

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Walden to attend E.O. Counties Association meeting in Baker

Rep. Greg Walden will be in Baker City on Wednesday, Sept. 19 to meet with the Eastern Oregon Counties Association.

The meeting will start at 8 a.m. at the Baker County Courthouse, 1995 Third St.

Walden will be in attendance to discuss the Association's objections to the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision.

### Dog Jog, fundraiser for Baker City's new dog park, scheduled for Oct. 6

The second-annual Dog Jog is set for Saturday, Oct. 6, at Central

Park in downtown Baker City. Registration is available at Baker City Hall or online at <http://bakercity.com/2283/Dog-Park>. A link is also available on Facebook — search for Baker City Partners for Paws.

Entry is \$20 and includes a T-shirt if registered by Sept. 21. Entry the day of the event is \$10 without a shirt.

Same-day registration starts at 8:30 a.m., and the event starts at 9 a.m. The route is a one-mile loop that goes down the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway to Geiser Pollman Park and back to Central Park.

Dogs are encouraged but not required to participate. All proceeds go toward continued maintenance

and improvements at the Baker City Dog Park, located near Sam-O Swim in east Baker City.

### Registration starts soon for Ski for the Health of It program at Anthony Lakes

Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort is again offering the Ski for the Health of It program, which provides lower-cost rentals and lessons to students from grades 4-12 for eight weeks on Fridays. Registration opens Oct. 1, although forms are available starting Sept. 17 online at [www.anthonylakes.com](http://www.anthonylakes.com) and at local schools.

The ski program runs from Jan. 11 through March 15, 2019 (there is no program Jan. 25 or Feb. 22).

Ski For the Health of It has two separate programs:

- The Regular Program is open to grades 4-12. This includes transportation, lift ticket, lesson, and rental equipment (if needed). Cost is \$80 per student for all eight weeks. Space is limited to the first 150 to register.
- Ride/Lift Only Program: Open to grades 10-12 students who have completed at least two seasons of the Ski For the Health of It program and have their own equipment. Includes transportation and lift tickets only. (Lessons and rentals are not included). Cost is \$50 per student for the eight weeks. (Not eligible for scholarship). Space is limited to 40.

Completed forms must be returned to the child's school office. Scholarships are available and

require teacher recommendations — this must be turned in to qualify as a completed application. Please start the scholarship process well ahead of the Oct. 1 registration date. Scholarship forms are online or at the school offices, and should be started prior to the Oct. 1 deadline.

For more information, contact Jaime Kmetec at [jaime@anthonylakes.com](mailto:jaime@anthonylakes.com).

### Regional Theatre auditions set for Monday

Eastern Oregon Regional Theatre will hold auditions for "Doctor Frank'n Styne" at 6 p.m. Monday, Sept. 17, at the Iron Gate Theater, 2101 Main St. The cast includes four men, four women and three flexible roles. The show opens Oct. 18 for a two-weekend run.

## COUGARS

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The most recent case happened this May, when a cougar attacked two men riding mountain bikes east of Seattle, killing one.

It was the first fatal cougar attack in Washington state in almost a century.

"The anomaly was that we (Oregon) hadn't had one yet," Ratliff said. "It's a tragedy."

### Northeastern Oregon: heart of cougar country

Baker County is part of the Blue Mountains region, which has some of the higher concentrations of cougars in the state, according to ODFW's most recent cougar management plan, from October 2017.

The agency's population model estimates there are about 6,500 cougars statewide, including about 1,700 in the Blue Mountains zone, the higher number among the state's six cougar management zones.

ODFW also estimates that the cougar density in the Blue Mountains zone increased from 11 cougars per 100 square miles in 2006 to 11.4 cougars per 100 square miles in 2015.

For each zone ODFW sets a yearly quota for the number of cougars killed by hunters and for other reasons, such as by wildlife agents due to a complaint about cougars attacking livestock or being seen near homes.

The yearly quota for the Blue Mountains zone is 270 — higher than for any of the other zones.

If the quota is reached in any zone, then sport hunting is canceled for the rest of the calendar year.

