



# EAST OREGONIAN

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## Revised forest plan gets new timeline

Final environmental impact statement may be ready by June

By GEORGE PLAVEN  
East Oregonian

It may be 12 years overdue, but the U.S. Forest Service is inching closer to revising the outmoded Blue Mountains Forest Plan.

A final environmental impact statement, or EIS, may be ready by the end of June, according to Victoria Anne, revision team leader. The final EIS was expected before the end of 2016, though staff turnover has further delayed what has already been a lengthy process.

In addition, the Forest Service has crafted two new plan alternatives based on a year's worth of feedback from local communities and stakeholders. When completed, the Blue Mountains Forest Plan will form the backbone for land management on the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur national forests.

But there is still plenty of work left to do, even after the agency's environmental analysis is finished.

Tom Montoya, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest supervisor, said there will

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## Federal hiring freeze raises firefighting concerns

By GEORGE PLAVEN  
East Oregonian

The government-wide hiring freeze instituted by President Donald Trump just days after his inauguration has raised questions about how it will impact seasonal firefighting crews ahead of the 2017 wild-fire season.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) wrote a letter Monday to Kevin Haugrud, acting secretary of the Department of the Interior, asking for clarity about how the Bureau of Land Management will be affected by the hiring freeze, particularly when it comes to firefighters.

"Failure to have a robust and well-trained permanent and seasonal wildlife team is crucial to protecting public lands and communities in the rural West," Wyden wrote. "Whether it is the O&C forests in western Oregon, or protecting the sage grouse and ranchers' livelihoods in southeast Oregon, hiring adequate personnel is of paramount concern."

See FIREFIGHTERS/8A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's owner Jennifer Keeton pours Champagne into the top glass of a Champagne tower as her staff and guests look on Tuesday at her restaurant in Pendleton.

## Romantic Retreat

### Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's bustles with business on Valentine's Day

By GEORGE PLAVEN  
East Oregonian

A champagne tower greeted couples inside Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's for Valentine's Day dinner as guests were seated at candlelit tables decorated with fresh roses and candy hearts.

"You can't get much more romantic than this," said Bob Lemmon, who sat across from his wife of 20 years, Toni.

From the red velvet wallpaper to the dim and intimate lighting, Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's was a popular retreat for lovebirds on Tuesday. In fact, other than Pendleton Round-Up week, Valentine's Day is one of the restaurant's busiest days of the year, according to owner Jennifer Keeton.

"We always try to make things extra special," Keeton said.

Bob and Toni Lemmon recently moved back to Pendleton, where they met years ago in the bleachers at a Babe Ruth League baseball game.

"Our sons were playing against each other," Toni Lemmon said. "As we were leaving, he said 'Why don't you give me a call sometime?'"

Twenty years later, Bob

"I just want them to be taken care of, and to thoroughly enjoy their food and time with either their friends or loved ones."

— Jennifer Keeton, owner of Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's

Lemmon said they enjoy doing everything together. Toni said they were happy to be at the same table Tuesday to enjoy a good meal in good spirits.

Across the dining room, Dick and Marilyn Smiley sat together in their usual booth and ordered a bottle of wine. The couple has been married for nearly 50 years, and they recalled meeting each other while Dick was a student and Marilyn an employee at Washington State University. For their first date, Dick Smiley said they went to Ridpath Hotel in Spokane.

"I bet you didn't think I would remember that," he said to

See CIMMIYOTTI'S/8A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Roses make up the centerpiece of every table in the dining area at Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's in Pendleton.

### BOARDMAN

## Fog, smoke cause crashes that injured seven Monday

East Oregonian

Smoke from a pile of burning wood at the Boardman Tree Farm contributed to a series of crashes Monday night on Interstate 84 that sent seven people to the hospital.

Don Rice, director of North American operations for Greenwood Resources, said a large quantity of tree bark and branches — known as hog fuel — spontaneously combusted late last week on the north side of the old sawmill, about three-and-a-half miles from the freeway.

Firefighters liken the blaze to a haystack fire, Rice said. Though crews were able to isolate the hot

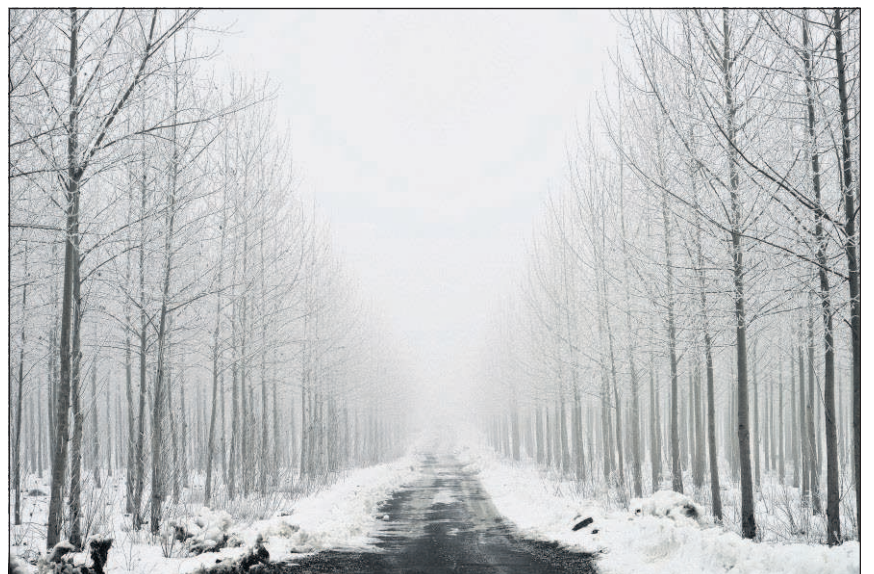
spot and keep it from spreading, there is not much more they can do.

"We just have to let it burn out," Rice said.

A combination of smoke and fog caused three passenger vehicles and four or five semi-trailers to crash within a couple hundred yards of each other Monday night in the eastbound lanes of I-84, according to Boardman Fire Lt. Casey Zellars, who responded to the scene.

Seven people, all from the passenger vehicles, were injured and taken by ambulance to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston. The injuries ranged from bumps

See SMOKE/8A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

An access road disappears into the fog amidst two of the remaining stands of poplar trees on the Greenwood Resources tree farm east of Boardman. Dense fog mixed with smoke from a burning slash pile at the Greenwood Resources tree farm were contributing factors in the multi-vehicle wreck on Interstate 84 on Monday near mile marker 175.



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