



LOSTINE RIVER RUN
RUNNERS YOUNG AND OLD ROMP INTO
LOSTINE | See Page 5

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



Enterprise, Oregon Issue No. 11 Wallowa.com July 5, 2017 \$1

Chinook salmon harvest canceled

By Paul Wahl
Wallowa County Chieftain

For only the third time in 16 years, there will not be a Chinook salmon harvest in the Lostine or Imnaha rivers. Salmon numbers are down by around half of normal and have arrived much later than expected, according to Jeff Yanke, Wallowa District Fish Biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in Enterprise. “Things haven’t looked promising most of the spring,” Yanke said. “I have been holding out hope something dramatic would happen, but so far it hasn’t.” The last years harvesting was suspended were 2006-07. Yanke’s organization tags and tracks the endangered species through use of small electronic tags. Trouble has been brewing since 2015 when the school of fish released in Wallowa County had a hard time making it to the ocean because of river conditions. Once they arrived, they encountered warmer than normal water temperatures. Now at the end of the Chinook two-year trek to the ocean and back, there are fewer remaining to migrate.

That plus colder than normal water temps this year because of a heavy snow pack has meant anglers will have to put back Chinook they might catch, regardless of size. Chinook, like most salmon, are anadromous, which means most types are born in fresh water, migrate to the sea and return to fresh water to reproduce or spawn. The chinook is the state fish of Oregon. Salmon from the Lostine and Imnaha river journey into the Snake River and eventually the Columbia and finally into the Pacific ocean. They are able through natural instinct to return to fresh water, even to the beach on which they were spawned, Yanke said. Once the salmon return, Yanke and his staff go to great efforts to increase the number of fish spawning by adding hatchery-grown smolts (juvenile fish) to the river. “We release 500,000 smolts each year, 250,000 in the Lostine River and 250,00 into the Imnaha,” Yanke said. Yanke stays in touch by email with 50-75 active Chinook anglers to keep them apprised of conditions.



Chieftain File Photo
A spring Chinook salmon, also known as an Alaskan king salmon.

See CHINOOK, Page A16

THE BEST EVER

Wet weather and slick conditions do not dampen the enthusiasm at Chief Joseph Days Ranch Rodeo
Story and photos, Page 9



Ellen Bishop/For the Chieftain
A number of riders were slung into the mud during Saturday’s Chief Joseph Days Ranch Rodeo. The arena turned slick from rain in the late going of the event.

Rancher gets fine for killing dozen elk

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

A long-time Wallowa rancher accused of killing 12 of 25 dead elk found on his and adjoining property has been given a hefty fine and supervised probation. Larry Michael Harshfield, 69, pleaded guilty to six counts of Taking, Angling, Hunting, or Trapping in Violation of Wildlife Law or Rule. His case was heard June 28 in Wallowa County Circuit Court. Judge Thomas Powers presided. The controversial case divided the region along the lines of those who favored ranchers’ property rights and those who argued for the right of the animals to roam freely. The incidents occurred between Dec. 1, 2016, and Feb. 11 of this year when Oregon State Police game wardens appeared at the Harshfield ranch after receiving an anonymous tip about the killings. Harshfield was charged April 14. Law enforcement officials initially arrested him, but he was released on his own recognizance later in the day. In a somewhat unusual development, Harshfield’s wife, Pam Harshfield, released a letter through their attorney Lissa Casey to media outlets and the public detailing the events that led to the incident. The Harshfields claim they did everything they were told to do, but the elk were persistent in a winter where food was scarce. At the 45-minute court hearing, Harshfield pleaded guilty to counts 13-18 of the 24 charges, which included 12 charges each of taking wildlife unlawfully and wasting wildlife meat. After Powers accepted the plea, district attorney Mona Williams said an aerial search of Harshfield’s property confirmed the reports and law enforcement officials obtained a warrant to search. She said that her office believed it could prevail in court on 12 of the elk deaths and the associated

See ELK, Page A16



Ellen Bishop/For the Chieftain
Brady Black takes aim at the head of a calf in the roping competition at Saturday’s Chief Joseph Days Ranch Rodeo at the rodeo grounds in Joseph. Behind him waiting for an opportunity to heel the calf is teammate Mel Coleman.

Library district planning group off to fast start

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

The group planning for establishing a library district in Wallowa County began its work with a flourish. In its June 26 session, held just minutes after formation, the Wallowa Valley Library Foundation named a new chair person, selected officers and began mapping out their plan to put a library district on the 2018 ballot. The decision whether they will work to save the County Library or expand their ideas for the district to individual communities will wait until after a feasibility study is completed. Mike Crawford of Troy had

“WE WILL NOT MOVE FORWARD ON BOND AND SIGNATURES UNTIL WE GET THE FEASIBILITY STUDY DONE.”

Kim Witherrite
Wallowa Valley Library Foundation chairwoman

stepped into a temporary chairman role until the group could select a permanent leader. Kim Witherrite of Imnaha took that position. Witherrite is the mother of three small children. Autumn Wilburn of Enterprise was selected vice chair and Maggie Holcomb of Wallowa is secretary and treasurer. Appointments must be approved by the library boards in their area, but that is not

seen as an obstacle. Wendy Stauffer of Enterprise was nominated at the meeting, but when contacted declined the honor. Lorien James of rural Enterprise stepped up to fill that position. Other members of the board are Kay Sawin and Kirsten Rohla of Joseph and Tamara da Silva of Enterprise. Crawford was glad to be handing off his temporary

leadership to a board said he felt was prepared for the work. “I believe that this board is made up of a group of very passionate and energetic individuals who possess the mix of necessary skills required to achieve a long-term funding solution for the County Library along with those city libraries that choose to participate,” Crawford said. Witherrite and the rest of the board made the decision to go forward with creating a bond measure and began the planning phase. “Obviously we must first be approved by our local library boards,” said Witherrite. “Then, the first steps for us is to contact the state librarian Mary Kay Dalgren about

a consulting service that was offered for free for a limited time.” Other early steps for the board will be researching an economic feasibility statement and meeting a bond requirement to file for a special district on the May 2018 ballot. “In addition to that, it takes 800 signatures to get on the ballot,” said Witherrite. “We will not move forward on bond and signatures until we get the feasibility study done.” The initial petition in circulation mentioned in an earlier report was not the document that will be needed to get the ballot listed. The next meeting of Foundation is July 6, though no location has been named.

