

MONEY FOR WEED WARRIORS



Courtesy photo
Musk thistle is one of the most prevalent of thistles in the county. The county was awarded two grants from Oregon State Weed Board this year to help remove it, as well as welted and plumeless thistles in Wallowa County. The goal is containment and eradication of all of these species. “I am trying to get the word out that there is free money for people who have these weeds and we are going to be working our tails off to kill them all this summer,” said Ryan Oberhelman Wallowa County vegetation manager.

Wallowa County residents make multiple trips to Standing Rock

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Local citizens Joe Whittle and Quintin Lynch, after watching media coverage of the Standing Rock pipeline protests in North Dakota, decided they wanted to take part.

Both men said the trips made a deep impact on their lives, both spiritually and in their world view as they witnessed the heights of humanity as well as its worst aspects.

Whittle is a Wallowa County native who works as a backcountry ranger for the U.S. Forest Service, as well as a freelance photographer/journalist. He is an enrolled member of the Delaware and Caddo tribes of Oklahoma. Lynch, originally from New Hampshire, recently moved with his family to this area from central Washington.

He wanted to get involved with the protest, first by supporting the Wallowa County for Standing Rock Facebook page. Within two days, the site had helped raised \$3,000 for a trip to the site to bring winter clothes, food and firewood.

Jaime Stone, a friend of Whittle’s, invited him along for the ride.

“I was really rewarded by the fact that people of so many different walks of life came together to support the cause and our trip over there. People donated who were multi-generational family farmers or even members of patriot movements. The struggle for freedom and to stand up against government oppression appealed to them,” he said.

In November 2016, Whittle departed for Standing Rock. He was also documenting the protest for “The Guardian,” a British newspaper.

“Part of my goal as a journalist is to bring indigenous narrative into the mainstream media so we (Native Americans) can speak for ourselves and not be spoken for,” he said.

On the first trip Whittle stayed at the main camp, Oceti/Sakowin, which is the name the Sioux tribes call themselves. Another encampment, Sacred Stone, was on Army Corp of Engineers land on the other side of the Cannonball River.

Whittle noted the spiritual and traditional atmosphere of the protests. There was head-



Courtesy photo
The Standing Rock Veterans Day March from a distant perspective. Those are law enforcement vehicles at the bridge ahead of the marchers. Several Wallowa County citizens participated.

man council, and deference given to the culture and tribe.

“We even had a sacred fire that never went out,” he said. “Everyone was allowed to have a say.”

After dropping off supplies and getting a taste for the culture, the group returned to Wallowa County.

But Whittle turned back around about a month later, traveling to the protest site with his brother Larry in December.

“We stayed at Sacred Stone (encampment) because we thought Oceti might get raided,” he said.

As talk of an imminent raid increased, about 5,000 veterans joined the camp in a show of support. Although the standoff got tense, on Dec. 4, the ACE announced their intention to ask for an Environmental Impact Statement, which defused the tension.

Whittle said the protest, the tension, spurred Indian country.

“It awakened something that was dormant in a lot of Native people for a long time,” he said. “It was pretty profound for me. I can’t describe it. It brought home just how unjust the system is, particularly in its treatment of Native Americans.”

Lynch made three trips to the encampment, the first two at the same time as Whittle. The last was on Feb. 22 for what he called the “get the hell out” notice.

“I had to go back and clean up,” he said. “Those people had given so much.”

Lynch described his role in the protest as “delivery boy

for Wallowa County.”

“It was amazing and humbling to bring supplies to people to fight for a cause,” he said. “As a new resident, I’m amazed at how giving this county is.”

Like Whittle, Lynch found himself overwhelmed by the spirituality exhibited by the protesters.

“There were daily prayer walks. I’m not particularly religious, but I took my share. Nearly every religion and ethnic group was represented there. It was powerful, listening to people speak at the sacred fire and watching the water ceremony led by three women each day while the phrase “water is life” was murmured in every imaginable language. It has impacted me like nothing else has,” he said.

The most challenging thing for Lynch was a blizzard during his December visit.

“We had arctic conditions, and the wind chill was twenty below zero,” he said. “I wasn’t sure what was going to happen, but the next morning it was clear and bright, so got our snow shovels and got to work.”

Whittle said Standing Rock might feel like a world away, the crux of the issue is something everyone can understand.

“What I really want people in Wallowa County to understand is this: Just imagine that someone was trying to build a pipeline full of toxic poison over Wallowa Lake. Would anyone here support that? Likely not,” he said. “Now imagine that everyone here from the commissioners on down were against it, and the National Guard showed up the next day with guns and said, ‘Too bad.’ What would Wallowa County do? That’s exactly what’s happening to those people.”

Few races in May election competitive

By Tim Trainor
Wallowa County Chieftain

May will be a quiet election in Wallowa County, as there are no bonds or levies on the ballot and only a few school board seats are in dispute.

The filing deadline was 5 p.m. on March 16. Candidates are still able to mount write-in campaigns, though their names will not be on the ballot.

As of the filing deadline, there are only a few competitive races in the county. All of those races are for school board seats.

In Enterprise, Autumn Wilburn and Heather Melville will square off while in Joseph it will be Kirsten Rohla against Rachel Sykora. Dustin Dehaan and Connie Curry will compete for a single school board seat in Troy.

Many others are running currently running unopposed. That includes:

Education Service District: Penny Arentsen, Joan Gilbert and John Lawrence

Enterprise School District: Kate Fent

Enterprise Cemetery District: Linda Weaver, David Hayslip Allen Schnetzky. Also, no candidate filed for seat three.

Joseph School District: Sara Hayes

Joseph Cemetery District: Tom Schaafsma

Lostine Cemetery District: Muriel Jones, Shirley Doud, Les Carlsen

Wallowa County Health Care District: Nick Lunde, Katherine Loftus

Wallowa School District: Carrie Holmes, David Flynn and Polly Devore

Wallowa Cemetery District: Marcus Burns, Bonnie Henderson

Wallowa Lake Rural Fire District: Bob Young and David Hurlley. Also, no candidate filed for seat five.

Wallowa Rural Fire District: Bobbie Baker and Larry Wightman

Evergreen Water District: Gary Willett, Robert Burns and Jason Crenshaw

Lower Valley Water District: Kim West. Also, no candidate filed for seat five.

Alder Slope Cemetery District: Joyce Zollman

Lower Joseph Creek Project record released

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

The U.S. Forest Service announced Monday its final record of decision which, will allow for implementation of the Lower Joseph Creek Project.

The long-awaited decision gives the green light to improve forest resiliency on and enhance fish and wildlife efforts on about 100,000 acres of forest land in northern Wallowa County. The project is located about 20 miles north of Enterprise along Highway 3.

On March 17, Wallowa-Whitman forest supervisor Tom Montoya signed the final decision authorizing implementation of the project. With some changes, the U.S. Forest Service chose alternative two of the final environmental impact for project implementation. A more detailed exploration of that alternative will appear in a future edition of the *Chieftain*.

A brief overview includes: tree thinning, commercial logging and other treatments on about 17,000 acres. An

“The thoughtful feedback we received from all participants in this project really helped shape a decision that will allow positive progress across the landscape.”

Tom Montoya
forest supervisor

additional 90,000 acres will receive prescribed fire treatments in the next decade.

Changes in road density, including the opening 23 miles of road to public access while closing 12 miles of road, is also part of the project.

“The thoughtful feedback we received from all participants in this project really helped shape a decision that will allow positive progress across the landscape, resulting in a healthier decision,” Montoya said.

The project is expected to support several dozen jobs to the community throughout its duration, which could be as long as a decade.



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