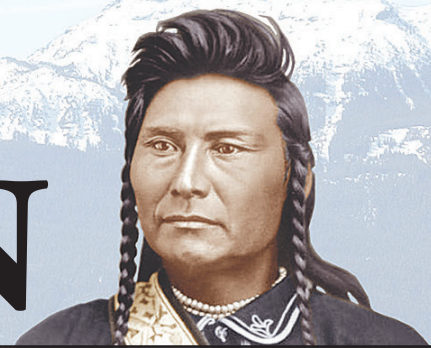




# WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



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## Wallowa County Voices



**Roz McTee**  
Enterprise

She enjoys the sense of community here

ENTERPRISE — Roz McTee has lived in Enterprise for almost eight years, having moved here from Northern Nevada.

She and husband, Ryan, moved here for “a simpler life and a simpler, quiet, more home-town feel,” she said.

One of her favorite things about Wallowa County is the changing of the seasons. Although she got that in Nevada, she likes it here, too.

“What I like the most about the county is that everybody is super friendly and it’s a friendly community here, especially with the locals in the offseason,” she said. “I know that we welcome the tourists every year, which is great, but I also like the sense of community during the wintertime and the little traditions that we have.

“Whether it’s going down to the tavern in Imnaha or skiing at Fergi or going to basketball games on Friday nights. I just like the sense of community throughout the entire year.”

She and Ryan have owned and operated McTee Creations for about four years, where they build and sell bamboo furniture from locally sourced wood that comes from places in the county that people just give to them or they search out and find.

“We build anything from entertainment centers to bamboo tables to cabinets,” she said. “I also do a little bit of home décor.”

They sell some of their items at various shops around the county.

“We’re just local artisans trying to find our way,” she said.

They have a grown son and daughter, the son lives here.

As the weather gets warmer, Roz looks forward to getting out and camping, which she loves.

She believes this month’s primary election to be quite important.

“I think if you have the means, stick your ballot in,” she said.

Roz says the increasing cost of fuel — which she attributes to many causes — is limiting her ability to travel.

“I can’t go farther to camp,” she said. “It’s too expensive to venture farther out of Wallowa County.”

As for people who are thinking of moving here, she has some advice.

“Come with the attitude of not changing what it is now,” she said. “Don’t come into the county and try and change it; just take it for what it is.”

— Bill Bradshaw,  
Wallowa County Chieftain

**A light snowstorm comes down from the Wallowa Mountains onto a freshly greened-up pasture along Airport Lane just west of Joseph on Thursday, May 19, 2022.**

Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain



# A WELCOME RETURN

**Cool, wet weather has eased drought conditions, challenges remain**

By **JEFF BUDLONG**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

**W**ALLOWA COUNTY — Coming off one of the driest and hottest summers in recorded history, Wallowa County and much of Northeast Oregon has benefited from a recent run of wet, cool weather.

While the central and southern portions of the state still are extremely dry, leading to Gov. Kate Brown to use the word “megadrought” in an address last week, Eastern Oregon has seen drought conditions improve. That doesn’t mean effects of last year’s dry conditions still aren’t being felt, and fire season is coming, if not as soon as initially thought.

Cooler, wetter weather in April and to begin May has helped improve conditions in northern portions of Oregon. Wallowa County has areas of moderate, severe and extreme drought according to the latest drought monitor



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

**The level of Wallowa Lake was inching up on the dam Thursday, May 19, 2022, amid a light snowstorm.**

released May 17. Most of Umatilla, Morrow and Union counties are abnormally dry — the least severe drought ranking.

Much of the moisture the north has enjoyed eluded central and southern Oregon where a large area of exceptional drought conditions exist.

The combination of moisture and cool temperatures can be seen in the local green up, but more importantly is the continued presence of the snowpack on the mountains.

“In March, we were seeing

the snowpack melting pretty rapidly already,” said Marilyn Lohmann, a National Weather Service hydrologist in Pendleton.

With the snowpack at just 70-80% of normal, it was projected to melt between a month to two months early. Fortunately, that is no longer the case.

“The cooler weather has allowed the snowpack to stay in place, and in some cases actually build,” Lohmann said. “It will now be melting in a more normal timeframe. We should see stream flows last longer into

the early summer months, which will help irrigation and just put more moisture back into the soil.”

April saw 1.37 inches of moisture and 6.3 inches of snow in Wallowa County, and just over an inch of precipitation and an additional nine inches of snow in Lostine, Lohmann said. Precipitation over the last 30 days has ranged from 130-200% of normal, making for a significant difference from just 90 days ago.

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## County OK’s Road Service District

**Donates to Wallowa bicycle playground**

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The groundwork was laid for a new Wallowa County Road Service District and the planned bicycle playground in Wallowa received a donation when the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners met Wednesday, May 18.

The commissioners voted to take advantage of a new law approved by the Oregon Legislature that allows counties to direct the state Department of Revenue to deposit money that ordinarily would go into the county Road Fund into the Road Service District instead.

The funds in question are Secure Rural Schools money under which 25% is apportioned to schools — the Education Service District — and 75% to the Road Department. It comes from federal funds received as payment in lieu of property taxes that counties have received since the federal government changed its policy

on timber harvest in the 1990s and came up with a formula to replace the money counties previously received from logging on federal lands within their borders.

“It dropped the stumpage fee to almost nothing,” Board Chairwoman Susan Roberts said. “It went from \$3 million to about \$50,000. So they came up with this formula, this Secure Rural Schools that went through, that would pay for trees they weren’t cutting anymore, which took away almost all the income. Then they decided that formula would give it to places that weren’t getting huge amounts of money. They did it on a population basis, too. Although Wallowa County has a lot more federal land than (for example) Union County, they get more money because they have a bigger population. It’s convoluted.”

Commissioner John Hillock agreed.

“It’s very convoluted,” he said.

“Lane County gets the most in the whole state because they’ve got more people, although we may have more acres (of federal timberland).”



Hillock



Nash



Roberts

Commissioner Todd Nash said the whole “convoluted” problem could have been avoided.

“We could’ve foregone all of this by just having an agreement with the feds that they no longer subtract that payment, but they’re not willing to do that,” he said. “We’ve got to jump through the hoops to make it happen.”

Hillock said he believes no other Oregon counties have yet taken advantage of the new law. He noted that counties in other states have set up road service districts for the SRS money.

“That’s because their state allows it and ours did not, but now it does,” Roberts said.

The matter must first go before voters. The commissioners and their legal team has work to do before putting it on the November ballot. This elicited

concern from the commissioners.

“It’s going to be one of those things that is going to be really difficult for people to understand,” Nash said. “The bottom line is we’ll have a half-million dollars in our general fund that we didn’t have before, and it doesn’t do harm to our Road Department. It’s a win.”

Roberts said that under the new district — for which the commissioners would be the board of directors — nothing would change in how the Road Department operates or is funded.

“What it’s going to do is put a little more than a half-million dollars (in PILT money) in the general fund, which will allow us to fully staff the sheriff’s office and that would continue each year rather than us losing half of that money due to that formula,” the Roberts said.

She agreed that the commissioners will have to make it clear what voters are being asked to approve.

“We’ll need to explain why it’s on (the November ballot),” Roberts said. “It doesn’t change anything. The Road Department will operate exactly as it always has.

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