

FIDDLE DEE DEE



Caleb Samples of Joseph was one of the featured performers at the Blue Mountain Old Time Fiddler's Fiddle Show Saturday evening at Hurrican Creek Grange Hall outside Joseph. Performing with him were, from left, Laura Skovlin, Shannon Spring and John Raines on guitar. The evening was filled with music presented in Grand Ole Oprey roundrobin fashion with each performer playing three tunes.



Part of Denny Langford's duties as emcee of the Blue Mountain Old Time Fiddle Show Saturday was the passing out of water and other treats for those in attendance. Langford, of Union, serves as the fiddler's group president and also performed a segment of the show at Hurricane Creek Grange Hall.



Lorraine Ragsdale played her accordion as part of the Home-made Jam Band during Saturday evening's Blue Mountain Old Time Fiddler's Fiddle Show at the Hurricane Creek Grange Hall. Performing with her is her daughter, Sandi Richerson, on the autoharp. Nearly a full house gathered for the event, which was preceded by a baked chicken dinner served by members of the Grange.

Ranchers will sue over wolf study

By Katy Nesbitt  
Wallowa County Chieftain

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association announced this week its intent to sue the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for its failure to complete an environmental study that would remove gray wolves from the endangered species list in the lower 48 states.

Citing the agency's lack of decision-making following the publication of its 2013 proposed rule in the Federal Register to remove the gray wolves from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species, Jerome Rosa, executive director of Oregon Cattlemen, said the membership voted to file a 60-day letter of intent to sue U.S. Fish and Wildlife at its Pendleton spring quarterly meeting June 2.

Rosa said the Cattlemen will be represented by the Pacific Legal Foundation of Sacramento, Calif. "One comment we've gotten through the years is that the cattle industry often tends to be playing defense," Rosa said. "Many of our members feel by moving forward with this we are being on the offensive side of things instead of trying to defend what we do."

Todd Nash, the Cattlemen's wolf committee chairman, said the absence of a completed analysis three years after U.S. Fish and Wildlife closed its public comment period regarding its environmental policy analysis to delist gray wolves from the endangered species list was one reason for the suit.

"They are legally bound to do that within one year and that's the preface pressing forward with lawsuit," said Nash, who is a Wallowa County rancher and a member of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners.

The lack of manpower Fish and Wildlife dedicates to managing wolves was the other

frustration that led to litigation, Nash said.

In Oregon, like Washington and Utah, managing wolves is complicated.

Through an appropriations bill Congress removed gray wolves from the Endangered Species List in Montana, Idaho and parts of Oregon, Washington and Utah in April 2011. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife then took over sole management of wolves living east of U.S. Highway 395, Oregon Highway 78 and U.S. Highway 95.

In November 2015 wolves were removed from the state endangered species list, but west of that line wolves remain protected by the federal Endangered Species Act.

In the vastly larger landscape of the western portion of the state under federal jurisdiction, Nash said the agency is woefully understaffed.

"This is no discredit to John (Stephenson, wolf biologist)," Nash said, "but he is one guy."

Nash said the Cattlemen believe the U.S. Fish and Wildlife needs to increase its staffing to better capture, collar and monitor wolves and complete its effort to delist gray wolves through the National Environmental Policy Act.

A vote was taken to sue the federal government at the Cattlemen's November annual meeting in Bend as well, Nash said, but the members were waiting to see if the Washington Cattlemen were interested in taking legal action along with them. While a contingency of Washington Cattlemen members were in attendance at the Oregon Cattlemen's Pendleton and participated in lengthy discussions regarding the intent to sue, Nash said they are not yet on board.

"Washington is going to take it back to their board and discuss it and California will likely throw in with us," Nash said.

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