

Akenson reinstated to Wildlife Commission

By Steve Tool

Wallowa County Chieftain

The Oregon State Senate recently voted 22-8 to reinstate retired wildlife biologist Holly Akenson of Enterprise for another four-year term on the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission. Confirmation of Akenson, along with commissioner Michael Finley of Medford, was delayed from April 2015 due concerns by some of a lack of ODFW Commission budget oversight as well as pressure from sport-fishing and stockgrowers groups to appoint commissioners with their interests at heart.

The seven-member commission consists of one person from each congressional district plus one person from each side of the Cascades. The commission determines ODFW policy and wildlife management practices. The ODFW Commissioners serve a maximum of two four-year terms.

The 22-8 vote came as somewhat of a surprise to Akenson.

"It (the no votes) was a little more than I expected, but I guess that's politics in Salem," she said.

Akenson attended high school in Baker City before attending college at Eastern Oregon University, where she earned degrees in biology and secondary education. She earned her master's degree at the University of Idaho.

Akenson has lived and worked as a biologist in both



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission member Holly Akenson of Enterprise.

Idaho and Oregon. She has never been a full-time ODFW employee.

"I had a short-term position and did some contract work," she said.

She also served as field station manager/scientist for the University of Idaho, where she did research and ran programs for college students.

In 2011, the office of Gov.

John Kitzhaber contacted Akenson to see if she was interested in serving on the commission. The vetting process included an appearance before the state Senate Rules

Committee and other senators before her original nomination was confirmed by the entire Senate. During her recent re-confirmation hearing, Akenson met with some senators before the vote.

Akenson said she appreciates the role the commission plays in Oregon wildlife management and mentioned several important issues she took part in during her first term — the most critical being wolf management. She was among the four commission members who voted to delist the wolf from state Endangered Species Act protections in November.

"I think the wolf delisting is a positive thing for Oregon that won't stop wolves from being protected but will allow for us to continue to use the wolf plan," she said.

Conservation management of non-game wildlife also is important to Akenson, as there's not direct funding to do work in that area. The ODFW just finished updating a 10-year plan that gives private individuals and organizations ideas on what could benefit a variety of important non-game species in Oregon.

"I'll be working to find other funding sources for that plan," she said.

Sage Grouse protection also is a very controversial subject in the West, something the ODFW Commission

also tackled.

"I was pleased that the collaborative stakeholder groups that had different interests came together and helped determine how Oregon protects Sage Grouse while providing viable opportunities for employment and agricultural interests. The result of that plan contributed to the (U.S.) government deciding not to list (Endangered Species List) the Sage Grouse, which makes it easier on folks in Oregon."

Akenson cited the example of the Sage Grouse issue providing mutually beneficial aid to the grouse and ranchers by allowing for the removal of Juniper trees which soak up valuable ground water as well as encroaching on sage brush, as well as providing monies to both fight and prevent rangeland fires.

She said her ability to bridge gaps and find common ground with opposing factions is her greatest offering to the commission.

"I've had people tell me I have communication skills that work well in controversial situations. I like being able to communicate with people of different perspectives and feel like we're connecting and not just ignoring each other. As long as we can keep talking and communicating, it helps people feel better about a given situation."



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Dispatch log

- Nov. 23**
2:12 p.m.: Found lab cross dog with GPS collar; owner located
- Nov. 24**
2:11 p.m.: Baker City police arrested William Gabriel Roger, 35, of Joseph on a Wallowa County parole violation. Transported to Union County Jail.
8:48 p.m.: Lost Springer Spaniel in Enterprise.
9:13 p.m.: Vehicle in ditch outside of Enterprise.
- Nov. 25**
7:41 a.m.: Report of property damage in rural Joseph.
10:44 a.m.: Report of two trees cut on private property in rural Joseph.
11:35 a.m.: Theft in rural

FOR THE RECORD

- Enterprise.
12:26 p.m.: One-vehicle accident on Highway 3.
- Nov. 26**
10:30 a.m.: Report of lost dog in Enterprise.
4:40 p.m.: Vehicle in the ditch on Hurricane Creek.
- Nov. 27**
11:05 a.m.: 911 call reporting verbal domestic dispute in rural Wallowa.
11:22 a.m.: Vandalism reported in Wallowa.
- Nov. 28**
1:58 p.m.: Report of injured elk in rural Lostine.
4:54 p.m.: Possible wolf depredation reported in rural Lostine;

- determined to be unfounded.
5:29 p.m.: Lost dog reported in Joseph; reunited with owner.
7:45 p.m.: 911 call for possible electrical fire in Enterprise.
- Nov. 29**
9:52 a.m.: Report of red bag lost between Joseph and Enterprise on Highway 82.
10:37 a.m.: Cougar sighting in Enterprise.
5:06 p.m.: 911 call reporting traffic crash with property damage in Wallowa.

The Wallowa County Chieftain

2015 GRIDIRON CONTEST

The GRAND PRIZE WINNER will be announced in the December 9th Edition!

Jim Clegg won the week 11 football contest with 11 correct picks!

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Student of the Week

Emma Carlsen has earned a 3.91 cumulative GPA while at EHS. She has taken two years of foreign language Algebra II and College Math. She has excelled in the Sciences taking Physics, Animal Science and College Biology. She has challenged herself with AP Language and Composition and College Writing 121. She has enjoyed Psychology, Band and is a four year Agricultural Sciences student. She has completed 16 college credits and is currently enrolled in Chemistry and Writing 122. Thank you Emma for making EHS a better place.

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The Student of the Week is chosen for academic achievement and community involvement. Students are selected by the administrators of their respective schools.

Catch the Bus!

- **Intercity Transportation to La Grande** Monday and Thursday Weekly ~ Cost \$5.00 each way. Free access for veterans medical appointments in La Grande.
- **Mealsite Bus** ~ providing transportation to Senior Center for lunch ~ Cost \$1.00 round trip.
- **Tuesday & Thursday Shopping Bus** provides transportation for shopping and errands throughout Wallowa County ~ Cost \$3.00 from Wallowa/Joseph, \$2.00 Enterprise only.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION OF WALLOWA COUNTY

WINTER WONDERLAND

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Join us for Winter Wonderland, presented by BMW of Tri-Cities. Tree lighting, performances, family-friendly activities and festivities for all ages!

DECEMBER 3 FROM 5:00 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M.
Uptown Shopping Center Open House

- Featuring luminaries outside participating store fronts
- Central United Protestant Choir
- Special customer treats, specials, and gift certificates
- Visit Santa

Uptown Theater 6:00 p.m.
Free Holiday Classic Movie: White Christmas

DECEMBER 5 @ 5:00 P.M.
Holiday Mini-Parade and Tree Lighting
Warming Fire and Entertainment by the Lee Blvd. Dock Lighted Boat Parade
Santa House, with Santa, the Grinch, Olaf and an elf too!
Horse Drawn Carriage Ride - Vendor
Holiday Movie on a Giant Outdoor Screen: Polar Express
Food Vendors

DECEMBER 4 @ 6:00 P.M.
Warming Fire by the Lee Blvd. Dock Lighted Boat Parade
Santa House, with Santa, the Grinch, Olaf, and an elf too!
Horse Drawn Carriage Ride - Vendor
Food Vendors

Richland Community Center

- Model Railroad Display
- Mid-Columbia Ballet: Nutcracker Excerpt and Photo Opportunity
- Professional Entertainment
- Bingo with Santa's Elf
- Holiday Movie

Richland Community Center

- Bouncy Land
- Model Railroad Display
- Bingo with Santa's Elf
- Holiday Crafts

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