

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

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Wallowa County Sheriff Steve Rogers

UNDER THE GUN

New law spawns confusion, resistance

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

As of May 11, most gun sales in the state of Oregon require a background check. But don't expect Wallowa County Sheriff Steve Rogers to come hunting you down to check your papers.

"My office will continue to work our cases and do the work a sheriff is mandated to do to keep our community safe and happy. However I will not make any of my citizens a criminal, based on what I see as a violation of their constitutional rights," he said. "As always true criminals trying to gain access to firearms will be prosecuted."

Rogers is well supported in his viewpoint by sheriffs across the state.

"I don't know of a sheriff in the state that doesn't think this is a violation of the Constitution," Rogers said. "Opposition to this law is totally non-partisan. It's personal. I took an oath to uphold the constitutions of the United States and the State of Oregon, as well as the laws of the state. I do not believe that an unfunded mandate by the state is a law that should not be challenged in the courts as a violation of constitutional rights that was not sent to a vote of the people."

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Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain
Wallowa County Sheriff Steve Rogers at work.

Suspect in Imnaha domestic dispute surrenders

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

The man who had more than a dozen deputies and troopers, a SWAT team and an armored vehicle looking for him earlier this week walked in and out of police custody Tuesday night.

Scott Lee Foust, 53, the suspect in the Imnaha River Woods domestic dispute incident of May 11, voluntarily surrendered to Wallowa County Sheriff's Office (WCOS) deputies at 8 p.m. May 13. He was arrested without incident and charged with unlawful use of a weapon, fourth-degree assault, menacing and pointing a firearm at another.

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Joseph buffers out dispensaries

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Anyone who planned to open a marijuana dispensary in side the Joseph city limits could have watched their plans go up in smoke at a May 7 city council meeting. In response to the upcoming legalization of marijuana in Oregon, the council unanimously approved ordinance 2015-1 that effectively bans the possibility of opening a dispensary within the city limits.

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NO SNOW

Water managers prepare for drought

Rob Ruth/Chieftain

Separate layers of clouds appear as both cap and skirt to the Wallowa Mountains on Tuesday morning following a night of heavy rain in the valley. Wallowa County's watermaster says receiving plenty of spring rain could help soften the effects of the winter's record-low snowfall in the local mountains.

THE WINTER OF 2015 WILL GO DOWN IN OREGON'S HISTORY BOOKS AS THE YEAR THAT WAS DOMINATED BY BARE GROUND IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Wallowa County Watermaster David Bates

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

Although the National Drought Monitor reports that Northeast Oregon has been elevated to the "severe drought" category for this summer, Wallowa Lake is holding 157 percent of the usual amount of water. But don't take that as a sign that Wallowa County will be drought-free.

"What that really means is

our dam tender, Jim Hite, and Tom Butterfield, president of the Associated Ditch Companies of Joseph, have been keeping a close eye on what will be needed and began storing water earlier than usual," said Wallowa County Watermaster David Bates.

That water will no doubt be needed; Aneroid Lake weather station reports a snow water equivalent (the amount of water that is in snow) of 48 percent of average for this time of the year.

"Aneroid Lake set a new record low for peak snow pack level this winter," Bates said. "And basin-wide, for precipitation, we are 86 percent of average."

What has saved Wallowa County so far has been precipitation that has come as falling rain.

"We just have to see what the weather systems bring for rain," said Bates. "It's possible we may get enough rain."

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Veteran's favorite bronze shut away

Statue was cast at old Joseph foundry; local vets posed with it

By Rob Ruth
Wallowa County Chieftain

Vietnam veteran Errol Roberts is aiding the cause to get one of the world's largest patriotic bronzes back on public display.

Roberts, a Wallowa County native who currently lives in La Grande, enjoys traveling to Branson, Mo., with his wife Barbara every couple of years or so to take in that city's patriotically themed attractions, especially the Veterans Memorial Museum.

He has felt a sense of deep personal connection between the museum and

his own family since October 2000, the month it became home to a 15-ton, monumental memorial bronze depicting 50 full-size World War II soldiers, modeled on 50 actual WWII veterans, one from each of the nation's 50 states. (The soldier from Kansas is Bob Dole, who went on to serve in the U.S. Senate.)

The statue, the work of artist Fred Hoppe, of Malcolm, Neb., who also sculpted pieces honoring soldiers who fought in other U.S. wars, was cast at the old Joseph Bronze Foundry.

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Courtesy photo Errol Roberts stands next to part of the 50-man statue, currently stored in a warehouse in Missouri. Roberts, a Wallowa County native who now lives in La Grande, remembers when his father, the late Ivan Roberts, was photographed next to the statue after it was loaded aboard a trailer at the old Joseph Foundry.

