

State's no-hunting buffer removed from Wallowa Lake

Some concerned about safety and sportsmanship

By Steve Tool and Ellen Morris Bishop
Wallowa County Chieftain

In the 2019 ODFW hunting regulations, a quarter-mile-wide no-hunting buffer around the perimeter of Wallowa Lake was removed. Residents and business owners have expressed concern that hunting in this area of private residences would endanger human safety, and that given the tame nature of the deer, was unsportsmanlike.

Residents and business owners in the Wallowa Lake Village area expressed strong concerns about ODFW's omission of regulations that prohibited deer hunting in their residential neighborhoods. "The deer here are a tourist attraction, worth a lot to Wallowa County," Susan Esvelt said. "They walk right up to people. These aren't wild deer. This isn't hunting. It isn't sportsmanlike." Beyond the deer, residents also worried about hunting in such a highly populated area.



Ellen Morris Bishop

Mule deer in Wallowa Lake Village and the Wallowa Lake State Park are tame and very habituated to people.

"I especially worry about safety of myself and my dog when we are out walking," said Jill Zundel. Zundel, who worked for the Wiggins family at Wallowa Lake Lodge as a teenager, now spends summer and early

fall in the family's long-time cabin along the Wallowa River. "I don't think anyone should hunt these deer. They're like pets," she said.

At the Scenic Meadows RV Park, where go-carts occupy the track during the

summer, owner Greg Jarman said that the area should remain a no hunting zone. "The whole idea of hunting here is a little crazy," he said. "ODFW should have left it as it was." Jarman said that he had not encountered any

hunters, or heard any shots. "But there doesn't seem to be as many deer here as there used to be," he noted.

Wallowa County Commissioners can designate the area a no hunting zone. "We have received some com-

plaints from residents," said Commissioner John Hillock. "We hope that hunters are responsible, and don't hunt where they shouldn't. But if people want us to do something, we'll talk about it."

Wallowa Lake State Park superintendent Mac Freeborn said that he had not heard of the rule change. But because hunting is not permitted in Oregon State Parks, the change would have little effect on the area he manages.

By way of explanation for the regulation change, Shane Talley of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said that because the vast majority of the land around the lake is private property, the ODFW removed the quarter-mile-wide no-hunting buffer in the interest of simplification.

Now, private landowners can decide whether to let individuals hunt on their property — or not.

As Talley warned, the area is not free range for hunting and hunters are responsible for hunting only on the land on which they have permission to hunt.

"Ignorance of the law is no excuse," he said. It's up to hunters to know where they are."

Organic: Following in father's footsteps

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toes and some of them are good to go and some need to mature up," he said. "That's all part of the reason for having a variety. It hedges your bets against all your weather patterns, your timing, your disease and pest issues and your climate getting too wet or too dry."

The mainstays of his crop are German butterballs — much like russets — and huckleberry golds that have a purple skin but are yellow inside. Other varieties include large yellow Kennebecs, Yukon nuggets, purple majesties and Valery long yellows that have a red skin.

The potatoes grow near Joseph. Just west of Lostine he has a field protected by a deer fence where he grows about a tenth of an acre of quinoa, just under 5 acres of carrots and about 2.5 acres of various colored beets, all



Bill Bradshaw

Organic farmer Patrick Thiel shows the yellow inside of a red-skinned Valery potato Wednesday, Oct. 2, at his farm near Joseph.

organic.

In Oregon, organic crops are certified by Oregon Tilth, a Corvallis-based nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting and advocating organic food and farming, that certifies organic farms.

Thiel has a personal connection with the group. Back

when his father, Eugene Thiel, first grew organic in the early 1970s, organic certification was just beginning. The elder Thiel worked with state officials to establish organic standards.

Eugene Thiel continued to pursue organic farming until his death in 2013.

The Thiels grew seed potatoes in the Wallowa Valley for more than 30 years here and found it was not that hard to transition to organics.

After following in his father's footsteps, he doesn't yet know if his farm will continue on to another generation. Of his four daughters, ranging in age from 14 to 24, "That remains to be seen over the next few years. My youngest daughter, perhaps."

"Farming is a great privilege; I was trained in that," Thiel said. "It's a miracle every year we put a crop in."

Health: Meeting to help shape healthcare

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meeting will occur at The Place in Joseph, from noon until 2 p.m. Like most of the LCAC meetings, lunch, served up by the Chuckwagon Sisters, will be included. You needn't be a health care professional or even a provider to participate and develop new projects. Plus, there's a free lunch.

Established in 2012, the local LCAC's parent organization, EOCCO, serves about 50,000 members across a 50,000 square mile service area — roughly the size of New York state. It

serves Oregon Health Plan members in Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa and Wheeler counties.

"Wallowa County has a lively and active Local Community Advisory Council, which has developed really creative, and often fun, solutions to improve health and well-being" said Meg Bowen, Chair of the Wallowa County Local Community Advisory Council. "Our LCAC has been in place for several years, and Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts is our sponsor. She has been

very important to, and supportive of, our work. Some of the issues we address include loneliness and social isolation; slips, trips and falls due to inclement weather; access to specialty care outside of the community; access to perinatal support through access to lactation consulting and breast pumps; and as of this year, access to child care services for those who cannot afford them. There are so many success stories we can share. This is a great opportunity for more people to find what they need to succeed in making a better life here."

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