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# EAST OREGONIAN

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## Pendleton inmates remain constituents who can't vote

Redistricting council wards not a high priority for city

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Nearly 2,000 of McKennon McDonald's constituents will never vote for her.

Nor will they vote for the other Pendleton city councilor who represents Ward 2, Sally Brandsen. Any candidate who runs against them in the future won't have luck getting their votes either.

These holdouts aren't avoiding the ballot because they're apathetic or protesting the candidates' politics or policies. Instead, the inmates of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution and the Umatilla County Jail are in a political gray zone: legally prohibited from voting in elections but still counted toward representation in Congress, the Oregon Legislature and the Pendleton City Council.

While Oregon recently concluded its redistricting process for congressional and legislative seats, the city council



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

The Pendleton City Council meets Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2021, at Pendleton City Hall.

hasn't taken any steps to reconfigure its three wards.

While the ship has sailed on lobbying the Legislature from separating prisoners from the rest of the voting population, one group wants the city to amend its laws to align inmates

with where they actually live.

### What is prison gerrymandering?

According to its website, the Prison Policy Initiative is a nonpartisan nonprofit that "uses research, advocacy, and organizing to dismantle mass

incarceration." While the group is generally concerned with criminal justice reform, one of the issues it's most focused on is a practice it calls "prison gerrymandering."

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Inmates at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution and the Umatilla County Jail, both in Pendleton, cannot vote in elections, but they still count toward representation in Congress, the Oregon Legislature and the Pendleton City Council.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian



Rick Swart/Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Coho salmon in Eagle Creek, a tributary of the Columbia River, during the fall of 2009.

## Coho salmon run shatters record as steelhead numbers flop

By ALEX WITTEW  
EO Media Group

LOSTINE — A record shattering number of coho salmon have made the long journey from their home streams to the Pacific Ocean and back.

Nearly 24,000 coho salmon have passed through Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River — the last dam between the ocean and the Grande Ronde and Willowa rivers.

The prior record, set in 2014, saw 18,098 coho make their way past the Lower Granite Dam. In recent years, those numbers have fluctuated between 1,449 and 8,178, with 2020 seeing just 7,797 coho return to the Lower Granite Dam. The run this year marks more than a 300% increase from the previous year.

Part of that return could be attributed to the Nez Perce tribe's monumental work to reintroduce coho to the Lostine River and the Clearwater Basin. In 2017, the tribe began the work to return the salmon to the Lostine River after it was bereft of the silvery fish for over 40 years.

Becky Johnson, production division director for the tribe's Fishery Resource Management, was there when nearly 500,000 smolt were released into the Lostine River in 2017. She described the release as "awesome." The results were almost immediate — the next year, two coho were caught in the tribe's weir. Then, in 2021, 88 fish were caught in the net.

"Salmon are a really amazing, resilient creature, and if you just give them half a chance, if you provide the right conditions, the habitat and the clean water — I've been impressed with what they can do," Johnson said.

To be sure, not every coho released into the Lostine would return — predation and harvesting take their toll, as do natural diseases and parasites. Many more would return to different streams to spawn, in a process called straying. Still, the return is more than welcomed, and their journey was a long one in both length and time.

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## Pilot Rock's new fire chief has big goals for rural department

Community's first full-time fire chief sought place where neighbors help neighbors

By BRYCE DOLE  
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — Pilot Rock is upping its public safety efforts now that the fire board has hired its first full-time paid fire chief.

Herschel Rostov, 53, joined the department Oct. 1 after serving Washington fire departments for nearly three decades. A lifelong public servant with extensive training, Rostov said he's thrilled to lead a smaller department in a tight-knit rural community where resources are often few and far between.

"People that have worked in big cities and have a high level of technical experience, or a lot of education, those kinds of people are not

typically attracted to smaller departments," he said. "I feel like rural communities get shorted on the type of protection and expertise they get. I always wanted to bridge that gap and bring something that's not common in the rest of rural communities."

Pilot Rock Mayor Virginia Carnes said Rostov already is making a positive impact on the town. He has attended local pancake feeds and joins city council meetings to answer land-use and building questions. She said she's excited with how invested he appears to be in improving public safety in the roughly 1,300-person town.

"They've done an awesome job to start with," Carnes said of the fire department. "But this will bring us to a higher level."

Rostov's salary this year is \$48,000 plus benefits, according to Anita Willingham, bookkeeper for the Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

The Pilot Rock Fire Department's first full-time paid fire chief, Herschel Rostov, right, leads a training on air tanks Nov. 18, 2021, at the fire station in Pilot Rock.

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