

'Ag is what has paid me back for the efforts I put forth — if it is a passion for someone else, I want to help create a return for that passion.'

— **Woody Wolfe**, a landowner who's using a hunting raffle to fund a scholarship for an Oregon State University agriculture major from Wallowa County

Eastern Oregon hunt raffle to benefit OSU ag scholarship

By **KATY NESBITT**
For EO Media Group

A conservation easement in the heart of Wallowa County farmland is being managed to grow large white tail buck deer for big game hunting — and philanthropy.

Landowner Woody Wolfe said he's managed the river bottom to grow big white tail bucks for several years and with a handful of Land Owner Preference elk, buck and doe tags issued through Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, he has a few tags to share.

"In 2016 the largest white tail buck in the state was taken off my property by a neighbor," Wolfe said.

At the time, Wolfe said, the buck ranked fifth in the Oregon black powder record book.

Chad Garrett has guided hunts on the Wolfe Ranch for several years and is

well familiar with the Wallowa mid-valley land with views of the surrounding mountains.

"Woody has a lot of trophy game on his place," Garrett said.

As he's become known around the county, Garrett said he's been asked to help local clubs and nonprofits raise money through hunt raffles, allowable under Oregon state gaming laws.

When Wolfe was approached by Wallowa County Center for Wellness for a donation he looked for advice from staff at The Nature Conservancy's Zumwalt Prairie Preserve that offers raffle hunt opportunities to local nonprofits. Then he turned to Garrett for help.

With a website and a PayPal account 100 tickets were sold at \$100 apiece in six days. Garrett was paid for his effort, Wolfe said, and \$8,500 went to the



EO Media Group File

Woody Wolfe is using a hunting raffle of Land Owner Preference tags to fund a scholarship for an Oregon State University agriculture major from Wallowa County.

Center.

According to Garrett, the winner of that raffle was a man looking to kill his first white tail buck to qualify for the Super Slam of North American Big Game — the legal taking of all 29 of the

traditionally recognized species of big game animals native to North America.

Wolfe said the experience got him thinking. With such a rapid response to the first raffle, what other worthy causes could he support

by raffling some of his Land Owner Preference tags?

"If I could raise that money that with one tag or two, I thought about what cause do I feel is the most valuable to me?" Wolfe said.

The answer was a scholarship for a Wallowa County high school graduate pursuing a degree in agriculture at Oregon State University. As a sixth-generation Wallowa County farmer, agriculture is close to Wolfe's heart.

"I think an education can facilitate people who want to go into agriculture, whether in ag service or production," Wolfe said. "Ag is what has paid me back for the efforts I put forth — if it is a passion for someone else, I want to help create a return for that passion."

Again Wolfe turned to Garrett for help. He set up a website and a PayPal account to facilitate raffle hunts and serves as the

guide. After Garrett's time, Wolfe said each scholarship award will be around \$7,500.

This year two raffles are offered to raise money for the scholarship. Garrett said 100 tickets are available for \$100 apiece for each hunt. The winner of each of the two raffles will receive a three-day guided hunt and lodging.

Garrett said the first scholarship will be awarded in 2019, but the money will not be available until the winner's junior year, when he or she declares a major. The winner must also have maintained a 3.0 grade-point average those first two years of college to claim the scholarship.

Tickets are available at www.biggameafflehunts.com through Jan. 1. The raffle drawing will be held Jan. 10. For more information call Garrett at 503-367-0207.



USDA ARS

Fire in an ungrazed sagebrush community.

Using grazing as wildfire tool

Kirk Davies finds that grazing can reduce fire risk

By **BRAD CARLSON**
EO Media Group

Kirk Davies and his fellow rangeland scientists in southeastern Oregon for years produced studies showing earlier grazing reduces future fire risk while benefiting native plants.

Now they are working to figure out how to apply these lessons on the larger scale that the vast sagebrush steppe landscape often demands.

"With these findings established, now the challenge becomes prioritizing where to apply this in land management," said Davies, lead rangeland scientist with USDA Agricultural Research Service in Burns.

Issues inherent in working on the usually large-scale range include coordinating and moving people, equipment and cattle; a limited number of cattle available; and some public opposition to public-lands grazing altogether, let alone as a management tool, he said.

"We are hoping to work with more landscape ecologists, looking at how it applies across the landscape," Davies said. That would include investigating, long-term, how rangeland plant communities respond to fire whether they are grazed or not, and deriving a grazing approach to suit a location's unique fire risk — deciding how much to graze and in which season, for example.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management Burns District has used targeted grazing to help reduce fine fuels, particularly annual grasses, District Manager Jeff Rose said. The effort is on a fairly small scale now, but the district is working with ARS to help scale it to a level that will be effective in larger landscapes, he said.

Fires haven't yet materialized on treated, grazed areas and it's hard to predict where a fire will start, Rose said. "There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that it will work," he said.

