

# Wallowa County population increased 5.5% in last decade

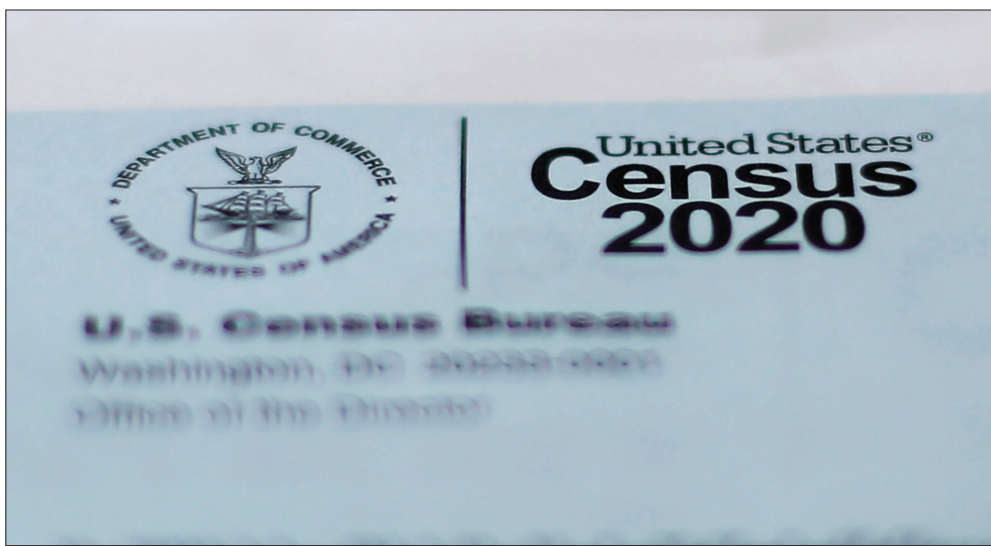
Census has county with just under 7,400 people counted

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The population of Wallowa County increased by close to 400 people during the last decade, with the updated population of the Northeastern Oregon county now just under 7,400, according to data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on Thursday, Aug. 12.

Wallowa County had a population of 7,391 in the census, a 5.5% increase over the 2010 census, which reported the county with 7,008 people. While still by far one of the smallest counties in the state — only Grant, Sherman, Wheeler and Gilliam tallied smaller counts — it grew at a faster rate than 11 other counties in the state, and at a rate on par with Umatilla County, which also saw its population increase 5.5%.

The state's population grew to 4,237,356, an increase of 10.6%. Deschutes County grew at a rate of 25.7%, and now is the home of more than 198,000 people. Grant County was the only one to see its population decrease, as it dropped 2.8% to 7,233.



Paul Sancya/Associated Press, File

The U.S. Census Bureau released more details about the 2020 Census last week, including that Wallowa County had a population of 7,391, an increase of 5.5% from 2010.

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Todd Nash, Wallowa County commissioner

Multnomah County remained by far the biggest in the state, with a population of 815,428, an increase of almost 11%. Wheeler County remains the smallest with 1,451 people.

Most of the county's increase in population is in adults 18 and older, with more than 6,000 adults now

calling Wallowa County home, an increase of 5.7%.

The number of people 18 and under, while increasing 4.2%, is at 1,375.

That the younger population increased was encouraging to Commissioner Todd Nash.

“One of the interesting things that I saw was

our age demographics changed considerably. The persons 65 and older were now at 16% and were at 30% previously,” he said. “The percentage of young people went up. We’ve seen a trend where we’ve been losing school population for a long time, so to see any sort of increase

the other way is a positive sign.”

Oregon seeing just one county decrease in population bucked the nationwide trend, where 52% of counties saw their population drop.

“(It means) Oregon’s predominantly rural counties are not losing as much, or, that there is a little bit of growth and no loss is relevant,” said Charles Rynerson, coordinator at the Oregon State Data Center at Portland State University. “That is going to continue. As our population ages, in 2020 there were more deaths than births statewide, and I think that was true in most counties ... due to aging population and low birth rates.”

