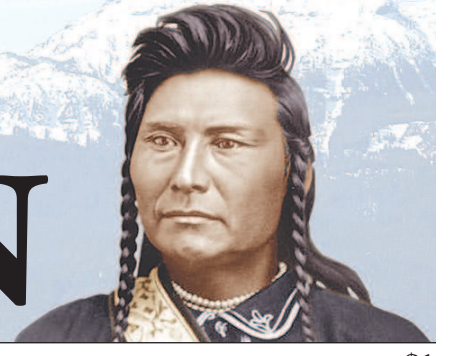




# WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



# RIDING & ROPING



Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

All Around Cowboy winner Bryce Svedin of Baker City gets his head loop going as he pursues a blonde muley (no horns) steer. Behind him as his roping partner, Dave Yost of Lostine, prepares for his chance at the heels at the 2018 Stockgrowers Ranch Rodeo.

## Wallowa eliminates school fees

Some families had been paying \$200 or more

By Kathleen Ellyn  
Wallowa County Chieftain

Attending public school has become less expensive for students in the Wallowa School District.

Officials there announced that thanks to smart financial management on the part of the school board and former superintendent Bret Uptmor, the district will not be charging fees.

“Bret Uptmor and the board created opportunities in the budget to account for changes, and over the years all the accounts have become more stable and that creates latitude,” said Supt. Jay Hummel. “It’s a (financial) choice, there’s no doubt, but it’s our choice to put kids and families first.”

Hummel and the school board will transfer approximately \$13,000 from the general fund supply account to pay the fees.

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## County moves ahead with lodging tax hike

Wallowa Lake business owner files challenge

By Kathleen Ellyn  
Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa County Commissioners completed the legal process required to place a proposed Transient Lodging Tax hike on the Nov. 6 ballot.

Commissioner Susan Roberts voted against the measure and Commissioner Paul Castilleja voted in favor of the measure while simultaneously expressing concern “about what you folks (commissioners) are trying to bring forward.”

The measure, approved Aug. 16, asks voters to approve an additional three percent tax on lodging in the unincorporated areas of the county. Businesses in unincorporated areas already pay five percent collected by the county.

The often-requested total of how much money would be generated through the tax was finally provided in the language of the ballot title: an estimated \$129,520. The county already collects approximately \$360,000 in lodging tax, according to County Commissioner Todd Nash.

The new revenue raised annually would be split 70 percent for fairgrounds redevelopment and operations (estimated at \$90,720) and 30 percent for the sheriff’s office (estimated \$38,800). Although commissioner Todd Nash stated that the sheriff’s funding would be used for policing of tourist-related activities, no such specific labor division is made in the wording of the ballot measure.

By statute, the money raised through tax must go to tourism-related entities and activities. Questions remain as to whether the Wallowa County Fairgrounds qualifies as a recipient, and commissioners’ plans for funding could still be legally challenged on that issue.

Wallowa County Commissioners received a petition challenging the ballot title from David Hurley, owner of Eagle Cap Chalets at Wallowa Lake Aug. 17. Benjamin Boyd of Hostetter Law Group represents Hurley.

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## Stockgrowers name top rockjack builder

By Kathleen Ellyn  
Wallowa County Chieftain

The ooos, ahhs, gasps and cheers were many as an enthusiastic crowd was kept on the edges of their seats at the annual Stockgrowers Ranch Rodeo Aug. 17. Classes were packed with entrants and a new event, the dog race, turned out to be a real crowd-pleaser. The dogs, unsure on the rules, left the starting line to dart hither and thither along the way to the finish, distracted by cowboys on horses, open gates and one another.

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## USFS, county win second round of corridor lawsuit

By Steve Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain

U.S. District Judge Michael Simon refused to overturn the findings of Magistrate Judge Patricia Sullivan regarding a lawsuit filed by environmental groups against the U.S. Forest Service to stop the Lostine Corridor Public Safety Project.

The corridor project involves forest thinning, patch cuts and some commercial logging along an

11-mile stretch of the Lostine River Road leading up to the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Environmental groups Oregon Wild and the Greater Hells Canyon Council filed the lawsuit against the project in May 31 2017.

Among other things, the suit claimed the USFS made improper use of a categorical exclusion, which allows some projects to sidestep certain environmental analysis procedures. The groups also claimed that the project did not follow the forest or river plan for the area and was not done in a collaborative manner.

On March 20 of this year, Judge Sullivan heard the arguments from attorneys for the environmental groups, the USFS and Wallowa County, who had filed for, and were granted, intervenor status in the suit.

On June 15, Sullivan released her findings and recommendations for the case in a 35-page document that appeared to find little merit in the suit. From there, the suit went under the review of U.S. District Court Judge Michael H. Simon.

Apparently finding no fault in Sullivan’s recommendations, he did not make any comment or attempt to amend the ruling.

Wallowa County Commissioner Todd Nash said that he was pleased with the latest developments in the case although he fully expects the two groups to appeal the latest setback to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Arran Robertson, communications manager for Oregon Wild, said the group needs time to plan before making any new decisions



on the case. He said he didn’t get the news until the morning of Aug. 20.

“We haven’t talked about it internally or with the other groups yet, as far as I know,” he said. “We’re still convinced we have a good case whether or not we decide to move forward with it. We still have to have that discussion.”

Greater Hells Canyon Council did not respond to requests for comment prior to press deadline.

## Commissioner-elect Dunn passes Tuesday afternoon

By Steve Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa County commissioner-elect Bruce Dunn passed away Tuesday afternoon Aug. 21. Dunn, a well-known forester and advocate for practical resource use, was on a tour of a U.S. Forest Service timber site in the Lower Joseph Creek area when he suffered a suspected cardiac incident.

In May of this year, Wallowa County citizens elected Dunn to the county’s board of commissioners to replace the retiring Paul Castilleja.

Commissioners Todd Nash and Susan Roberts expressed deep shock at Dunn’s sudden passing, both noting Dunn’s expertise in resource management was unmatched.

Roberts said the candidate filing deadline for Dunn’s position has been extended to Sept. 4.

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