

Rural-urban divide missing in Idaho

By SEAN ELLIS EO Media Group

BOISE — The rural-urban divide that splits many states hasn't reached Idaho yet, a new survey shows.

The University of Idaho survey found that residents of Idaho's two main urban counties see eye-to-eye with their rural counterparts in Owyhee County on many natural resource issues, such as public lands grazing and logging.

Owyhee County in southwestern Idaho is heavily dependent on agriculture, particularly raising livestock. Some 80 percent of the county's economic output is tied to the farming industry.

UI surveyed 450 people in Ada, Canyon, Elmore and Owyhee counties. Ada and Canyon county are the state's two most populous urban areas and, along with Elmore

County, border Owyhee. Support for livestock grazing was high across the region. Residents of all four counties were also in line on many other natural resource issues, such as logging and outdoor recreation opportunities.

For example, while 90 percent of Owyhee County residents surveyed support livestock grazing, nearly 80 percent from the urban areas also support it.

"There are some very positive feelings toward agriculture and grazing," said UI agricultural economist Neil Rimbey, one of the report's four authors. "That's something you don't usually get by reading the newspapers or listening to the news."

Owyhee County, at almost 5 million acres, is one of the nation's largest counties, and 83 percent of it is public land,

most managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Public lands grazing is a major issue in Owyhee County. In response to a lawsuit, a federal judge ordered the BLM's Owyhee field office to rewrite 68 grazing permits that it renewed in 1997. The case includes 120 grazing allotments and impacts hundreds of thousands of acres in Owyhee County.

The new permits, issued in 2013, reduced grazing by 30-50 percent in most cases. The survey results show urban residents support livestock grazing on public lands.

Fewer than 2 percent of urban residents surveyed considered livestock grazing to be a serious problem facing southwestern Idaho.

Sixty-six percent of urban residents felt livestock grazing was a very healthy or somewhat healthy aspect of working

landscapes while 13 percent felt it was somewhat or very unhealthy.

Owyhee County Commissioner Kelly Aberasturi said the survey results were surprising but welcomed.

"It makes a big difference when we know citizens in urban areas realize we are utilizing the resources properly," he said.

The overall population of the four-county region has increased by 65 percent in the past 25 years. It has increased by 109 percent in Canyon County and 91 percent in Ada County.

In spite of that, the social cohesion among residents in the area remains solid, said UI sociologist J.D. Wulfhorst, a report author.

He said that result is notable given the area's population growth and is unheard of in other areas that have experienced rapid growth.

BRIEFLY

Prison restrictions in place after inmate brawls

WALLA WALLA, Wash. (AP) — A unit at the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla remains on restricted movement following three recent inmate fights.

The first fight broke out in one of the prison's units on Dec. 21 and involved about 14 inmates.

The other fights happened about an hour apart on Christmas morning. Both involved about 20 inmates and took place in the outside recreation yards at the prison's West Complex.

One of the Sunday fights resulted in an inmate receiving stitches at a nearby hospital. State Department of Corrections spokesman Jeremy Barclay says officials are working to determine the cause of the fights.

life. He wrote that his brother's condition is improving by the hour, and "most of the major repair work has been addressed."

The Washington County Sheriff's Office says Cederberg was shot several times by homicide suspect James Tylka following a car chase. Tylka was then killed by police.

Officers pursued Tylka after finding his estranged wife dead outside his suburban Portland home.

Oregon court reverses DUI conviction of wheelchair user

PORTLAND (AP) — The Oregon Court of Appeals has reversed the conviction of a wheelchair user who had been found guilty of driving under the influence of intoxicants.

James Greene of Waldport was arrested in November 2012 after entering a crosswalk in a motorized wheelchair and striking the side of a moving pickup. Police determined he was impaired by alcohol and drugs, and a jury convicted him of drunken driving.

In his appeal, Greene argued that he should have been considered a pedestrian, not subject to the DUI law.

The state disagreed, pointing to a law that treats motorized wheelchairs like bicycles when they are driven on bike lanes.

In its opinion Thursday, the Appeals Court decided legislators only intended to have wheelchairs treated like bicycles in that narrow circumstance, and users should be considered pedestrians when in a crosswalk.

Judge denies Ryan Payne's motion to undo guilty plea

PORTLAND (AP) — A federal judge has denied Oregon refuge occupier Ryan Payne's request to withdraw his guilty plea.

U.S. District Judge Anna J. Brown ruled Wednesday that Payne's plea in the Oregon case wasn't, as his attorney argued, contingent on reaching a plea agreement in a case against him in Nevada, The Oregonian reported.

"Payne's factual statements supporting his guilty plea were both thorough and unequivocal," Brown wrote in her 32-page ruling.

Payne, of Anaconda, Montana, acknowledged in July that he conspired with others to prevent Interior Department employees from doing their jobs during the 41-day occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

Payne was one of 11 defendants to plead guilty before others in the case went to trial and were found not guilty.

Payne was one of three co-defendants who filed motions to withdraw guilty pleas. The judge hasn't issued rulings on the other motions

filed by Joseph O'Shaughnessy and Eric Flores.

In Nevada, he's accused of organizing "armed protection" in an April 2014 standoff over impounding Cliven Bundy's cattle.

Payne's attorney had also argued that his client's plea should be withdrawn because Ammon Bundy — Cliven Bundy's son — and others were acquitted of the same charges. Brown ruled that the plea stood on those grounds as well.

"This is not a case in which there is a new question as to Payne's factual innocence after the trial of his Co-Defendants," Brown said. "Indeed, it remains undisputed that Payne was a leader of the occupation of the (Malheur National Wildlife Refuge)."

Under the plea agreement, federal prosecutors were to recommend a 12-year sentence, but Payne could have argued for seven years. It is unclear if that recommended sentence will remain since no plea agreement has been reached in the Nevada case.

Payne will be sentenced at a later date.

Shooting prompts Bend police to reconsider body cameras

BEND (AP) — Last week's officer-involved shooting in downtown Bend has the police department reconsidering an earlier decision not to purchase body cameras.

Police Chief Jim Porter told The Bulletin newspaper the department considered the cameras before, but felt the cost of equipment and other expenses was prohibitive.

Porter said falling prices and the shooting of Michael Jacques have prompted the department to take another look at the viability of cameras that are worn by officers and record their daily activities.

The 31-year-old driver was shot and killed during a traffic stop Friday night. A Bend Police officer pulled him over after receiving reports of him driving erratically in a Dodge Caravan.

The shooting investigation remains active.

Porter said he initially backed away from using body cams because the department didn't have the money for it, and he didn't see the need.

"I did not feel at the time

that we had a culture that needed body cameras," he said. "We weren't getting excessive force complaints; we weren't seeing complaints about officers' attitudes on the street."

Porter said the department set aside \$40,000 during the 2013-14 budget cycle for body cameras, but then the Oregon Legislature passed regulations as to when the cameras could be turned off, and how the data has to be stored and processed. That greatly increased the cost, Porter said.

"Yes, we are looking at them again," Porter said. "There's now much easier software to work with to be able to redact information out of the videos to make it much easier to use."

Porter and Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel declined comment on whether body cam footage would be helpful in the investigation of Jacques' death.

Hummel, a former defense attorney, said he has always been in favor of body cameras.

"Having more evidence is always better," Hummel said.

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