

Heppner Ranger District hosts sheriff’s office training

By JESSICA POLLARD
East Oregonian

MORROW COUNTY — The Heppner Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest hosted training for nine deputies and Sheriff Kenneth Matlack earlier this month about personal firewood harvesting within forest boundary lines.

“We wanted just to let them know, so if they get questions from the public they can answer them,” said Cindi Doherty, who works at the Heppner Ranger District and helped to coordinate the training.

Matlack said the training was a way to get local deputies up to speed on what is allowed in the forest when it comes to harvesting personal firewood.

“You can get yourself into a bunch of trouble if you don’t use permits, or if you take too much at the wrong time,” he said. “Sometimes we have people who are trying to steal stuff. We work with the public to help educate them. All we do is augment [the Forest Service] process.”

On Facebook, the Forest Service said the training was part of a “new partnership.” But according to Matlack, that partnership has existed for a long time.

“This is an old program that we’ve done for years,” he said. “There are more sheriff’s deputies available than their law enforcement at any given time.”

According to the U.S. Forest Service’s 2020 budget justification, almost \$5 million has been dedicated to maintaining the approximately 500 cooperative agreements with state, county and local partners across the country.

Last year’s amount was over \$6.8 million, according to 2019’s budget projections.

Matlack said the Mor-



Photo contributed by the U.S. Forest Service
Earlier this month, the Heppner Ranger District hosted a training for deputies at the Morrow County Sheriff’s Office.

row County Sheriff’s Office share of this is in the low thousands range, though he didn’t have an exact number for this year’s contract at the time of publication. No one at the Umatilla National Forest was available for comment.

Law enforcement officers— known as LEOs— are employed by the U.S. Forest Service to patrol forest lands as well. They’re authorized to carry firearms and can issue citations, make arrests, execute search warrants and perform other duties like police officers, according to the U.S. Forest Service website.

Money allocated by the Forest Service will pay for 691 law enforcement and investigations staff-years in 2020, according to the budget justifications.

There are than 140,000 acres of the Umatilla National Forest that fall into Morrow County lines.

“We’d go over there even if we weren’t contracted,” Matlack said. “The money makes it easier on our local county budget. We use those dollars first. It’s not an awful lot, but it’s certainly a lot of help.”

He said that in the past,

the sheriff’s office was understaffed. But right now, all positions are full. And anyone might find themselves working in the forest.

“We look on any criminal activity in the forest as part of our mission,” Matlack said.

But when the sheriff’s office isn’t helping solve crimes in the Umatilla National Forest, they might be assisting in different ways: notifying people who live on forestland of emergencies, promoting fire prevention, or managing spectators who might come to watch a fire or other natural disaster run its course.

Matlack added that earlier in the fall, deputies at the sheriff’s office were offered a tour of parts of the Umatilla National Forest that were damaged by the HK Complex fires, which burned for weeks across over 2,000 acres south of Heppner.

“I thought that was very helpful, very informative. They gave us an update on how the fire response works,” he said. “They have always been helpful, and always ready to help our people.”

Pilot Rock fire sends two people to hospital

PILOT ROCK— Two people were transported to St. Anthony Hospital for possible burns and smoke inhalation caused by a structure fire on the 200 block of North Alder Place Tuesday night.

The fire also destroyed a shed and two recreational vehicles.

The Pilot Rock Fire District was dispatched to the scene after 11 p.m. One RV was fully involved upon arrival. The fire nearly reached a house and an additional backyard shop, but was contained away

BRIEFLY

from the structures just after midnight.

The Pendleton Fire Department and Umatilla County Fire District 1 provided mutual aid during the incident. Mop-up of the fire lasted until after 3 a.m. Wednesday, and Pilot Rock Fire District kept at least

one unit on scene throughout the rest of the morning.

Pilot Rock Fire District could not be reached for comment before publication and did not offer a cause for the flames in a press release posted Wednesday morning.

— East Oregonian staff

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Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Faux headstones and skeletons adorn the lawn of a house at the intersection of Northwest 12th Street and Northwest Horn Avenue in Pendleton on Wednesday afternoon.

Lexington residents vote to recall mayor despite resignation

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

LEXINGTON — The recall election against Lexington mayor Marcia Kemp is officially over.

Kemp resigned earlier this month, rendering the results of the Oct. 22 special election a moot point, but 104 voters still turned in their ballots, voting 62-42 to recall her.

Lexington has about 238 residents total. Ninety-nine turned out to vote in an Oct. 1 recall election against city councilor Bill Beard, voting 54-43 to keep him in his seat.

Kemp and three of the city’s four city councilors had been in a feud for months over several items, including whether Kemp was allowed to vote on the appointment of councilor Curtis Thompson. On July 1, the city government shut down for nine days after not enough councilors showed up to pass the budget before the new fiscal year.

The recall against Kemp was filed by Lexington res-

ident Will Lemmon, who stated in his filing documents that she had failed her oath of office by “regularly exceeding the authority of the Mayor,” refusing to work with three council members, and “slandering” their character.

Kemp’s official response, initially indicating she would not step down, listed things she had done to improve Lexington during her time as mayor. She submitted a resignation letter to the East Oregonian on Oct.

10, stating she could not continue in office with a majority of the council refusing to work with her.

Councilor Bill Beard told the East Oregonian at the time of her resignation that Kemp stepping down cleared the way for the city to get back to focusing on improving Lexington. He did not return a call Wednesday asking what the council’s plan is for appointing someone in Kemp’s stead, and a call to city hall also went unanswered.

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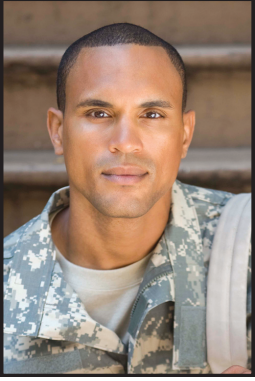


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This special section will print in the Hermiston Herald on Nov. 13th, 2019 and in the East Oregonian on Nov. 12th, 2019. There is NO CHARGE to be included. Bring us or send in photos of servicemen, servicewomen or veterans, along with the information in the form to the right, by November 1, 2019.

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