

FEES

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Initially, Lawrence thought the county had until the end of the fiscal year to close the gap, but the landfill is supported by a special fund and cannot be allowed to operate in the red for even a single month.

“All we can do is put general funds in there until June, and we don’t have a lot of

money to spare in general funds,” Lawrence said.

Commissioners have budgeted an extra \$90,000 to cover the predicted shortfall and machinery repair costs for 2016, but obviously a new way to fund the facility will have to be found, Lawrence said.

Commissioners settled upon the 40 percent increase after research indicated Wallowa County prices were significantly lower than those of nearby counties.

“I checked the fees in Union, Baker and Asotin, and they’re way higher than we are by 37 to 79 percent,” Lawrence said.

Chris Borgerding of Borgerding Contracting said he already knew Wallowa County fees were low and he didn’t know how the facility was “staying above water” with those fees.

“Compared to other counties it’s been pretty low,” he said. “I think it’s worth the extra cost.”

Builder Gene (Sonny) Settergren of Joseph said he knew he was getting off pretty cheaply in Wallowa County, after having worked in Bend and Portland, which have much higher tipping fees.

“I know our costs are really cheap here and I can see why they have to jack it up,” he said. “That (increase) will affect when I’m doing demolition work, and it might hurt the roofing guys worse because they have to haul a lot to the landfill.”

Don Casper of Casper Roofing of Wallowa confirmed that the cost was not something he was taking as philosophically as the builders.

“It’s just going to increase our disposal fees across the board, it just goes back to the people we work for,” he said.

Local garbage pickup in the cities of Joseph and Enterprise is contracted to Rahn Sanitary Services, and their costs are determined by their contract with each city.

Co-owner Amanda Rahn said the commissioners have given her company more time — until May 1 — to meet the first fee increase so that Rahn can discuss rates with city officials and notify its customers.

“We have to go through Enterprise and Joseph City Council to increase our rates for garbage pickup,” Rahn said. “We’re kind of still figuring this out. We’ll be sending out a letter to our customers.”

BIOCHAR

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And, though it is characterized as a “new” product, due to fires (natural and man-made) it has been part of the ecosystem for a long time.

Biochar is made by ther-

mo-chemically converting woody debris and agricultural biomass into a solid material resembling charcoal. Due to its stability and persistence in the soil, a single application of biochar can boost fertility for years. Additional benefits include reducing soil acidity and increasing nutrient and water retention.

Dusty Moller of the Washington State Energy Program spoke to a small group of interested Wallowa County farmers and ranchers in February about the possibility of using locally sourced biochar.

Furthermore, a trial is underway to find out if biochar is a good option for Wallowa County.

Wallowa Resources, working in conjunction with Oregon State University Extension in Pendleton, is preparing to test biochar on soil taken from

five sites throughout Wallowa County.

“If we can demonstrate soil benefits that translate to more efficient and higher yielding farms, we will create more opportunities for family operations to sustain their livelihoods and entice a new generation to enter agriculture,” said Kyle Petrocine, Wallowa Resources’ Renewable Energy Coordinator.

Petrocine hopes that over the long term, biochar will catalyze investment and new

job creation while supporting much-needed forest restoration work.

“With the results of the soil testing, the next step will be scaling up the trial and starting field application,” said Petrocine. “The project contributes to a regional need to improve the economics for forest restoration through new value-added products and services. It could add substantially to our manufacturing base as we have an enormous amount of potential biochar production here.”

SPARKS

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Furthermore, Sparks is a little too good at creating a market. He currently runs a sales route that takes him to Pendleton, Lewiston/Clarkston, Walla Walla, the Tri-Cities, Baker and La Grande. And word has gone out to Heppner, Ukiah and throughout the Blue Mountains, Sparks said.

“I’ve got more than I can do. I’ve been working at this for a year and now I’ve got a system that works.

“I get orders for thousands of pieces — I just got an order for 5,400 pieces and I had 400 pieces available. If I know other reliable guys and we can work together to supply each other, we can all do well.”

It’s a concept that has been slow coming to realization for a lot of people: the idea that competition can be cooperation. But it’s a concept that Sparks is very familiar with. One he’s had a lot of experience with. And one he believes in wholeheartedly.

As Sparks explains his dream of filling his yard with other contractors swapping product for service, for equipment usage, for knowledge, a phrase comes up over and over; it’s Sparks goal: to build a network of connection.

Sparks is the man who could get the wheels within wheels turning and make that connection of independent contractors work because not only does he have a location he’s willing to share as a home base, he knows how to make the connections, to develop the market and to help a start-up contractor estimate the work potential on a piece of forestland.

In his younger days in the Livingston/Bozeman corner of Montana, Sparks managed 1,000 acres of private land that had been burned out by wildfire. That job, which lasted three years, supported as many as 11 portable mills owned by private contractors — “from retired folks to a guy who has extra equipment he wants to put to work,” Sparks said.

He also spent many years working as a warehouseman for a private contractor in war zones from Kosovo to Afghanistan. He knows how to set up systems.

“The system I’ve set up allows for small equipment and a small start-up cost,” Sparks said. “Now all I need is a few good men.”

To contact Ed Sparks Direct Post and Poles of Wallowa, call 541-398-1056 or email directpostandpole@gmail.com.

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WOLF

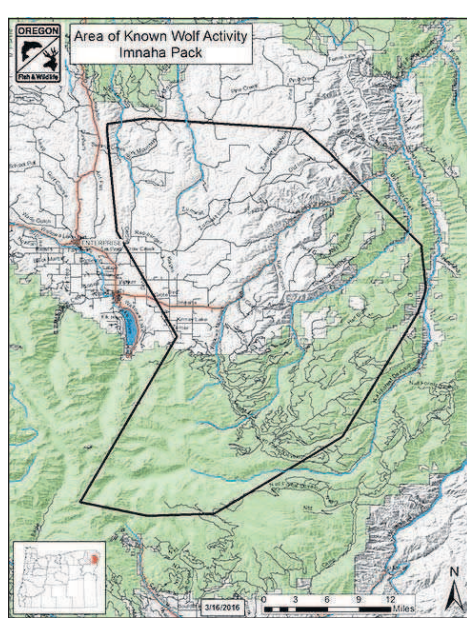
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A third, live calf was found in the same pasture with “numerous bite wounds and severe tissue damage on both hind legs.”

Incident reports indicate fresh wolf tracks were discovered near the carcasses and GPS radio-collar data confirm two members of the Imnaha Pack — OR-4 and OR-39 — were in the area at the time.

ODFW investigators previously confirmed a separate wolf depredation involving a calf in the same pasture on March 9. A fourth depredation, involving an adult male sheep, was confirmed about 3 miles away on March 25.

On March 17 ODFW of-



Courtesy of ODFW

Imnaha Pack AKWA map, issued March 17.

officials released an updated map of the Area of Known Wolf Activity for the Imnaha Pack, which roams primarily in Wallowa County. The newest AKWA map, last revised in December, now extends across much of the Zumwalt Prairie area north of Enterprise.

ODFW Wildlife Communications Coordinator Michelle Dennehy said the state is considering a request for lethal action that was made by some Wallowa County ranchers.

“Wolves have moved into a new area and the (Imnaha

Pack) is showing new behavior up there,” Dennehy said. “We’re considering the lethal request, but no decision has been made.”

ODFW has filed official incident reports on nine wolf depredation investigations so far in 2016. Five have been confirmed depredations, one was categorized as “possible/unknown” and three were determined not to be related to wolves. The only confirmed wolf depredation this year that didn’t occur in Wallowa County involved a heifer in Klamath County in late February.

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