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EASTERN OREGON

Fed judge won't block grazing in six pastures

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

PORTLAND — A federal judge has denied a temporary restraining order sought by environmental groups that would block grazing in six Eastern Oregon pastures.

U.S. District Judge Michael Simon said the environmental plaintiffs haven't shown that turning cattle out on the pastures will cause irreparable harm to sage grouse or to rangeland research.

Continued grazing isn't likely to irreparably harm the ability of environmental plaintiffs to enjoy undisturbed sagebrush grassland, since the pastures have long been grazed and are commonly rested on a rotating basis, he said.

Any hardship suffered by the environmental nonprofits is also "minimal" compared to the harm that a temporary restraining order would cause Cahill Ranches near Adel, Ore., which relies on an affected pasture to turn out cattle, the judge said.

"Several families' livelihoods depend on Cahill, which in turn depends on the ability to use public lands for its livestock operations," said Simon, noting that the public interest also doesn't weigh in favor of a temporary restraining order.

Six other ranches are also seeking to intervene in the case, which was filed against the U.S. Bureau of Land Management by the nonprofits Oregon Natural Desert Association, Audubon Society of Portland and Defenders of Wildlife.

Aside from seeking a temporary restraining order to stop cattle from being turned out on six pastures in April, the environmental plaintiffs have requested a broader preliminary injunction against grazing on a total of 13 Oregon pastures.

"There are a lot of other places the cattle can go," said Mac Lacy, attorney for the environmental groups during oral arguments March 28. "The permittees, we believe, have greatly overstated the harm they may suffer."

Grazing in the 13 pastures must end to allow for research into its impacts on sage grouse habitat, which has already been delayed to the detriment of that species and the environment, he said.

"Economic harm never outweighs irreparable environmental harm," Lacy said.

The environmental plaintiffs would suffer "severe" hardship from continued grazing, but the impact on BLM would be minimal while the affected ranchers have been on notice for years that livestock would

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Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Chris Zimmerman and Tanner Hawkins stand behind the bar of the Rainbow Cafe on Monday, March 28, 2022. They acquired the establishment in December. The pair plans to make some improvements but say they will retain the decor and ambiance of Pendleton's longest continually operating business.

New bosses at the 'Bow

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton's most famous bar is under new ownership.

Business partners Tanner Hawkins and Chris Zimmerman bought the historic Rainbow Cafe late last year, taking over for the McGee family. Hawkins, a farmer north of Pendleton, and Zimmerman, an office manager for his father's chiropractic office, officially bought the Rainbow on Dec. 28, the Rainbow's New Years celebration acting as an unofficial coming out party for the bar's new owners.

Hawkins and Zimmerman view themselves as stewards of one of Pendleton's oldest businesses, and are looking to maintain the spirit of the Rainbow that's been established over the decades.

"It's more than just a bar and cafe," Hawkins said. "It's an iconic little piece (of) downtown Pendleton. If it was any other business, I don't know that Chris and I ever would have pulled the trigger."

The Rainbow, the oldest, continuously operating bar in Oregon, began its life in 1883 as The State Saloon and Banquet, its business including both a brothel and opium den. After operating as a cigar shop during the Prohibition years, the business relaunched as the Rainbow, gaining its iconic neon sign and Irish themes in the early 1940s.

An accomplished drag car racer and longtime auto shop owner, Steve McGee moved from Lake Oswego back to his hometown of Pendleton in 1999 and bought the Rainbow with his wife, Joanne. McGee died in 2017, but Joanne continued to run the bar until selling it to Hawkins and Zimmerman.

The pair said they didn't buy the Rainbow looking to make money. They're keeping their day jobs and plan to reinvest any profits they make from operating the Rainbow back into the business. Hawkins said the new owners plan to renovate the Rainbow's bathrooms and are looking into converting the building's second story space into a vacation rental. But otherwise the core look and service that the Rainbow has been offering for decades will remain.

