



GRADUATION CELEBRATIONS
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BROWN ANNOUNCES NEXT STEP ONCE 70% VACCINATION IS REACHED
STATE, A5

MORE PREMIUM COFFEE ARRIVES IN WALLOWA COUNTY
BUSINESS, A6

\$1.50

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



137th Year, No. 9

WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

Wednesday, June 9, 2021

Wallowa County Voices



Andy Singer
Wallowa

Commutes to Elgin from Wallowa

ENTERPRISE — Andy Singer has lived in Wallowa for six years, having moved here from Payette, Idaho, to be with his fiancée, Christina. She moved to Wallowa to be with her dad until he died.

Andy works driving forklift at the Boise Cascade plywood mill in Elgin. He doesn't mind the 28-mile drive from Wallowa.

"I'm not the only one in town who makes the drive," he said.

Andy recently shared his thoughts about living in Wallowa County.

What's your favorite thing about Wallowa County?

It's pretty quiet. You can get out of town and it's really quiet. You can get away from everybody anytime you want.

What fun plans do you have in the county for this summer?

Probably do some swimming and fishing. I play golf. I usually fish in the rivers or the ponds. Every once in a while at the lake. But there's usually too many people.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you?

It's kind of a pain at work. I've got to wear a mask. If you have any kind of sickness, you have to call in. If you have to have any flu-like symptoms, I think you have to be gone three days to make sure you don't get a fever and the like. If you go get tested, and you have direct contact (with someone with coronavirus) you have to quarantine for two weeks or depending on what the doctor says.

What have you learned from living in Wallowa County?

I like the peacefulness. I can go outside on a Sunday and it's dead quiet. I live a block off of Highway 82 and it's quiet. It makes you enjoy life.

What's your advice for people who are thinking about moving here?

It's a pretty good place to live, but it's kind of hard to make a living in a lot of ways. The price of housing is getting pretty wild right now, but it is everywhere. If you're going to buy a house, you better be on it. A house goes on the market and it sells the next day.

— *Bill Bradshaw,*
Wallowa County Chieftain

Umatilla Co. deputy drowns on Minam River

Chieftain staff

MINAM — A Umatilla County sheriff's deputy drowned Saturday, June 5, in the Minam River.

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office released the name of the deputy Sunday afternoon, saying in a Facebook post that Senior Deputy Jason Post died during a rafting accident near Minam State Park.

According to the sheriff's office, Post and three friends were rafting when they were thrown from the watercraft. The 34-year-old did not reach shore, and his body was found soon after.

A procession of multiple regional law enforcement agencies escorted Post from La Grande to Pendleton later Saturday,

where he was honored by law enforcement officers and first responders.

Wallowa County Sheriff Joel Fish said Tuesday that Post was wearing a life vest when he and the three others were ejected from the inflatable raft in the midst of some rapids. Fish said it took about an hour and a half to recover Post's body, which was found

about 300 yards from the site of the accident.

According to the UCSO, Post began service as a reserve officer in 2010 and was hired as a full-time patrol deputy in 2013. He was a field training officer and mentor, and in April was hired as a probation officer with Umatilla County Parole and Probation.

Post leaves behind a wife and infant daughter.



Post

FIRE SEASON ARRIVES

Joseph Canyon and Dry Creek fires have burned more than 9,000 acres

By **RONALD BOND**
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — The declared start of the fire season is Wednesday, June 9.

But it got underway in earnest last week, as the first major fires of 2021 started in Wallowa County.

The Joseph Canyon Fire and Dry Creek Fire, which between them have burned more than 9,000 acres, are burning in the northeastern corner of Wallowa County, with the Joseph Canyon Fire spreading into Washington.

The Northwest 7 Type 2 Incident Management Team took command of fighting the fires Monday. The Blue Mountain Type 3 Incident Management Team was the initial firefighting lead.

According to the Oregon Military Department fire dashboard, as of Tuesday morning, the Joseph Canyon Fire had burned 7,575 acres and was 20% contained.

The larger of the two fires has largely been burning between Rye Ridge to its west and Cottonwood Creek to the east.