Davies and colleagues conducted research for years before publishing a



USDA ARS

Kirk Davies, lead rangeland scientist for the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Burns, Ore.

Kirk Davies

Title: Lead rangeland scientist, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Burns.
Age: 40
Hometown: Princeton, Ore.
Education: Ph.D., rangeland ecology, Oregon State University; dual B.S., rangeland resources, crop and soil science, OSU.
Family: Wife and three children

2009 paper documenting that grazing can help native plants.

"We saw that long-term ungrazed areas, when they were burned, were subsequently invaded by exotic annual grasses," he said. "We found moderately grazed areas recovered to the native plant community. They didn't have that invasion and were much better off."

The 2009 study's text said in part that even plant communities that aren't accumulating fire fuels beyond historical levels may need low-severity, fuel-reducing disturbances to improve resilience to more severe disturbances.

Researchers in turn began looking into fire severity.

In ungrazed areas, "we found we had larger and hotter fires, and those fires caused higher mortality of desired native annual bunch grasses," Davies said. "We also found ungrazed

areas were much more likely to ignite with an ignition source and more likely to spread ... with higher flame heights and faster-moving fire."

Even areas that went ungrazed for just one or two years were found to have greater fire risk, he said. Moreover, grazing in the fall or spring ahead of peak summer fire season greatly reduced the risk of severe fire.

Findings from the researchers' 2010 study included that moderate grazing reduces wildfire risk by decreasing fine fuels available for ignition, and limiting spread by reducing fuel continuity, the text said in part. While moderate grazing makes prescribed burning more difficult, it can help produce a mosaic burn effect that can reduce a fire's speed and overall size.

Their other studies found that dormant-season grazing increased moisture levels to an extent that an area was at risk of fire some two months later into the summer season; and that winter grazing can reduce wildfire size, intensity and spread in shrub areas; prefer grazing increases post-fire resistance to exotic annual grass invasion and dominance for decades; and fall and spring grazing decreased ignition probability and a fire's ability to spread by increasing fine-fuel moisture while decreasing fuel mass and height.



Amber Baesler/Jackson Hole News & Guide via AP

In this Saturday, Sept. 22, 2018 photo, volunteer Oliver Schofield digs up a temporary trail near the Taggart Lake trailhead in Grand Teton National Park, Wyo. After the "decompaction" the park's vegetation crew will reseed it with grass and other native plant species.

Grand Teton park-goers lend a hand to public lands

By **CODY COTTIER**
Jackson Hole News And Guide

JACKSON, Wyo. — How many volunteers does it take to build a fence?

They might tell you it depends on how passionate those volunteers are about building that fence.

On National Public Lands Day, there was no shortage of motivation as a small band of outdoors lovers helped with renovation projects in Grand Teton National Park.

"It's never-ending, there's always trail work," said Donna Niemi, a veteran volunteer with the park, as she and a dozen others began dismantling a buck and rail fence along the trail to Taggart Lake.

"If we're hiking and using the trails," she said, "we feel like we need to take care of the trails."

After volunteering weekly for the past five years, Niemi knows that care can take many forms. On this day it meant creating a taller, improved barrier between hikers and the park's horse corrals beside the trail.

"The taking down is gonna be a lot easier than the putting up, I tell you that," Niemi said, hauling away one of the old logs.

The fence did fall fast, as the volunteers pried out rusted nails and stripped off aging rails. But they hustled on the construction, too, and within a couple of hours a new one sprung up in its stead. Not professional pace, perhaps, but, speed aside, the extra hands are a boon to overburdened park employees.

Angela Timby, the park's trails volunteer coordina-

tor, organized the event. She walked along the fence rails, a small sledge hammer in hand, surveying the work and directing members of her temporary crew.

She's glad to have them, if only for the day.

"With the increase in visitation and the limits on our resources," she said, "it's extremely valuable to have support from volunteers."

National Public Lands Day, according to the National Park Service, is the country's largest single-day environmental volunteer effort. On Saturday, the 25th anniversary of the holiday, it expected 200,000 people to participate nationwide.

At about 100 national parks and 2,600 federal public land sites, volunteers rehabilitated campgrounds, improved trails, restored natural habitat and cleaned beaches.

Even Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke pitched in, painting historic buildings at Grand Canyon National Park. Later in the day he met with legislators to talk about efforts to address the Park Service's \$12-billion maintenance backlog, a slew of overdue projects postponed due to budget constraints.

While they're sorting that out, Timby said that in the meantime Grand Teton has a solid volunteer base. Some, like Niemi and her husband, Doug, both Sierra Club members, consistently attend Timby's weekly Thursday sessions as well as National Trail Day in June. Others serve as "ambassadors," educating visitors about the park's rules and the importance of protecting wildlife and other resources.