

PILOT ROCK

City looks to clean up junkers

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

On Tuesday, Pilot Rock Police Chief Bill Caldera checked the mini junkyard at the dead end of Southwest Third Street and found nothing had changed. Five inoperable vehicles and the decrepit trailer still sported the notices police left two weeks ago to clean up or face the tow truck.

"A couple of months ago, we realized we had a real problem with not only run-down properties but also abandoned cars," Caldera said. "We went around and counted 130 abandoned cars."

For a community of about 1,500, he said the situation was "ridiculous."

Caldera has been the town's police chief for about a year and half, and his statement in the city's recent community newsletter let residents know he would enforce city laws to curb blight and nuisance properties.

"Like I tell people, there's no sense in having a city ordinance if you're not going to enforce it," Caldera said. "Obviously, this has been allowed to happen for quite some time."

The city first took action on 50 problem properties, places where weeds and grass grew wild and tall. The city council then gave its support to tackle the vehicles.

"We're only tagging those that are obvious," Caldera said, such as vehicles on blocks or with flat tires or expired tags. Someone parking their car while on vacation, for example, is not the target.

"We've had voluntary compliance from several people," he said. "There's been a lot of people that have been very happy with what we're trying to do."

But not everyone is on board with the effort.

C. Moore received a notice for his wrecked 2003 Suzuki Aerio on Northeast Douglas and East Main streets. He said he crashed the car about two months ago when he hit a deer and can't do a thing with it.

He said he generally likes how Caldera operates the Pilot Rock



Staff photo by Phil Wright
The owner of this trailer and the vehicles at the end of Southwest Third Street, Pilot Rock, has yet to comply with notices police left two weeks ago to move the vehicles before the tow truck does.

police, but the city leadership needs to understand much of the community is in the same boat — living on disability or other fixed income and lacking the means to fix up appearances. If the cars are not hurting anyone, he said, neighbors can just look away.

"People can't manage to mind their own business," Moore said.

But Caldera countered that letting homes and streets stay a mess does not encourage anyone to live in that neighborhood. He said cleaning up the city encourages economic development.

Mike Staggs lives on Southeast Cherry Street near Fourth Street. He said police put a notice on his mother-in-law's faded Ford Tempo in front of his house, but he's more concerned with the broken-down Pontiac in the yard.

"I don't think it's fair," Staggs said. "I understand the one on the street, but when you're on private property, why are they making a fuss about that?"

City law, it turns out, applies to discarded vehicles on private property unless they are completely inside a building.

Jake Jackson lives across from

Staggs. Jackson said Caldera has a thankless job and police have to keep a handle on nuisances in smaller communities. And besides, he added, "there's a potential sting factor" because bees and wasps build hives in long-parked vehicles.

Caldera said he knows some will cast him as the bad guy in this, but the city publicized the coming clean-up for months, and the police department left "courtesy notices" two weeks before tagging vehicles.

"We don't want to be heavy handed at all," he said. "We want compliance. The last thing we want to do is take enforcement action on these people."

But the sand in the hourglass is running out. The city now has a contract with Blue Mountain Towing & Recovery of Pendleton to haul off abandoned or inoperable vehicles. Getting a vehicle back costs \$150, plus the \$35 per day storage fee. Caldera said the tows could begin next week.

Moore said he would like to sell his Suzuki and avoid any problems, but he may not be able to make that happen in time.

PILOT ROCK

Community Days kicks off with reunion dinner

East Oregonian

Pilot Rock is gearing up for its Community Days event, which includes the sixth annual Class Reunion and Community Dinner.

Just a few days before the total solar eclipse, organizers said Pilot Rock is the perfect place to make plans before hitting the road toward the path of totality. The dinner is Friday, Aug. 18 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Pilot Rock High School cafeteria. The meal, which features barbecue tri-tip or pork loin, costs \$15 for adults and \$12 for students and those 65 and older. Class reunion groups need to request special seating arrangements by Friday, Aug. 11.

