

FARM

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The property has been farmed and ranched continuously for almost 140 years. The Melville family continues the farming operation. Mary and Kirk Hayes lived on the property until Kirk's death in 2005 and Mary's in 2014.

A variety of species of birds and animals gather at Kirk's Pond, a shady man-made refuge, surrounded by pine, fir, cottonwood, juniper and aspen.

Monteith said the property became available when the current owners, who purchased it for investment purposes, broke up their partnership and decided to sell.

Joseph Properties I had begun the process of subdividing the property; however, only two homesites were carved out and approved by the county rather than the hundreds originally envisioned.

Monteith said if his group isn't successful in purchasing the property, the development plan will likely be implemented.

Monteith envisions selling shares to raise the funds, which is a deja vu experience for him. His organization was at the center of a plan to purchase the Wallowa Lake Lodge in similar fashion in 2015.

"It's about as sweet a real estate deal as you can put together, it's just a very short timeline to raise the downpayment," Monteith said. "The deadline is real."

A development easement might also be a source of revenue for the purchase. An easement cannot be negotiated until the group owns the property, however.

The support of at least four other conservation-oriented groups is being courted by the legacy land fund.

Monteith said if his group doesn't succeed, "we will live with a couple trophy homes that will change the character of the property significantly."

A number of potential uses for the property have been discussed.

Cropland could become an incubator in which young farmers could learn the business and perhaps even live in the Hayes house that sits on the property. The group would like to enlist the National Young Farmers Coalition to assist with those plans.

Ecotourism is also a possibility. A combination of grants or



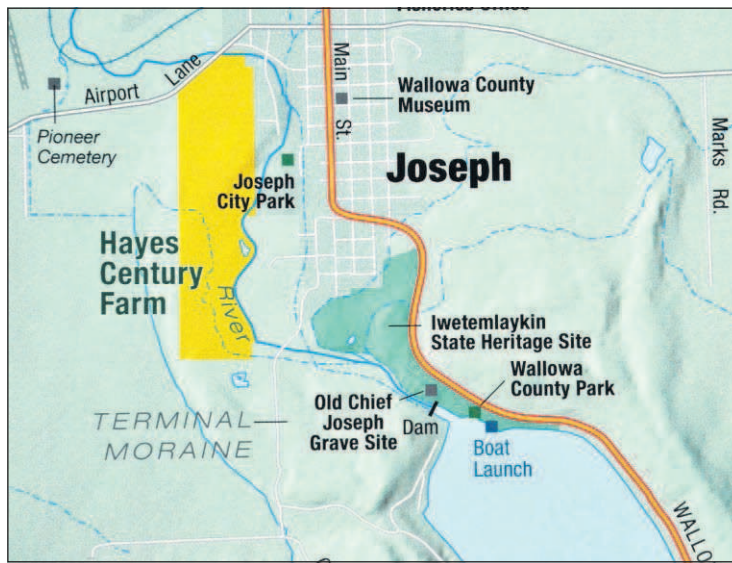
David Jensen/Submitted photo

The Hayes Farm property has been continuously operated for almost 140 years.



Paul Wahl/Chieftain

James Monteith, chairman of Eastern Oregon Legacy Lands Fund, during a gathering at Wallowology in Joseph.



The 150-acre Hayes Farm is located on the western border of the city of Joseph.

no- or low-interest loans is being sought. Anyone interested in learning more should contact David Milder with the Eastern Oregon Legacy Lands Fund 541-786-9354 or davidm@wallowology.org.

Homan Lane fire guts Nash homestead

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

A fire of unknown origin destroyed the home of a Wallowa County couple and injured two firefighters on the afternoon of Jan. 22. The home belonged to Ken and Annie Nash of Enterprise and was located on Homan Lane west of Enterprise. The residents did not suffer any injuries.

At around 12:30 p.m., units from both the Enterprise and Joseph fire departments responded to a report of a fire on. Eight units and about 20 firefighters were on scene.

Enterprise fire chief and county emergency services director Paul Karvoski said firefighters of both departments battled the blaze for more than an hour before wind, injuries and the fire's severity forced them to stop. Karvoski said the home, a 1940s structure with several additions, was fully engulfed by the time firefighters arrived on scene.

The chief said that the fire started in the northwest corner of the home.

"We had a west wind, which did not support our fire operations at all — it was a complete hindrance," he said. "We kept fighting the fire as best as we could, but it got unsafe after the first few minutes of arrival." He added that two Enterprise firefighters received unspecified injuries directly related to fighting the fire, which led to the decision to fight the blaze outside the structure.

"The wind just acted like a funnel through that house," Karvoski said. "We fought it for about an hour, and it kept getting worse. We weren't gaining on it at all and pretty much everything in the house was a complete loss." At that point, Karvoski said that the homeowners made a decision to cease fire operations out of concern for the firefighters. The crews stayed on scene until shortly after 3 p.m.

One of the injured firefighters was taken to Wallowa Memorial Hospital while the other visited a doctor Tuesday morning. Karvoski said that both are expected to make a full recovery.

"It's a sad thing to see," Karvoski said about the home loss, "but the safety of our firefighters is priority number one."



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