

# Oregon wolf count, management plan update delayed

Extreme winter weather interrupted ODFW surveys

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon's heavy snow in January caused problems for wildlife staff who track the state's wolf population.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said extreme weather in northeast Oregon, where most of the state's wolves live, interrupted airplane, helicopter and ground surveys of wolfpacks. As a result, the annual wolf report has been delayed a month and won't be delivered to the ODFW Commission until its April 21 meeting in Klamath Falls.

The report usually is released in March and typically includes an updated wolf population count and information on the number of breeding pairs in the state. The count provides



Courtesy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
**Two adult wolves from the Walla Walla Pack were caught on remote trail camera Jan. 16, 2016 in northern Umatilla County.**

an information baseline as the commission considers updates to the state's Wolf Management and Conservation plan. The plan is reviewed every five years, and the

commission will most likely adopt an updated version later in 2017.

Although heavy snow and an extended cold snap delayed ODFW's field work, department

spokeswoman Michelle Dennehy said it probably didn't harm Oregon's wolves.

"Wolves typically do quite well during the winter," she said by email. "Winters that are hard on deer and elk may actually be easier on wolves. There is winter (prey) loss to scavenge and it is harder for ungulates (deer and elk) to escape in the deep snow."

Oregon had a minimum of 110 wolves at the end of 2015, according to figures released by ODFW in February 2016. At least seven wolves died in 2016. Four members of Wallowa County's Imnaha pack, including venerable alpha male OR-4, were shot by ODFW in March 2016 after repeatedly attacking, killing and eating livestock. Wildlife biologists speculated at the time that the group began attacking livestock due to OR-4's advanced age and the fact that his longtime mate limped from an injured leg. They had two yearlings with them,

and the four appeared to have separated from or been forced out of the main Imnaha pack.

In addition, a female wolf designated OR-28 was found dead in October 2016 in south-central Oregon. Officials have not said how the wolf died, and Oregon State Police are investigating. A \$20,000 reward for information is available.

State police also are investigating a wolf found dead in Northeast Oregon in March 2016.

In May 2016, a sheep herder shot a wolf from the Walla Walla pack that was attacking sheep. State police judged the shooting was lawful under the "caught in act" provision that allows producers to kill wolves that are wounding, biting, killing or chasing livestock, according to ODFW.

*The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.*

## BRIEFLY

### Morrow County School District sets make-up days

Schools across Oregon have had to adjust their calendars as they've been hit by an unusually high amount of winter weather, and the Morrow County School District is no different.

According to a district press release, Boardman and Irrigon schools have missed seven days while Heppner schools have missed five, spurring the district to activate built-in make-up days to recapture lost instructional time.

Boardman and Irrigon students will now go to school on April 7, 14, 28, and May 12. Students that attend Heppner schools will attend classes on April 7, 14, and 28.

Even in the event of an additional snow day, the make-up dates will not change.

With the make-up days now set, the district is in position to meet the state's minimum threshold for instructional hours.

### Property taxes due in March

PENDLETON — Paul Chalmers, director of the Umatilla County Assessment and Taxation Office, reminds everyone doing business in the county that the deadline for returning personal property and real property tax returns is March 15, 2017. The returns must be in the Assessment and Taxation Office or postmarked on that date to avoid a late filing penalty.

If you are a new business and have not received a tax return in the mail it is your responsibility to call the person property appraiser at the Assessment and Taxation Office at 541-278-6217.

### Holiday Inn Express announces grand opening

HERMISTON — Hermiston's new Holiday Inn Express is having a grand opening and ribbon cutting on Friday, Feb. 24 from noon to 2 p.m.

The open house will include tours, refreshments by Nookies and a chance to win a free stay at the hotel.

The hotel, located on the corner of Highway 395 and West Hermiston Avenue, features four floors, 93 rooms, 18 suites, an indoor pool, fitness center, complimentary breakfast, laundry room, meeting room, WiFi and a business center featuring computers and other office equipment for guest use.

The hotel opened its top floor to guests starting Dec. 7 as it worked to finish the rest of the rooms.

### BMCC hosts EMS conference

PENDLETON — The 2017 Eastern Oregon EMS Conference begins Thursday in Pendleton.

The event, now in its fourth year, is a partnership with Life Flight, Blue Mountain Community

College and the Oregon Trail Fire Training Association.

The conference draws emergency services providers in rural communities across Oregon, Washington and Idaho with training opportunities that count toward required education credits.

Attendees will participate in workshops and presentations about subjects like treating burns, sepsis, pediatric respiratory emergencies, human trafficking and CPR.

The keynote address will be delivered by Mike Helbock, a clinical educator in pre-hospital medicine at the University of Washington School of Medicine.

Pre-conference workshops will start at BMCC on Thursday and Friday while the main conference will start Saturday morning and finish Sunday afternoon.

Attendees can register or find more information at <http://eastoregonems.com>.

## PENDLETON

### Former Round-Up director named to Hall of Fame board

East Oregonian

Carl Culham has moved from one Pendleton Round-Up-related board to another.

The Round-Up and Happy Canyon Hall of Fame board announced Wednesday the addition of Culham, who served on the Round-Up Association Board of Directors from 2008-2016.

After going to high school on the west side of the state, the Pendleton native resettled in Athena with his wife, Jackie.

A 38-year employee of the U.S. Forest Service, Culham has added 12 years of volunteering at the Round-Up since returning to Eastern Oregon.

Culham will serve as the hall of fame's director of membership and Circle of Champions.

Culham doesn't have a Round-Up lineage, but he married into a family with

plenty of experience.

Jackie was a member of the Happy Canyon Quadrille team and a Round-Up contestant while her sister, Andrea Beck, was the queen at the

75th Round-Up. The couple's three sons have also been Round-Up volunteers.

Culham's arrival isn't the only change at the Hall of Fame board.

Greg Duchek was recently named board president while Jack Remillard assumed the vice-president position. Secretary June Mohrland and treasurer Steve Campbell retained their positions.

The rest of the board is comprised of Cedric Wildbill, Cydney Curtis, Susan Talbot, Gary Ward, Patricia Dawson and Marlene Currin.



Culham

## PENDLETON

### No severance for superintendent Kovach

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

The Pendleton School Board provided superintendent

Andy Kovach with some kind words when he announced his impending resignation Monday, but he won't get much more than that when he steps down June 30.

Board chairwoman Debbie McBee said Kovach waived his rights to a compensation package when he announced his resignation, even though he was in the midst of a three-year contract.

"It's all null and void," she said.

McBee said the district will continue to pay him his \$127,500 salary through

June, but otherwise will not provide compensation for the final two years of his contract.

The \$127,500 represents the low end of the scale the school board agreed to when the district went through its last superintendent search, the maximum set at \$140,000.

In a statement, Kovach said he was resigning for "personal reasons" and has declined to elaborate further.

The board will hold a special meeting on Monday to declare a superintendent vacancy and plan the hiring process for Kovach's replacement.

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



Kovach

## Community Forum on Chronic Non-Cancer Pain Management

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