

# Lightning sparks 1st wildfire of season

East Oregonian

Wildfire season has begun on the Umatilla National Forest.

Andrew Stinchfield, fire management officer on the North Fork John Day Ranger District, said lightning has sparked a one-acre blaze in a remote area of the forest about seven miles northwest of Granite. No structures or private land are threatened at this time.

With rain in the forecast and numerous hazards to firefighters, Stinchfield said they will monitor the fire indirectly unless it gets out of hand. Ian Reid, district ranger, said that decision weighs the forest's need to protect property and keep fire crews safe.

"Given the fire's location deep in the wilderness, rugged terrain, distance from private property and hazards with limited medical evacuation options, directly suppressing this fire would create unnecessary exposure to our firefighters," Reid said.

The fire is believed to have started during a storm that rolled over Eastern Oregon on April 29, scattering 2,000 lightning strikes throughout the region.

Forest personnel will continue to monitor for additional fires that might be left smoldering in the wilderness.

# County hires new vegetation manager

Oberhelman comes with energy and experience

By Kathleen Ellyn  
Wallowa County Chieftain

They've got him hidden down Marr Pond Lane, tucked in behind some buildings in the Road Department compound. His office is next to a garage door that says "hazardous materials."

But there's nothing hazardous or hidden about Ryan Oberhelman. He's a fresh-faced young man with an impressive set of skills he hopes to put to good use.

Oberhelman is the new county vegetation department manager. He replaced Alan Schnetzky, who recently retired after 13 years on the job.

Schnetzky developed a solid program for fighting weeds in Wallowa County, so Oberhelman knows he's got some big shoes to fill. The Wallowa County fight against noxious weeds is a nearly \$2 million-per-year fight. The county's part of that budget is \$357,386. Individual farmers programs and work by Wallowa Resources and others account for the rest of the money spent.

"A lot of what I'll do in the coming year is make the program my own," Oberhelman said. "I'll do more outreach, hire a vegetation coordinator to replace Ashley Spaur (who quit to take care of a new baby) and get a technician



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Wallowa County Vegetation Manager Ryan Oberhelman.

full time to go out and help treat landowner properties."

Helping treat landowner properties is high on his list. As bad as funding for programs can be in a small county, Oberhelman has money left over in one particular project that he'd like private landowners to take advantage of — the co-share of weed control costs on private land. The Vegetation Department will kick in up to \$500 on

those costs and will provide consultations for free.

Another program Oberhelman really wants private landowners to use is the upcoming weed tour. The tour is held every year in conjunction with farmers and ranchers and weed warriors from Asotin County, and this year the tour is all in Wallowa County and recertification for applicators is one benefit of taking the tour. The 13th an-

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Ryan Oberhelman

nual Weed Tour is May 27, and they'll meet at 9 a.m. at Cloverleaf Hall in Enterprise. There will be four Oregon and three Washington pesticide recertification credits available for this training.

Another benefit this year is the opportunity to see how a drone can be used to police weeds in the county.

The subjects being covered include weed identification, calibration, drone inventory, Common bugloss herbicide test plots and new chemical formulations.

A lunch will be provided. RSVP Oberhelman at 541-426-3332 ext.206 or email : roberhelman@co.wallowa.or.us if you plan to attend.

Also over the next two years Oberhelman will be overseeing the fight against Wallowa County's Most Wanted — meadow hawk weed — from Bear Creek to Lostine in 2015-2016 and from Lostine to Wallowa Lake in 2016-2017.

It's a big job but Oberhel-

man has a lot of energy and has spent 10 years working in conservation and weed management in Wyoming and other areas.

"My educational background is in communications and outreach. My natural interest is in rural development."

Oberhelman has earned three degrees: a bachelor of arts from Reed College in Portland, a masters in Great Plains studies and English from the University of Nebraska and a masters from the University of Wyoming in environment and natural resources and creative writing.

Oberhelman knew about Wallowa County long before his arrival.

"My parents live in Walla Walla, so every time I came down we'd go to Terminal Gravity, the lake, ride the tram and hike around. I knew this was a beautiful place. I thought, 'Man, I lucked out,' when I got asked to do this job."

# SMITH

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One can obtain sound science-based information on nutritional and lifestyle choices at reliable websites like NutritionFacts.org, "Physicians for Responsible Medicine" and "American College of Lifestyle Medicine".

Another great battle strategy is what Dan Buettner of

the "Blue Zones" advocates — changing your environment so that you can "make the healthy choice the easy choice."

Finally, the JAMA article points out that as citizens we "can vote in two ways; with the ballot, for politicians who place priority on food policies in the public interest; and also with the fork. With

every food purchase, the food industry can be incentivized to market healthful food instead of commodity-based industrial products."

Together we can make a difference in this battle and stem or forestall this looming social and economic catastrophe by effectively addressing the epidemic of obesity and other chronic diet-related dis-

eases in our society that are killing us.

*Kenneth D. Rose, MD, is a general surgeon at Mountain View Medical Group in Enterprise. Dr. Emily Sheahan, MD is Family Medicine/Obstetrics specialist at Mountain View Medical Group.*

# STREET

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By the way, Johnson also gave us Medicare.

These presidents and programs were not about diminishing and denigrating government, but about making it work for more people. And in each case it was an army of government workers — and not contractors vying for the biggest possible payday — who built the programs.

Some time ago, Wendell Berry — or was it Gary Snyder — advised environmentalists that the most radical thing they could do for the environment was to stay home. I would make a similar challenge to the armies of Obama and Bernie: go to work for the government and make it work. Forget, for a few years anyway, the condo in Sun Valley and the big new boat. Make government work better.

I don't blame it on any party or faction — anti-government sentiments come from right and left. But the notion that government "is the problem" runs contrary to the American idea that a band of citizens can look past individual self-interest to create a better world for all of us. I can't build highways or airports, manage a police force or run a university extension and research system by myself. It takes an army of smart, committed government workers to make that work. And to give us the crop insurance program, the highway, internet or Medicare program that we will need in the future.

Columnist Rich Wand-schneider lives in Joseph. Editor's note: This column was submitted for last week's edition and was intended to appear in print before Oregon's May 17 primary.

## Spring Training!

Join us for two FREE evening presentations before the official start of our 2016 Season!

**Tues, May 17th • 6-7pm**

### Matthew Morriss Earthquake Mapping

Have you ever wondered what was under your feet? Not just 10, but 100, or even 10,000 ft below your shoes? Scientists from the University of Oregon, Whitman College, and the California Institute of Technology are asking that very question in Wallowa County.

This group of researchers will be using the energy of distant earthquakes to make an image of what lies beneath our region.

**Wed, May 18th • 6-7:30pm**

### Dr. Dennis Jenkins Can You Dig It?

Making his way through the high desert caves near Paisley, Oregon, Dennis Jenkins seeks not crystal skulls and golden idols, but 14,000-year-old coprolites — otherwise known as ancient human waste.

Known in some circles as "Dr. Poop," Dr. Jenkins has helped to redefine theories about Oregon's first human inhabitants.

**Wallowology Opens!  
Fri, May 27th • 10am-3pm**

**Our 2016 Season brings many exciting events!**

Lamprey Presentation by Todd Sweeney; Pollination Presentation by Dr. Karen Antell; Mammoth Presentation by Dr. Loren Davis; Astronomy Club Presentations; Nature Outings; Expeditions; And much more

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## Wallowology!

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