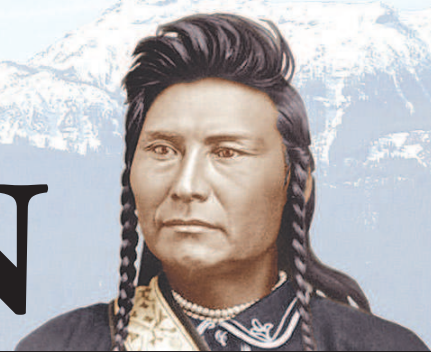




WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



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Lethal wolf take lands ODFW in hot water with both factions

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Fulfilling the predictions of ranchers and the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, the Harl Butte Wolf Pack struck again on Aug. 16, a week after the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's lethal removal of two wolves from the pack. The lethal removal was intended to change the behavior of the pack, which had recently inflicted losses on ranchers in the Harl Butte area, including a pair of killings on July 28 and July 22.

Local ranchers had requested that the department eliminate the entire pack.

Arran Robertson, communications director of conservation group Oregon Wild, said the ODFW's response to the depredations is a bad choice. Oregon Wild and 17 other conservation groups recently zipped off a letter to Oregon Gov. Kate Brown detailing a number of complaints. Among other things, the groups accused ODFW of a lack of transparency, kowtowing to ranchers by not insisting on more verified nonlethal action to reduce depredations and foot-dragging to complete a two-years-overdue Wolf Management Plan revision.

Robertson said that one of the things that precipitated the letter is that the groups were told by the department that they would be informed as to what the agency would do, but not when they've done it.

"They're not announcing when they've done anything unless you actively call them ... They've decided they're not going to proactively communicate on this campaign they have."

He added that the department is generally forthcoming about livestock depredation but reticent with details about the lethal take of wolves, which he said invites mistrust.

Robertson also said that even with the department's concentration on delisting the wolf and the lawsuit that ensued, the agency should have placed the wolf management plan draft at the top of its list.

The Aug. 16 depredation incident included livestock belonging to Wallowa County commissioner and rancher Todd Nash. The county's range rider discovered the remains of a calf on private property at Marr Flatt. Both Nash and

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BRAGGING RIGHTS

Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Zeb Ramsden of Enterprise does a good job of stopping a stampede for the gate in cattle sorting competition at the 2017 Stockgrowers Rodeo.

Stockgrowers Rodeo puts money in the bank for scholarships

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

Sledges and hammers swung at a furious pace as the contenders in the 2017 World Championship Rock Jack Building Contest vied for the bragging rights at the Wallowa County Stockgrowers Rodeo on Saturday.

The luck of the draw on the logs helped Clancy Warnock of Imnaha get off to an early lead as a crisp split on his log stacked the rails up. He never looked back.

At least three other competitors, including two-time champion Mark Ramsden of Enterprise, drew splintery, pithy logs that fought them all the way. "Old Man" of the competition, Ramsden, showed his winning form with a second-place despite the obstacle of an obstreperous log.

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Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Two-time rock jack champion Mark Ramsden gets to work on splitting his log as his younger competitors try to beat the "old man" in the World Championship Rock Jack Competition at the 2017 Stockgrowers Rodeo. Other competitors (nearest to furthest): Rawley Bigsby of Joseph, Devin Patton of Joseph, Clancy Warnock of Imnaha and Wyatt Warnock of Joseph. Clancy Warnock won.

State recognizes housing crisis

Oregon legislature provides funding for programs

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

Legislators are well aware that the state is in the midst of a housing crisis. As a result, they have passed a number of bills to expand existing programs and followed that up with more funding to address the issue.

MORE INSIDE: OREGON LIFT PROGRAM AVAILABLE IN WALLOWA COUNTY

"The Legislature can do two things," said State Sen. Bill Hansell, who represents Wallowa County. "We, as the Legislature, need to look for ways to incentivize private sector affordable housing in all parts of the state; and sec-



ond, we shouldn't pass laws or polices that disincentivize or make things more difficult for those people who are wanting to build the housing units."

Wallowa County has a good catalog of "assisted housing," much under the Oregon Section 8 housing program, which offers qualified beneficiaries lower rental rates each month.

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Homeowners offered grant money

Millions of dollars have already been awarded to communities across the state, several rural, from the The Homeownership Stabilization Initiative. The \$95 million program is available for homeowners behind on property taxes or mortgage payments. The initiative, which includes several programs, is run by the state in partnership with local housing nonprofits. In Wallowa County the programs are handled through Community Connection.

The Home Rescue Program is open to individuals who have had their income reduced by at least 10 percent compared to any tax year 2009-2016. This program can provide homeowners with monthly mortgage payments for up to one year with a maximum benefit of \$20,000.

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Library district could include entirety of county

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

The Wallowa Valley Library Foundation has decided to look into including all of the libraries in the county in the library district project.

"We voted officially for our feasibility study professional to conduct the study on the whole county," said foundation president Autumn Wilburn. "We could either go with the unincorporated portions of the county or the whole county. When we sat down

with County Assessor Randy Wortman, it was pretty clear we needed to go with the whole county in order to get enough tax money."

In the plan as discussed so far, the cities would continue to own their buildings and keep the lights on, but all other bills (not covered by existing grants) would be the responsibility of the district. Wilburn emphasized that no final decision had yet been made and would not until after the feasibility study was completed.

County commissioners met with

the group earlier this month and learned Ruth Metz of Ruth Metz Associates in Portland had already begun gathering information for the feasibility study. Metz is paid through an Oregon Library Services and Technology Act Program grant.

County Commissioner Susan Roberts said the group was "moving along quite nicely."

Commissioners have promised to keep the county library open 16 hours per week until the May 2018 ballot.

"If they get it on the May ballot,

we'll continue funding through June," said Roberts. "If the ballot passes we'll continue funding until the taxes are collected and available in November 2018."

Another public meeting before the commissioner is Sept. 13, when further progress is expected to be reported.

The announced closure of the Wallowa County Library, due to a \$1.1 million county budget shortfall,

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