

Chieftain claims 10 awards in ONPA Better Newspaper Contest

Chieftain staff

ENTERPRISE — Current and former staff members of the Wallowa County Chieftain received recognition in the annual Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association's Better Newspaper Contest.

In all, the Chieftain won 10 awards, including four first-place nods, in the 2021 contest for material produced in 2020. The submissions were judged in Arizona.

Leading out the winners was reporter Bill Bradshaw for his piece "Dialysis: A necessary fact of life for many." The article earned first place for Best Lifestyle Coverage.

Former reporter, editor and current WCC freelancer



Ellen Morris Bishop/Wallowa County Chieftain, File

This roping photo taken on July 18, 2020, was the winner of the Best Feature Photo award in the ONPA Better Newspaper Contest.

Ellen Morris Bishop won first place for Best Feature Photo for her roping photo taken July 18, 2020, during Mel Coleman's annual round-robin rodeo. It was one of four awards won by Bishop.

Also getting first place was former reporter Steve Tool, garnering the top sports story of the year with his article "Coach of the year builds character and winners," about Joseph boys basketball coach Olan Fulfer.

The final first-place award was for Best Page-One Design, highlighting layout work by former WCC designer Andy Nicolais.

Bishop, in addition to the first-place photo, earned second in Best Feature Photo for a shot she took of the comet NEOWISE as it toured the

skies in July 2020. She also took third place for Best Feature Story on her piece "Enterprise students spark Holocaust, hate speech awareness." An adjoining editorial by Bishop, "Battling the other pestilence that besets us," won third place for Best Editorial.

"Discover Wallowa County," the visitor guide put out by the Chieftain, won second place for Best Special Section or Issue. The Chieftain staff won second place for Best Editorial Page. And Bradshaw and Ronald Bond earned third place in Best Coverage of Business or Economic Issues with the article "Feeling the 'freeze.'"

The Chieftain was placed in Group E for weekly newspapers.

Hancock pilot program for campsites gets largely positive reviews

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — A pilot program by Hancock Forest Management on some of its Northeastern Oregon campsites is receiving an overall positive response.

The natural resource group started researching fee camping in 2019, and in that summer and the spring of 2020, began charging rental fees on a handful of its sites for overnight use, according to region manager Joe Justice.

Currently, there are 22 sites enrolled through the camping reservation company Hip Camp.

Justice said in an email to the Chieftain that since 2017, "Hancock Natural Resource Group's NE Oregon forests have been a part of the Access and Habitat Program through Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). This has allowed Hancock to maintain open recreational access to the public while still maintaining safety protocols on our property and meeting our fiduciary responsibility to our clients."

Justice said that in 2019, Hancock began researching fee-use camping "with the idea that they would be primarily used by hunters during archery season starting in September through rifle season ending in November."

"The original pilot program's goal was to gain a better understanding of what hunter's desired in a campsite, what the price point should be, and the amenities we would want to provide," Justice said. "The intent of this program is to enhance a hunter's experience by providing the opportunity to drive into and park their vehicle in an area that has no drive-in access for day use, and allow hunters to take better advantage of early hours in the day to start their hunt."

Justice said all the sites Hancock rented in 2021 were in the Sled Springs

hunting unit north of Wallowa.

"Historically, there were campsites on the property. Therefore, we opted to select those historical

are priced higher for this reason. We did learn in the pilot that hunters desired lower price points for smaller groups. Based on that feedback, we now have

"In general, the feedback has been positive," he said. "Most feedback we have received has been on price. Last year, we offered larger sites that could accommodate more people at a higher price point. However, some have indicated that they would prefer smaller campsites at a lower price. Based on that feedback, we have added those types of sites to the program to better accommodate user's needs."

The sites are still free for day use. Hancock does monitor the sites, and will ask someone camping overnight who hasn't made a reservation to make one or leave.

"Hancock managed lands are private property. Unlike most private property in Oregon, our lands are open to the public for a variety of recreational activities. If a member of the public chooses to disregard the rules we have in place that help maintain safety on our lands and for our recreational users, we

can take legal action if necessary. This is extremely rare. Most members of the public are respectful and appreciate the opportunity to recreate on our properties."

Hancock is still process-

ing feedback on the sites to determine how it will handle them in the future.

"As we receive feedback on our sites, we will be able to adjust to meet the needs and wants of those using the sites," Justice said.

"THE INTENT OF THIS PROGRAM IS TO ENHANCE A HUNTER'S EXPERIENCE BY PROVIDING THE OPPORTUNITY TO DRIVE INTO AND PARK THEIR VEHICLE IN AN AREA THAT HAS NO DRIVE-IN ACCESS FOR DAY USE."

Joe Justice, region manager with Hancock Forest Management

locations for our sites as we knew they were more likely to be used," he said of which sites Hancock elected to rent out. "Prices were set on presumed desirability of each site, and the amount of people that each site could hold. The highest priced sites are located inside the vehicle travel management area, which allows a camper to drive to the campsite but not hunt in a motor vehicle. Many of the sites are very large and can accommodate many campers. These large sites

several sites for rent that are smaller and at a lower price point."

The prices of the 22 sites, according to hipcamp.com, range from \$35 per night to as much as \$300 per night at two locations — Mud Springs and Howard Butte. Half the sites run for \$75 or less a night, and nine of those run for \$50. Seven more sites are at \$100.

Price has been the most-discussed point with users, Justice said, but on the whole the project, he said, has been well-received.

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