



A trio of juvenile red-tailed hawks sit in a nest perched on a rock outcrop on Wednesday in Juniper Canyon, north of Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

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WINNER OF THE 2016 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar



Photo by Debbie McIntosh

This 2015 file photo shows a grove of aspen trees near the East Lostine River Trail, less than a mile from Two Pan Trailhead in the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Conservation groups sued to stop a logging project on the road to the trailhead.

Groups sue over Lostine logging and safety project

Complaint filed in federal court

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Two nonprofit conservation groups are taking the U.S. Forest Service to court over a controversial logging project in the Lostine Corridor — one of the most popular and well-trodden entry points into the Eagle Cap Wilderness in Wallowa County.

The complaint, filed Wednesday by Oregon Wild and the Hells Canyon Preservation Council, accuses the Forest Service of violating the National Environmental Policy Act by improperly authorizing the project as a “categorical exclusion,” allowing the agency to sidestep a formal environmental impact study.

Kris Stein, district ranger for the Eagle Cap Ranger District on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, signed off on the project April 5. Restoration activities include treating roughly 2,110 acres of forest and removing hazard trees to make the area safer and more resilient to wildfire.

The Lostine Corridor is located along an 11-mile stretch of road that follows the Wild and

See **LOSTINE/8A**

“It’s a bad situation. If we got the right type of conditions and a fire started, it’s going to take off like a tinderbox.”

Bruce Dunn, chairman of the Wallowa County Natural Resource Advisory Committee

TRANSPORTATION PACKAGE

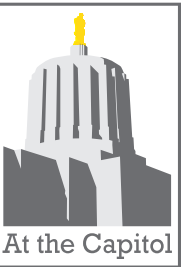
Legislators make bill an all-or-nothing deal

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon’s proposed 10-year, multi-billion-dollar transportation package could be repealed in its entirety if voters challenge even one of its provisions.

Legislators said they added that caveat to the transportation bill because projects and programs depend on corresponding increases in taxes and fees in the package.

“The logic is that this is a package. If you pull one string, the whole thing comes apart,” said Sen. Lee Beyer, D-Springfield, co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Maintenance.



Legislative counsel, who drafted the provisions of the package, unveiled the first draft of the 298-page legislation to the committee Wednesday, May 31.

The 14-member committee will hold public hearings on the bill June 5-7 at the state Capitol in Salem. A vote on the House floor could come as soon as mid-June.

“I am feeling relieved we have (the package) out on the table,” Beyer said. “I don’t think the Oregon Legislature has ever done as openly transparent a package as this.”

Beginning last year, the committee held meetings throughout the state to speak to constituents about their transportation needs and held open meetings at the Capitol to negotiate specifics of the package.

The end result would raise about \$8 billion over a 10-year period to pay for projects to relieve congestion, maintain roads and bridges and enhance safety for different types of commuters.

See **TRANSPORTATION/8A**



EO file photo

In this July 2016 file photo, a pair of helicopters perform bucket drops while fighting a wildfire near Emigrant Hill east of Pendleton. Oregon and Washington had 2,519 wildfires spread across 513,226 acres in 2016. Northwest officials are expecting the 2017 fire season to be more damaging.

Fire season expected to be worse than 2016

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

The 2017 fire season in the Northwest may be more damaging than last year. And a total solar eclipse is a late-season wildcard that will bring hundreds of thousands of people stream into Oregon forests and pose a major challenge to fire safety.

In 2016, Oregon and Washington had 2,519 wildfires spread across 513,226 acres, according to data from the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center. John Saltenberger, the fire weather program manager for the center, said that was below

average for both states. But both Oregon and Washington, he said, should expect a normal fire season this year.

Going back to 2000, Saltenberger said Oregon and Washington average around 4,000 wildland fires per year, a figure he described as fairly reliable. And the center’s data pegs the 10-year average number of acres burned at almost 760,000.

The number of large fires is more difficult to pin down. The center defines large fires as blazes that burn more than 100 acres in timber or more than 300

See **FIRE/8A**