A full day of fun is planned Saturday, Aug. 19 beginning at 8 a.m. with a community yard sale.

Most of the activities are held at Pilot Rock City Park, including a horseshoe tournament (Jason Bedard 541-377-9789), a stick horse rodeo (Lea Van Houten 541-240-1961), wiener dog races (Jackie Carey 541-443-8551) a car show (Sheila



File photo
Earl Perry of Pendleton peers inside an old Dodge pickup truck during the 2015 Pilot Rock Community Days. The event kicks off Friday, Aug. 18 with a class reunion and community dinner and continues through the weekend.

Buckley 541-969-0830) and the Great Duck Race (Nancy Hinkle 541-379-1950).

Craft and food vendors, along with children's activities, start at 10 a.m. Also, astronomer Charli Sakari will discuss the Great American Eclipse at 11:30 a.m. in the elementary school gym.

Other Saturday afternoon activities include The Rock Walk at 3:30 p.m., a history poker walk, and Barnyard Bingo at 5 p.m. For more details about both activities,

which cost \$5 each, call Mary Ann Low at 541-379-4972. The parade gets rolling at 6 p.m.

The evening includes a beer garden (\$3 for singles or \$5 for a couple), which includes live music with Badd Influence.

A community church service is Sunday, Aug. 20 at 10 a.m. in the park. A community potluck will follow.

The Friday night dinner is the main fundraiser for the Pilot Rock Education and Community Foundation, which supports school activities, community projects and scholarships for graduating seniors from Pilot Rock. To make a reservation, contact Annie Smith Tester at 541-377-3075 or annie_tester@yahoo.com. In addition, tax-deductible contributions can be sent to Laura Byrnes, P.O. Box 174, Pilot Rock, OR 97868.

For more information about Pilot Rock Community Days, call 541-443-2811 or visit www.facebook.com/prcommunitydays.

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at malgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

SUBMIT COMMUNITY NEWS

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

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West Nile detected in Morrow County

Residents encouraged to use insect repellent

East Oregonian

Mosquitoes collected last week in Irrigon have tested positive for West Nile virus, according to Oregon public health officials.

Residents of northern Morrow County should take steps to avoid infection from mosquito bites, such as using insect repellent, eliminating standing pools of water where mosquitoes breed and wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants in mosquito-infested areas.

Greg Barron, manager of the North Morrow Vector Control District, said crews will increase efforts to control the local mosquito population using ultra-low volume truck-mounted sprayers, and possibly some aerial spraying.

"The risk of contracting West Nile virus may be low, but we do encourage people to take appropriate precautions to protect

themselves against mosquito bites," Barron said.

About one in five people infected with West Nile virus will actually experience symptoms, and most are very mild ranging from headache to fever and nausea. In rare cases, more severe symptoms may occur including convulsions and disorientation.

The central nervous system may also be affected by West Nile virus, resulting in a headache associated with fever, aseptic meningitis or encephalitis. People with immune problems, diabetes, high blood pressure or individuals over the age of 50 are especially at risk. Contact your doctor if you are having severe symptoms, such as high fever, stiff neck, mental confusion, muscle weakness, shaking, paralysis or rash.

For more information about West Nile virus, contact the North Morrow Vector Control District at 541-481-6082 or the Morrow County Health District at 541-676-5421.

Nez Perce Tribe presentation highlights California condor

East Oregonian

A forum about the reintroduction of the California condor to northeastern Oregon is being presented by the Blue Mountains Conservancy and the Nez Perce Tribe.

The public is invited to the free meeting Thursday at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Room at Cook Memorial Library, 2006 Fourth St., La Grande.

"Return of the Condor" describes the Nez Perce efforts to reintroduce

the species to the Pacific Northwest. The California condor is North America's largest land bird.

It was described by the Lewis and Clark Expedition as "the beautiful buzzard of the Columbia." The Nez Perce believe the rugged terrain of Hells Canyon provides an opportunity for condors to regain a presence in the Pacific Northwest.

For more information, contact themoonisdown@yahoo.com or 971-645-5570.

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