



EAST OREGONIAN

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PAWS pulls tax district proposal

Organization will seek contracts with cities for animal services

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

The tax to fund a Umatilla County animal control district will not appear on the November ballot.

The Pioneer Humane Society, which operates the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter, worked on a petition to put the initiative to the voters. That required approval from the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners.

During the county board's meeting Wednesday morning in Pendleton, Amy Word with the Pendleton-based Humane Society said the organization wanted to postpone the proposal. Word did not give a reason for the move.

But Commissioner George Murdock said voters in the county have grown tired of new taxes for districts, and some people are going to breathe a sigh of relief this measure is not going on the ballot. Still, he said animal control remains an issue in the county.

"I still think animal control is a matter of policing," he said, and suggested the county should look at its budget for possible funds to cover the work.

Commissioner Larry Givens suggested the Pioneer Humane Society could look to how the Blue Mountain Humane Society in Walla Walla conducts business because it receives no city or county money. He added that funding animal control would open the door for other organizations to ask the county to fund their missions.

And Commissioner Bill Elfering said there is a need for the animal shelter and the work it does, but providing for a county-wide district would be difficult. He said the county has to distribute its funds equitably and suggested the group look for grants, including from the county.

"It's absolutely clear we're not united in our belief where animal control fits into the scheme of things," Murdock responded, noting that he felt it was an issue the county should address.

Jackie Carey, Pioneer Humane Society president, told the board animal control is a county-wide problem. Some locals dump their pets in the county's jurisdiction, and the sheriff's office is already fielding those calls. And while grants help cover the cost of spaying and neutering animals, she said they do not pay for day-to-day operations.

But Pioneer Humane Society is not throwing in the towel on public funding. Carey said the organization plans to seek contracts with cities for animal services.

MILTON-FREEWATER

Wildfire closes park, threatens homes



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A helicopter drops water from a bucket while fighting a brush fire in the South Fork Walla Walla River Valley on Wednesday east of Milton-Freewater.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A road block is set up at the intersection of Walla Walla River Road and Linton Mountain Road in response to a wildfire burning in the South Fork Walla Walla River Valley on Wednesday in Pendleton.

People return home after evacuations

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

A wildfire near Milton-Freewater forced the evacuation of a county park and about 100 homes on Wednesday.

According to Rick Saager, chief of the Milton-Freewater Rural Fire Protection District, the fire started Wednesday morning off Linton Mountain Road and spread toward the Walla Walla River. It was sparked by a combine, Saager said.

Crews evacuated Harris Park, a Umatilla County campground

located about 15 miles outside of Milton-Freewater on the south fork of the Walla Walla River, as well as other homes in the area. Umatilla County Undersheriff Jim Littlefield said homes in the Walla Walla Road and Linton Mountain Road areas were evacuated, but he didn't know how many people were ultimately forced to leave.

Around 6 p.m., Umatilla County Sheriff's Lt. Sterrin Holcomb said fire crews were still fighting hot spots but some fire agencies were already being

See WILDFIRE/8A

How to say 'thank you' to firefighters

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

When it seems like the entire state is on fire, it's only natural that people want to show their support to the firefighters working to keep the flames at bay.

Christie Shaw of the Oregon Department of Forestry said simple thank-yous are often enough. Personnel working on the Wilson Prairie fire in south Morrow County have mentioned community members and tourists thanking them at a local restaurant,

and crews on large wildfires will often see hand-written signs posted in communities thanking them for their service.

"I know that's meaningful to them," she said.

Families displaced by wildfires often need supplies as they

wait out in the fire and in some cases find they have no home to return to. Firefighters on large wildland fires, on the other hand, are "fully compensated and supported" for their work, including

See FIREFIGHTERS/8A

Outdoor education inside city limits



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Julian Jimenez, from left, Nahomy Claustro, Brenda Flores put a fresh coat of paint on a sign as their supervisor Colby Crawford picks up paint chips out of the grass on Wednesday at the campground in the Boardman Marina.

Teens learn stewardship, teamwork in summer conservation program

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Keeping the outdoors great doesn't always mean going into the depths of the wilderness. A group of local teens have spent the summer as environmental stewards in their own neighborhoods.

Each summer, the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps assigns teens to different outdoor projects around the state — everything from clearing invasive species to maintaining public campgrounds in the forests. This year, two crews in Pendleton and Boardman are working on projects within city

limits.

In Boardman, students have planted shrubs and trees, landscaped, pulled weeds, painted signs and cleaned up the riverfront. Pendleton students have been focused on one specific project: taking inventory of all the trees on public property in the city.

OYCC crews in Eastern Oregon work under the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon, which finds projects for the students and secures grants to pay their wages for the summer.

The program is geared toward "at-risk youth," though, as Boardman crew leader Colby Crawford pointed out, that may mean different things in different communities. Many of the kids in the program are from low-in-

See OUTDOORS/8A



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