"We're not going to turn it into an Applebee's," Hawkins said. "It's gonna stay what it is. We're going to upgrade the bathrooms. (They) really need it. There's a lot of wear and tear that can be upgraded. But the Rainbow itself is not going to change."

The Rainbow is open from 6 a.m. to 2 a.m. six days per week (it closes at midnight on Sundays), meaning it serves both the early-morning coffee klatches and the late-night bar crowds. Zimmerman and Hawkins said they've been on both sides of the customer spectrum and wanted to respect the views of long standing patrons.

Hawkins said the pair consulted with regulars and staff to make sure they got

the traditions and decorations right during St. Patrick's Day, one of the Rainbow's biggest days of the year. Following two years of COVID-19, Hawkins said they were happy with the packed house they saw on March 17.

The partners credited staff for ensuring the business stayed open during the ownership transition. Hawkins compared the learning curve of operating a restaurant and bar to "drinking out of a fire hose," but he and Zimmerman have been able to lean on the Rainbow's workers to help teach them the ropes, from working with vendors to contacting temporary employees who help out during busy times.

Hawkins and Zimmerman said their workforce ranges from 12-15 employees, but they would like to hire more permanent workers to help keep their staff from getting stretched too thin. When a dishwasher called in sick one day, Zimmerman said he washed dishes for five hours at the Rainbow to help keep things moving.

While the new owners' first St. Patrick's Day is already in the books, summer event season is right around the corner. Hawkins said the Rainbow made a deal with Jackalope Jamboree to become the June music festival's official afterparty.

The Rainbow also is keeping an eye on the culmination of Pendleton's event season: the Round-Up. In the eyes of the Rainbow, Round-Up is "three or four St. Patrick's Days" put together.

County commissioner candidates take the stage

7 candidates running for 2 seats gave their spiels Thursday in Pendleton

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County commissioner candidates during a forum Thursday night, March 31, generally agreed homelessness, drug addiction and mental health are key areas to improve in the county.

The seven candidates on the stage at the Pendleton Convention Center also expressed near identical stances on a number of issues, including universal support for Umatilla County as a 2nd Amendment sanctuary, which voters passed in 2020, legal immigration and opposition to moving from a board of commissioners to a county manager.

Incumbent John Shafer is vying against two challengers: conservative activist HollyJo Beers and former Umatilla County employee Rick Pullen. Six candidates are running for the open Position 1 seat on the board: Business owners



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Umatilla County commissioner candidate Rick Pullen speaks to the audience during a candidates forum on Thursday, March 31, 2022, at the Pendleton Convention Center. Holly Jo Beers sits to his left and incumbent John Shafer is on the right.

Bob Barton of Hermiston, Jesse Bonifer of Athena, Susan Bower of Pendleton and Cindy Timmons of Milton-Freewater participated in the forum, but Alvin Young, a Hermiston store manager, and David Nelson, former state senator of Pendleton, were no-shows.

The format allowed a minute for some answers and 30 seconds for others. Sometimes, then, responses from candidates were like a puddle

— wide but not very deep.

Shafer touted his work spearheading the move for the county to not renew the contract with Lifeways Inc. for mental health services and instead bring on Community Counseling Solutions. The new nonprofit has been handling County mental health and addiction treatment since December 2021, and Shafer said there has been significant

improvement in services.

"Now we go to where you are when you are in crisis," he said, instead of telling someone they should go to a hospital.

He also said communities and organizations are making some headway dealing with homelessness, pointing to the work of Community Action Program of East Central Oregon to revitalize a former hotel in downtown Pendleton as the Promise Inn, homeless shelter and transitional housing project.

But the county has work to do when it comes to recharging aquifers in the west side of the county, he said, in critical ground water areas.

Beers said she is the Eastern Oregon head of Oregon Three Percenters, a right-wing group. She said she is a constitutionalist and would "bring a constitutional approach to county government." She said she would push for more accessibility and transparency in county government if she wins and make fighting drugs a priority.

She and several candidates said the county has to take on the increase in drug use and addiction

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