

# WHITTLE: Not all assignments good BOND: Company ups proposed levy intake

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Whittle credits his artist father for indirectly helping him pursue photography. "I really wanted to be an artist like my dad, but I could never get the images in my head on paper, so I decided to try photography, and once I did, it was all over."

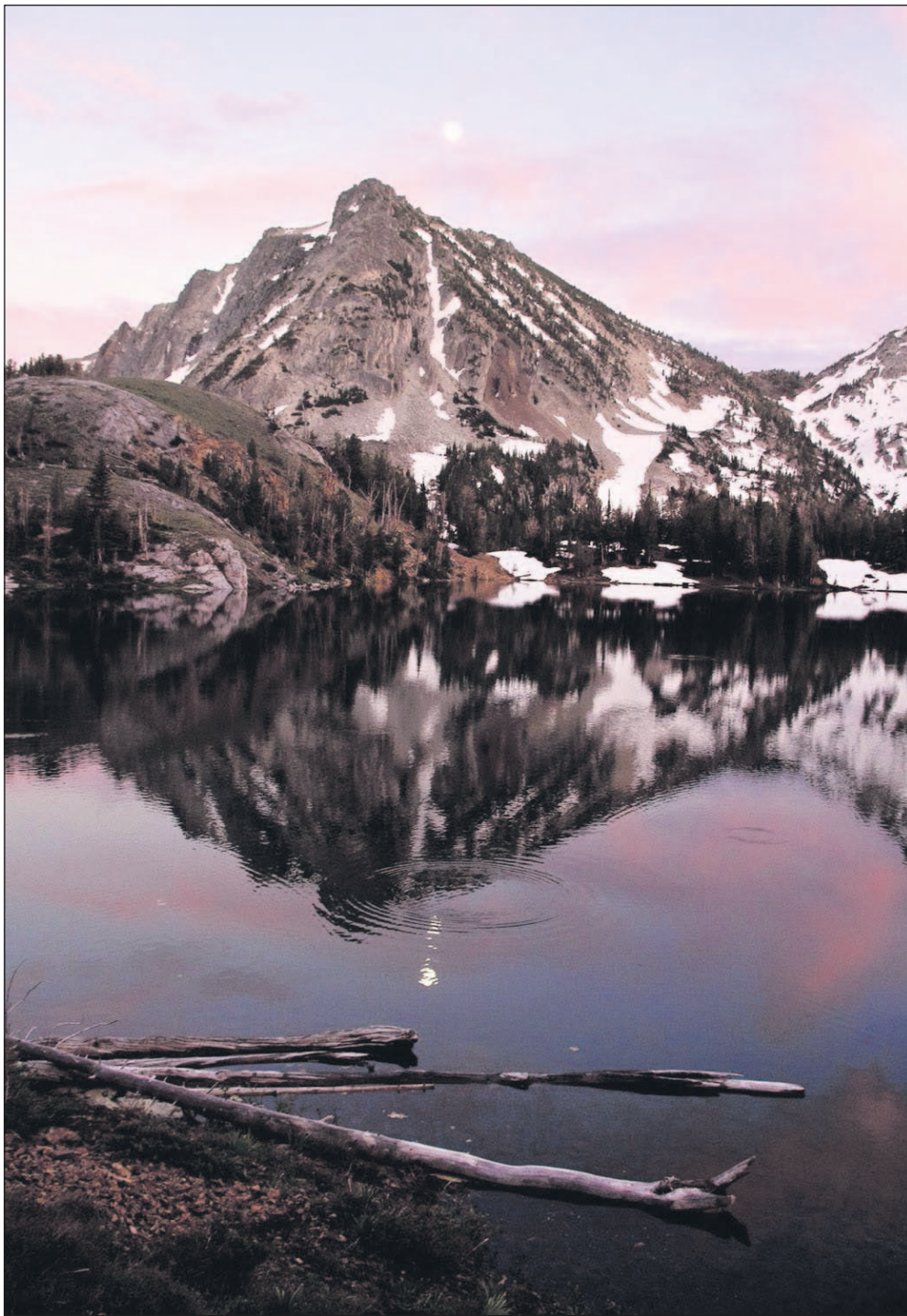
Graduating Brooks on the tail end of the 35mm film era, Whittle quickly adapted to digital photography, finding that the instant access to photos largely eliminated the stress of waiting to see the quality of a photo shoot. "Once I bought my first DSLR (digital single lens reflex) camera, I grew incredibly rapidly as a photographer," Whittle said.

One of Whittle's defining photography jaunts included a trip to Spain. "Spain was a new door for me as far as travel, street photography, documentary and photojournalism. I hit the streets with my camera and just started shooting whatever caught my eye."

Because of his membership in the Delaware and Caddo American Indian tribes, Whittle also finds himself drawn to photography of Native American tribes, which figure prominently in his website.

As much as he loves photography, Whittle gets his share of unpleasant assignments. "The worst was this contract I took for a week and a half as a K-Mart photographer during the holiday season because money was short. After the week and a half, I thought, 'I'll do anything but this.' It really saps your creative spirit," Whittle said.

His jobs come through local word-of-mouth and scanning craigslist and other sites as well as sending out queries to various publications. "Outside," "Backpacker," "1859" and other publications publish his work regularly. He credits a former Oregonian outdoor and travel editor with honing his writing chops and expanding



An example of Whittle's photography of the local area.

