduced until 1954. The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife estimates there are now roughly 4,500 bighorns statewide.

Drawing a bighorn tag is a once-in-a-lifetime hunting opportunity for Oregonians. Jeremy Thompson, district wildlife biologist for ODFW in The Dalles, said the department will offer

approximately 95 bighorn tags in 2016. None of the animals in the Interstate 84 herd are hunted due to their proximity to the highway.

"It's an outrage that someone would poach a bighorn sheep, when hunters can wait their whole life and still never get the opportunity to hunt this iconic species," Thompson said in a statement.

OSP continues to investigate the case, and anyone with information is asked to call The Dalles Area Command at 541-296-9646.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

Walden chats with sportsmen about elephant ivory, guns

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

Rep. Greg Walden's conversation with a group of hunters and sportsmen on Saturday at the Pendleton Convention Center ranged far and wide.

Topics included elephant ivory, guns on public land, polar bears and lead ammunition. All are components of the Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement Act, or SHARE, which passed the House in February by a vote of 242-161.

Critics have spoken harshly about the bill. A People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) news release calls the act "an irresponsible hodgepodge of pro-hunting and anti-environmental regulations" and "a proposed train wreck ... that reverses years of work accomplished to protect animals and the environment — all for the benefit of a small percentage of hunters."

Walden sees the bill as a common sense preservation of American hunting heritage. He said SHARE combines several bills into a single piece of legislation that benefits sportsmen.

If the bill passes the Senate and is signed by the president, multiple provisions would go into effect, including the following:

- Lead ammunition and lead fishing weights would be exempted from the Toxic Substances Control Act.

- Some of the Pitman-Robertson Wildlife Funds, which come from taxes on firearms and ammunition, would fund the acquiring of public land for target ranges.

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers could not prohibit people from possessing firearms in certain areas. The National Park Service could establish hunter access corridors and could not keep individuals from transporting bows, if certain requirements are met.

- Hunters could bring certain legally harvested Canadian polar bear parts back to the United States. The same goes for hunters who want to bring home African elephant ivory.

- Make changes to the Equal Access to Justice Act, which Walden called "an ATM for the left."

- Film crews of five or fewer could film on public lands for an annual fee of \$200.

At the last item, one man at the table with Walden gave a smile. Steve West, owner of Steve's Outdoor Adventures, is a professional hunting consultant and the host of "Steve's Outdoor Adventures" on the Outdoor

Channel. The La Grande man said it currently costs \$176 per day for each camera operator to film on public land.

"That's very cost prohibitive for a small production company to go spend 10, 20, 30 days filming on public lands," West said. "This would be game-changing for our industry with significant trickle-down to outfitters and guides."

Walden spent some time talking about the wisdom of protecting lead-based ammunition.

"For many, lead is still the best. The science is pretty clear that it's not a big issue," Walden said. "This bill excludes lead ammunition from regulation by the EPA under the Toxic Substances Control Act and hinders the ability of the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service to make similar regulations."

Jack Simons, of the Pendleton Bird Club, asked Walden to consider the effect of lead on wildlife and humans who consume animals shot with lead ammunition. He told the Congressman about Lynn Tompkins, owner of a raptor rehab center called Blue Mountain Wildlife, who regularly tests raptors blood for lead and often finds it. He said birds ingest lead from fragments found in gut piles left by hunters.

"The birds don't need to be shot — they only need to ingest it," he said. "The eat it and get sick."

The conversation roamed to other topics. Walden dismissed a proposal to turning more than two million acres of Malheur County into a national monument as nothing more than a ploy to reduce grazing land.

"The Oregon Natural Desert Association and Keen Shoes, out of Portland, teamed up to promote a 2.2 million acre national monument in the Owyhee Canyonlands in Malheur County," Walden said. "That would be twice the size of the Grand Canyon National Park."

Walden called the area "beautiful, rugged, gorgeous" but said there are already layers of existing management over the land. The Antiquities Act allows the president to create a national monument with the stroke of a pen, though there's no evidence to show Obama is inclined to go that way at the moment.

"In my view, it's another effort to shut down ranching in Eastern Oregon, that's what it is," he said. "This is all about stopping ranching in Eastern Oregon and selling shoes."