He said part of what drove Oregon’s increase in population was migration — even in the outskirts.

“Oregon — in general, the West Coast — has migration, but also into those rural areas. Some of those counties may be gaining more of those people,” Rynerson said.

He said that any impact the coronavirus pandemic had on the census won’t necessarily show up in this count.

“There was a bit of concern about data collection,” he said. “The real economic impact of the pandemic won’t show up in the 2020 Census. (In

2030, that natural decrease of more deaths than births is going to accelerate. All races are below replacement rates now.”

Rynerson said more students attending college is part of what is leading to lower birth rates.

“If you look at the teen and early-20s birth rates, those have plunged beyond belief. People understand the difficulty of having a child at a very young age,” he said. “Even up to age 30, there are far fewer births to women under 30 than there were in the past. As well as people have more choices now. When I was a child, every married couple had children with very few exceptions, and everyone got married, with very few exceptions.”

That’s not the norm anymore, nor is it looked down upon to not have children early, he said.

“The pandemic may have a bigger effect on birth rate in the long run than on death rates,” he said.

More data on the census is coming in the next few weeks, but looking ahead to 2030, Rynerson believes the trend of counties losing people could continue.

“Some counties may be at risk of population loss,” he said. “If nobody moved in or out, and there were more deaths than births, then certainly there would be a loss of population.”

Wallowa County Humane Society is in search of foster homes for the recent increase of new feline mothers, new kittens and feral cats in the County. If you are interested in cat/kitten foster care...

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## Main Street Show and Shine returns

Chieftain staff

ENTERPRISE — The free 2021 Main Street Show and Shine Event will be returning this year Friday and Saturday, Aug. 20-21, after taking last year off because of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a press release.

This annual event is held on Main Street in Enterprise and activities include a participating cruise to the Imnaha Store and Tavern on Friday at noon. Registered participants will meet behind the Market Place in Joseph to prepare for this cruise.

When they return, the public is invited to Warde



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain, File

A line of classic automobiles travels down Hurricane Creek Road toward Joseph on Saturday, Aug. 15, 2020, in the cruise held in lieu of the annual Main Street Show and Shine. A similar run will be made this year, along with a return of other Show and Shine events.

Park in downtown Enterprise for a concert by the local band “No Boundaries,” from 5-8 p.m.

Vendors offering food and refreshments will be

onsite and nearby in downtown Enterprise for this event.

At 7 a.m. Saturday, the participants will begin parking their classic and spe-

cial-interest cars, trucks and other items on wheels for the public to view. The Enterprise Elks Lodge No. 1829 will be serving breakfast at the garage of Main Street Motors at 311 West Main. Starting from 7-10 a.m. Money raised from the breakfast goes toward Elks scholarships and other programs.

After breakfast, the public is invited to view all of the vehicles parked downtown from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Awards and many specially designed and built trophies will be presented beginning at 2:30 p.m. The Best of Show and the People’s Choice Awards are two different cast-bronze sculptures produced by Parks Bronze and TW Bronze, both on Golf Course Road in Enterprise. Beautiful pottery and glass awards from Olaf, Ted Juve and also Sterling Webb of Moonshine Glass, featuring some of the last of Russell Ford’s blown glasses.

Nearly 100 registrations had been received as of Thursday, Aug. 12, and more than 140 participants were expected attend this year’s event.

Also noteworthy is that 16 vendors have requested to also participate in the show this year from three nearby counties.

Upon conclusion of the event, participants will drive from downtown Enterprise to the senior care homes in Enterprise and Joseph.

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Not only was Destiny Wecks one of the Chief Joseph Days queens, but after doing so she competed in numerous events during the Wallowa County Junior Rodeo and won goat tying in the process. She also was the all-around senior showman, champion of senior western equestrian, grand champion of western equestrian, reserve champion for senior showmanship ... and that doesn't even begin to list all her accolades from recent weeks. Great job, Destiny!

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