

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



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Alan Klages' undies didn't stand a chance in his super healthy hay field. Klages Ranch has been using cover crops for about six years, which has benefited the health of their soil and cattle. Alan's undies were planted on April Fool's Day 2018 and harvested 122 days later.

Courtesy photo



Staff photo by Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

A participant at the April 21, 2018 Second Amendment rally rests his hand on his gun as he listens to a speaker at Til Taylor Park in Pendleton.

NRCS INVITES FARMERS TO

'SOIL YOUR

UNDIES'

By GEORGE PLAVERN
EO Media Group

Talk about a strange harvest.

Earlier this year, six Eastern Oregon farmers and ranchers, four from Wallowa County, agreed to bury pairs of cotton underwear in their fields and dig them back up later in the season as part of the "Soil Your Undies" challenge, organized by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Not much remained of the tattered, torn and threadbare britches — and that's precisely the point. The "Soil Your Undies" challenge was devised to illustrate the presence of tiny microorganisms like mites, bacteria, fungi and protozoa that make up healthy soil, and which devour the organic cotton fibers in underpants.

NRCS Oregon is now ready to roll out the challenge statewide, inviting any and all growers to participate in 2019.

"This challenge is no substitute for lab testing," said Cory Owens, NRCS Oregon state soil scientist. "But it's a fun way to start thinking about what's going on in the soil."

According to the NRCS, one teaspoon of healthy soil contains more microbes than the entire human population on Earth. Working in concert, the bitty organisms are a critically important feature in soil, cycling nutrients for plants, storing moisture and helping to resist erosion.

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NRCS/Capitol Press

Woody Wolfe, of Wolfe Ranch in Wallowa County, holds up a pair of cotton underwear buried in a pasture as part of the "Soil Your Undies" challenge. Wolfe Ranch uses cover crops, crop rotation, no-till and livestock integration to maximize soil health.

'WE'RE PRODUCING A LOT OF FORAGE WITHOUT ANY CHEMICAL INPUTS — NO FERTILIZER AND NO CHEMICALS. WE SEE HOW IT'S HELPING THE SOIL AND THE ANIMALS. AND IT'S HELPING MY BOTTOM LINE.'

Alan Klages, of Klages Ranch

Proposals take aim at new gun restrictions

By Paris Achen
EO Media Group

A few days after Liam Mankins was born in September 2016, his father posted a photo on Facebook of his son wearing oversized sunglasses.

"Future's so bright gotta wear sunglasses," a friend commented.

"Yes, yes, it is," Liam's father replied. "He's going to ... make something of himself."

Then, two years later, on Nov. 4, Liam was killed by a shot from an unsecured gun.

The toddler "got control of a loaded handgun" at the family's Baker City home and "caused the handgun to discharge," Baker County District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff wrote in a news release.

"The gun had not been secured in a safe place," Shirtcliff said.

Such cases are motivating two state legislators and gun safety advocates to legally require gun owners to secure their firearms with a lock or in a locked container.

The proposal is among several gun safety measures that state lawmakers want to consider during the 2019 legislative session opening Jan. 22.

Some lawmakers also want to raise the age for buying assault weapons, give police more time to conduct background checks on gun buyers and regulate handguns in schools and universities.

Under the gun storage legislation, owners would face a fine of up to \$2,000. The average fine would be about \$165 — about the same as fines for driving 11 to 20 mph over the speed limit.

The fine could increase to \$2,000 if the gun owner knew that a child could reach the firearm, proponents said.

The law also makes the gun owner civilly liable if someone uses an unsecured gun to shoot another person or property.

Some gun rights advocates oppose the legislation.

Charlie Brinton, president of the Baker County chapter of the Oregon Hunters Association, said it's unfair to hold gun owners liable if someone stole their unsecured weapon and shot someone. The thief should be held liable, he said.

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THE TIME IS NOW

The future of the natural resource based economy

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

Communities that base their economics on natural resources like timber, farming and ranching are facing a worrying future. The situation in Wallowa County is unique in many ways, but international and national trends affect even this remote corner of Oregon.

Caleb Howard, a fifth generation Wallowa County rancher with a degree in natural resources, has learned a lot as a real estate agent specializing in land and wildlife, as well as a managing consultant for farms, ranches and timber ground.

Howard shared a snapshot of the issues facing Wallowa County's natural resource-based economy.

New management practices in the timber industry have led to rapid harvest on private

land in Wallowa County and a potential stoppage of work in the forest that could last for 15 years. Succession practices in agriculture and ranching have left farms and ranches vulnerable to division and permanent loss.

There are ways to address the various challenges, but some are uncomfortable and all have a looming deadline.

Timber and the cliff

According to Howard, the private land-based timber industry in Wallowa County is facing a crisis that may materialize within the next five years.

The crisis is due to the way in which much of Wallowa County's private forestland is managed.

There are hundreds of thousands of acres in Eastern Oregon formally owned by Boise Cas-

cade, Howard said. Boise Cascade used to own sawmills along with the timberland, which made them an integrated business model. That model incentivized the company to think long-term and only cut the amount of lumber the produced each year that would feed their mills.

After the creation of the Timberland Investment Management Organization (TIMO), Boise Cascade sold their land holdings first to Forest Capitol, then to Hancock Forest Management of Boston, Mass.

The TIMO model is very different. TIMOs developed in the 1970s after congress passed legislation called the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, which encouraged institutional investors to diversify their portfolios into timber.

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