

McKay Dam eases outflows

Bureau of Reclamation continues to monitor weather patterns

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Although water release briefly surged at McKay Dam over the weekend, there wasn't a repeat of the widespread flooding that plagued the McKay Creek neighborhood in April.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation announced on Friday that it was going to increase releases from the McKay dam to 1,200 cubic feet per second in anticipation of significant rainfall over the weekend. In comparison, the flow out of the dam peaked at 2,800 cfs during last month's flooding.

But by noon on Saturday, the bureau reduced flow to 500 cfs and reduced it further on Sunday morning to 100 cfs.

Although the city of Pendleton warned residents that they could experience some flooding in their basements or yards,



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Water jets from the outlet of the McKay Reservoir on Monday outside of Pendleton. The Bureau of Reclamation announced it will be further reducing the outflow from the dam to 100 cubic feet per second.

Donna Biggerstaff, a deputy city recorder and a public information officer for the McKay floods, said she received no reports of flooding.

While a press release from the federal agency states that the bureau will continue to monitor weather patterns in conjunction with the National Weather Service, the heavy

rainfall that was anticipated over the weekend never materialized.

"With the continued downgrade in the amount of forecasted rainfall, and the normal storage space available, we will begin refilling the reservoir with the incoming rainfall," said Umatilla Field Office manager Sean Kimbrel.

Marilyn Lohmann, a

hydrologist for the weather service, said Monday that further flooding was prevented when heavy rainstorms formed north and east of the basin that feeds into the McKay Reservoir instead of over it.

Weather service records show that Pendleton accumulated about 0.7 inches of rain from last Thursday through Sunday.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Voting closes Tuesday for special elections

Special elections for local school board and other taxing districts will end Tuesday at 8 p.m.

The Umatilla County Elections Division will be accepting ballots at its office in Room 18 at the Umatilla County Courthouse in Pendleton from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Until 8 p.m., ballots can also be turned in at dropboxes in the courthouse parking lot and at Hermiston City Hall, the Nixyaawii Governance Center on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Umatilla City Hall, Milton-Freewater City Hall, Stanfield City Hall, Echo City Hall, Pilot Rock City Hall, and Athena City Hall.

In Morrow County, dropboxes will be open until 8 p.m. at the Morrow County Boardman Annex, the North Morrow County Annex in Irrigon, the Bartholomew Building parking lot in Heppner, the intersection of Spring Street and Third Street in Ione, and the Morrow County Public Works Department in Lexington.

Most races will go uncontested, but there are a few that are competitive, including a race for an open seat on the Port of Morrow Commission. Stanfield voters will also decide on whether to approve an \$18 million capital improvement bond.

est school to join the trend, hosting a Decision Day assembly Tuesday.

Whether it's committing to a college, technical school, or a career path, students will get a chance to be honored by their teachers and peers. The Tuesday assembly will be at Riverside High School at 210 Boardman Ave. NE at 9:30 a.m.

Hermiston offers kindergarten registration help

After switching to online kindergarten registration this year, Hermiston School District is offering assistance to families without internet access. The district will provide use of computers and assistance from bilingual staff on Thursday, May 30 from noon to 7:30 p.m. at the district offices, 305 S.W. 11th St.

Parents should bring their child's birth certificate or other record of their birth, immunization records and proof of address such as a utility bill in their name. Students must turn 5 by Sept. 1 to be eligible for the 2018-2019 school year.

Those who wish to register from home can do so at www.hermiston.k12.or.us/apps/pages/registration.

Hermiston students earn Whitman College degrees

WALLA WALLA — Athen Reid and Grant Tynor of Hermiston received their bachelor's degree from Whitman College during its Sunday, May 19, 2019 commencement exercises.

Reid received a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology. Tynor graduated magna cum laude with a degree in biology and environmental studies.

Riverside High to host "Decision Day" ceremony

"Decision Day" ceremonies have long been a tradition for high school athletes signing with a college sports program, but its starting to spread for all high school students who commit to a post-high school path.

Riverside High School in Boardman is the lat-

hunts in future reviews. "Don't get pushed into shooting wolves for a few more hunting licenses," he said.

ODFW Director Curt Melcher said as the number of wolves increases, the public may need to help manage populations.

"We don't have an unlimited staff," Melcher said.

"At some point in the future we will need to enlist the help of the public. It's a long standing model."

Wolf plan vote set for early June

State wolf biologists brief ODFW commission

By KATY NESBITT
For the East Oregonian

SALEM — The much anticipated vote by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commissioners on proposed updates to Oregon's wolf plan is set for June 7 in Salem.

State wolf biologists briefed the commissioners Friday and took questions during a phone conference at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife headquarters. The review began in January 2016 but public and stakeholder concerns over a draft released in April 2017 forced department staff hold facilitated meetings to try and find better consensus on contentious issues.

Kevin Blakely, ODFW deputy division administrator, said the commissioners offered some ideas of what they wanted included in the staff's formal presentation ahead of the commissioners' vote.

"They asked us to come to the June 7 meeting and present the plan addressing a couple things to tee up the discussion, but are not looking to edit or re-do the review," Blakely said.

One topic Blakely said staff is going to talk more about during its presentation is a proposed change to how many confirmed livestock losses equates into killing wolves. Right now, he said, Oregon Administrative Rule requires two confirmed livestock losses before the department will accept a request to kill wolves.

In a draft of the review, Blakely said three losses in 12 months would be the new trigger before staff would consider killing a wolf, but he said no one liked that proposal. The current draft proposes two livestock losses in nine months as the minimum.

Blakely pointed out that this trigger point is not mandatory, it only starts



ODFW photo

State wolf biologists briefed Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife commissioners Friday and took questions during a phone conference at ODFW headquarters.

AVAILABLE ONLINE

All information regarding the June 7 Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting will be available on the ODFW website at www.dfw.state.or.us by May 28.

the conversation about eliminating wolves.

"That limit starts a potential process," Blakely said. "There is value in that the department certainly has made different decisions depending on circumstances."

During the call commissioner Holly Akenson said data revealed that in the past the department did not move to lethal control at the bare minimum loss.

"From what I know of those actions, many were denied," Akenson said. "The new rule would mean we may or can go to lethal control — it does show this is not an automatic that we are killing wolves with two depredations in nine months."

Commissioner Bruce Buckmaster agreed with Akenson and said the commission was looking at a new iteration of the plan.

"It makes sense that the plan reflect our practice rather than put in something we know we won't follow," Buckmaster said.

The other hot topic surrounding the plan review is hunting wolves. During the May 17 conference call, Blakely said staff decided proposing wolf hunting at this time is not appropriate. Wolf hunts would be considered if and when

wolves were determined to be a major cause of the decline in deer and elk populations.

Wolf hunting has been part of the management strategy since the Oregon wolf plan was first approved in 2005, but under strict measures. Doug Cottam, ODFW wildlife division administrator, said using lethal control to help ungulate populations should be directly attributed to loss wolf predation.

"If we were to propose wolf hunting in the future, we need to consider how likely or defensible is that statement," Cottam said.

Blakely said as with the most recent adoption of the cougar plan, the department manages other predators for ungulate populations, as well.

Commission chairman Michael Finley cautioned department staff members when considering wolf



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Their numerous contributions to the community-at-large are deserving of recognition because they embody the spirit of volunteering and exemplify the heart of our healthcare system.



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