The smaller Dry Creek Fire, burning southeast of the Joseph Canyon Fire, has burned 1,500 acres and was 50% contained, according to the ODM dashboard.

The fire had been reported as having burned 1,600 acres by the Bureau of Land Management Vale District on Monday. That fire is burning in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. "It's really gnarly country," Larisa Bogardus, public affairs officer for the BLM Vale District, said. "It's bad. Getting resources into it safely was a challenge."

Both fires were first reported Friday morning, and were caused by lightning storms that rolled

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Andy Hayes/Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

The Joseph Canyon Fire is shown from Rye Ridge on Sunday, June 6, 2021. The fire, as of Tuesday morning, has burned about 7,575 acres.

TRIBE CLOSES WILDLIFE AREA WITH FIRES BURNING NEARBY

JOSEPH CANYON — The Nez Perce Tribe is closing its Precious Lands Wildlife Area in Lower Joseph Creek to the public to allow firefighters to battle the blaze without worrying about members of the public.

Angela Sondana, Precious Lands Project leader with the tribe based in Lapwai, Idaho, said the temporary closure is being done for safety concerns. The closure was effective Monday, June 7.

"We are asking the public to stay out of the wildlife area," Sondana said. "We want the firefighters to be able to concentrate on the fire and not be concerned about members of the public being down in the canyon."

Part of the 1,583-acre parcel has

been caught up in the 7,575-acre Joseph Canyon Fire that was first reported Friday. It was both exacerbated and aided with the high winds in the canyon.

"Fire has already burned parts of it," Sondana said. "I assume more of it will burn before we get this thing out."

She said of particular concern are the many bear hunters that frequent the area this time of year.

The closure will remain in effect until further notice, Sondana said.

For more information, call the tribe's Wildlife Division at 208-843-7372 or email communications@nezperce.org or angelas@nezperce.org.

—Chieftain staff

JOSEPH

No written complaints issued against council

City administrator says all is hearsay so far

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — The can got kicked down the road again but not with as much force as might have been expected, Thursday, June 3, as the Joseph City Council heard Pro-Tem Administrator/Recorder Brock Eckstein say he has no documented claims of harassment by council members.

This came in open session after an executive session which he explained to the approximately 40 residents in the audience on behalf of the council.

"I know a lot of you are frustrated over potential allegations of harassment from council members to city staff," Eckstein said. "I can assure you these are being handled in the proper way."

He explained that the "proper way" means that people given due process when accused. He said when a written complaint — not just hearsay — is filed against anybody, the defendant is allowed two weeks to respond.

"The council receives the same correspondence. They'll get two weeks to think about it," Eckstein said. "Once that two weeks has passed, both parties will get 15 minutes in executive session with the council to pitch their side, whether they're the accuser or the defendant. Once both of those 15-minute sessions expire, they'll each get 5 minutes rebuttal and then they'll both be excused and the council will come to a consensus and their

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A windfall of cash likely for the fairgrounds

Fair board may receive a half-million dollars for needed repairs

By **RONALD BOND**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The Wallowa County Fairgrounds in Enterprise have been in need of repairs for years, possibly even decades.

A huge windfall of cash that would serve as a major boon to getting many of those fixes completed could be just around the corner.

The fair board should receive later this year \$500,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act signed in March through new District 58 Rep. Bobby Levy, R-Echo.

"It will be used for capital projects around the fairgrounds," Fair Board Chairwoman Brinda Stanley said. "We developed a list early this year. We have not prioritized that list, so we'll just work our way down through them and see how much each project is going to take. A new roof with moisture barrier on the roof is a high priority for us."

The money comes from \$240 million in ARPA funding for the state that was divided between Oregon's 90 state senators and representatives to hand out for projects in their districts. Each senator received \$4 million and each representative received \$2 million that they then requested to send to those projects.

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Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa County Fair Office Manager Tera Elliott and grounds Manager Greg Seuffer survey the work on the grandstands at the fairgrounds Monday, June 7, 2021. The county is expecting to receive about a half-million dollars that can be used to revitalize the fairgrounds.



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