Courtesy photo/Joe Whittle

his potential market.

When asked about his favorite photo, Whittle laughed. "I can't decide on a favorite anything in my life, except the Wallowas are my favorite place to photograph. There's a lot of the world I haven't seen, but this is the most beautiful."

Whittle generally spends four months a year working as a backcountry ranger for the USFS during summer in his beloved Wallowas and Hells Canyon. "It's a great supplement job for what I love doing anyway, which is spending time back there," Whittle said.

As his daughter is now grown and attending Stanford University, Whittle looks to expand his horizons. "I'd like to get a staff gig with a nice publication doing photojournalism. It's really my number one love as far as photography goes," he said.

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The bond issuing company also suggested a small property tax increase to serve as revenue backup in case too many of the city's utility customers failed to pay their bills, including the fee for streets, leaving the city short of funds to pay its bondholders.

Schwab said the property tax caveat would protect the city from dipping into general funds in case of a shortfall and also make the bond more attractive to potential investors.

Sands asked Schwab for a timeline on issuing the bonds and getting street work started if the levy passed. Without the property tax clause, replied Schwab, the process could take as long as two years. If it's included, however, it could begin as early as June or July. Schwab said she planned to work on the figures the following day to give a definitive answer.

The mayor said he planned to ask for a \$1.3 million levy as it still worked out to about \$11 per month as a transportation utility fee. He added that the council needed to consider placing two items on the ballot: imposition of the transportation utility fee, and the issuance of general obligation bonds to be repaid by the transportation utility fee or the property tax backup.

Schwab suggested making it very clear to voters that property owners would only be paying the additional tax if there were a shortfall in transportation utility fees collected. Councilor Sharon Newell

said Joseph citizens she knew did not support property tax increases for any reason. "This is a gamble. When people hear the word property tax and know what government is capable of doing — I can't vote for it."

"I think we're at a standstill," said Sands. "If we go ahead with this, it's gonna be a helluva sales job to convince people it's basically \$11 a month and that the property tax is just an insurance policy for the bondholders. Or we could go through all of this and come up short again — or we say it's an unsolvable problem and live with it."

The council followed with a discussion about writing an ordinance to shut off the water of people who do not pay their transportation utility fees. City recorder Donna Warnock said the city typically sends out 20 late notices per month to water users with one to four users per month getting their water shut off for non-payment. Sands said he planned to look through records to ascertain the monthly delinquency rate and see if the city could still pay the bond service with only the fee revenue.

The council followed with a vote to increase the bond total to \$1.3 million with a transportation utility fee of \$11 per month and a measure to issue a general obligation bond of \$1.3 million payable by the transportation utility fee with property taxes levied only in case of an anticipated shortfall in fees.

The motion passed, 3-1, supported by Sands, Ballard and Sturm while Newell voted against it.

## DOLLARS: Some payments could fall through cracks

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Yet, she says, only three filed for such potential funding in Wallowa County within the last year.

Roberts suggested the other half dozen or so might not wish to share confidential information, especially since monetary reimbursements could be small or nonexistent. Among the four direct-loss victims due to be reimbursed from the \$3,920 total is the Went Operation on Crow Creek, which lost 23 sheep in one wolf attack May 30, two calves in separate incidents in the Chesnimnus area, and one calf near Imnaha.

The funding breakdown for non-lethal measures includes a maximum of \$53,000 from the federal government, which will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the state (for each dollar spent), and \$40,000 of that total already has been requested by the county to hire range riders during the next 12 months.

In years past, said Roberts, about \$15,000 of non-lethal deterrence money went to purchase five miles of turbo-fladry — flapping red plastic flagging with electrical wiring. She said the fladry was only minimally effective in protecting livestock from wolves, however.

She indicates the only way any or all of the \$33,200 of indirect wolf losses suffered here, and more elsewhere, could be refunded in 2015 is if the ODA redirects some of the state money it was going to use for the

dollar-for-dollar match on the feds' non-lethal spending.

According to Roberts, indirect livestock losses to wolves are calculated by using herd histories for the previous 10 years, establishing a base percentage of livestock that are brought back in after being turned out for grazing. Thereafter, if the percentage of returning cattle is lower than usual, the producer should be eligible for some reimbursement.

Roberts points out that indirect losses steadily have increased in tandem with the rise of the wolf population here. ODFW's latest annual wolf population report for Oregon, released Feb. 24, reported a minimum total of 77 wolves in Oregon compared to a minimum total of 14 wolves at the conclusion of 2009.

Roberts says she has conferred with the Oregon Cattlemen's Association on the issue of funding producers' indirect

losses. She has also spoken with two state legislators and has drafted proposed state legislation that would provide tax credits for the losses. Currently, producers approved for direct loss compensation have the option of receiving tax credits in lieu of cash reimbursements, but no such option is available for indirect losses, which often reflect depredations occurring in remote areas where ODFW confirmation isn't feasible.

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## NUMBERS: More in state, official says

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Although not listed as Wallowa County wolves, Roberts says the collared leader of the Umatilla Pack recently was identified as being at Dug Bar, where the Imnaha and Snake rivers join, and later was seen at the Joseph Canyon Viewpoint along Highway 3. She contends that the identified Zumwalt Pack has no collared wolves, meaning livestock producers within that pack's general territory virtually are defenseless against wolf depredation.