Umatilla Co. denies allegations of wrongdoing

Lawsuit brought by three former employees

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Umatilla County denied accusations of retaliation and other wrongdoing in its answer to a federal lawsuit from three former employees.

Carolyn Mason, former county human services director, and Juan Valdez and his wife Martha Laura Aviles-Valdez, former county drug and alcohol counselors, filed a lawsuit in federal court Feb.

23 alleging they discovered "unlawful activity and wasted public funds," but then lost their jobs in May 2015 for blowing the whistle. The lawsuit also alleges harassment and discrimination.

Attorney Robert Franz of Springfield is representing the county and in his March 22 response denied the allegations of misbehavior and misconduct. Franz also argued the lawsuit "sets forth 25 pages of evidence, opin-

ions, legal conclusions, false facts, and pages of irrelevant facts" that fail to meet Federal Rules of Civil Procedure that a "complaint must contain a short and plain statement showing the pleader is entitled to relief."

Franz's 9-page response lays out 17 affirmative defenses, facts or sets of facts to undermine the lawsuit, including that Mason and Valdezes were at-will employees and not entitled to any due process and that at least some of their claims lack

enough supporting facts.

The lawsuit from Mason and the Valdezes does not seek a dollar amount but wants the county to pay for their monetary losses, including back pay and damages for physical and emotional injury. Attorney Shemia Fagan is representing the plaintiffs. She is currently a Democratic state representative from Clackamas.

Magistrate Judge Patricia Sullivan is presiding over the case and the parties have until June 22 to gather documents and other information.

BRIEFLY

Fire chief says city councilman saved apartment

PENDLETON — A Pendleton city councilor and his wife are credited with saving at least one apartment — if not the entire building where they live — after they reacted swiftly to a fire Monday afternoon.

Pendleton Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo said it was councilor John Brenne who called 9-1-1 at about 2:12 p.m. after spotting flames on a neighbor's second-level deck at 318 N.W. Bailey Avenue. Brenne's wife, Pat, then used a garden hose to keep the blaze in check until firefighters arrived on scene.

The neighbor was not home at the time, and the cause of the fire remains under investigation. If not for the Brennes, Ciraulo said the entire complex could have burned.

"If they would not have done what they did ... two or three apartments would have been on fire by the time we got here," Ciraulo said.

Firefighters arrived within minutes to put the fire out. A portion of the deck was charred and the heat from the fire shattered a sliding glass door leading into the apartment, but thanks to the Brennes, it did not spread inside, Ciraulo

said. John Brenne said he appreciated the chief's praise, but declined to talk further with the *East Oregonian* about the incident.

Power failure causes late start at high school

PENDLETON — Pendleton High School started an hour late Monday due to a power failure.

Power went down for the high school and some homes on Pendleton's North Hill. The school district notified parents and guardians at about 7:30 a.m. about the problem and that classes would start at 10 a.m.

Buses, though, ran on their regular Monday schedule, so staff was ready at the school for students who arrived at normal times.

Power company employees during the morning repaired a power pole at Northwest 13th Street and Despain Avenue, just a few blocks from the high school.

Man charged with sodomy, rape of 14-year-old girl

HERMISTON — A 19-year-old Hermiston man has been charged with

sexual contact with a minor.

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office arrested Kyle Naillon, 19, on charges of third-degree sodomy, third-degree rape and contributing to the sexual delinquency of a minor. Naillon was arrested March 28.

Deputy James English began investigating the case on Feb. 29 after the 14-year-old victim's mother reported that she discovered suspicious content on her daughter's cell phone, which indicated alleged sexual activity between Naillon and the girl. Detective Kacey Ward gathered evidence from the victim who confirmed there was unlawful sexual activity. Deputy English interviewed Naillon, who admitted that he had sexual contact with the girl.

Naillon was arrested and lodged in the Umatilla County Jail. The case will be forwarded to the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office.

SAGE Saturday offers glowing activity

BOARDMAN — Kids and their parents are invited to create their own Pacific albus decorations during this weekend's SAGE Saturday.

The project will utilize materials from Greenwood Resources and will glow in the dark. The free activity is Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman.

For more information, contact 541-481-7243 or visit www.visitsage.com.

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