That hasn't happened in the Blue Mountains zone. For the past four years the numbers of cougars killed hasn't totaled even half of the yearly quota.

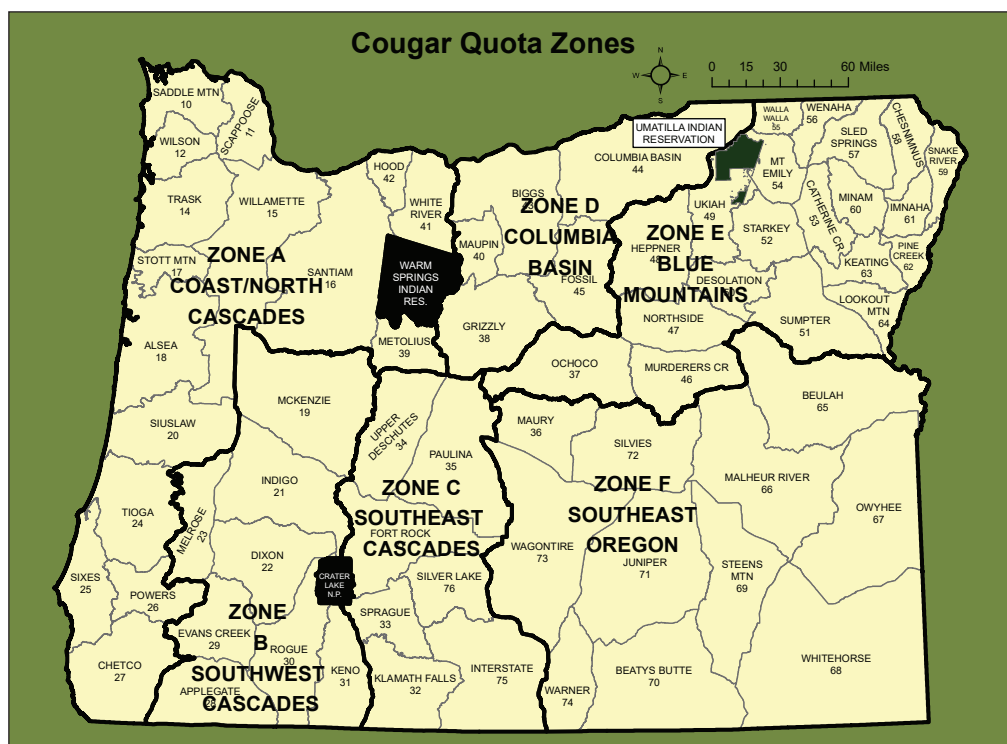
Sport hunters did kill more cougars in the zone in 2017 — 106 — than in any year since 2009, when the sport hunter harvest was 113 cougars.

According to the 2017 cougar management plan, the number of "cougar-human conflict" reports has been decreasing in the Blue Mountains zone for several years.

The number of cougar com-

YEAR	HUNTER HARVEST	NON-HUNTER HARVEST	TOTAL HARVEST	ANNUAL QUOTA
2018*	36	15	51	270
2017	106	26	132	270
2016	93	21	114	270
2015	79	31	110	270
2014	77	17	94	245
2013	96	40	136	245
2012	101	64	165	245
2011	93	76	169	245
2010	92	71	163	245
2009	113	45	158	245
2008	109	65	174	245
2007	110	72	182	245
2006	127	35	162	245

\*through Sept. 7



plaints has declined substantially over the past five years. Complaints include cases in which a livestock owner reports a cougar harassing or attacking animals, people seeing cougars near homes, or cougars acting as though they aren't afraid of humans, among other categories.

For the five-year period 2007-11, ODFW recorded a yearly average of 43 cougar complaints in the Blue Mountains zone.

For the five-year period 2012-16, the yearly average dropped to 19 such complaints.

The number of cougars killed based on complaints also declined during that decade in the Blue Mountains zone, from 25 per year from 2007-11, to 16 from 2012-16.

Ratliff said the number of cougar-related calls to his office have been relatively steady over the past several years.

Considering that ODFW estimates that the cougar population in the Blue Mountains has grown modestly over the past decade, Ratliff attributes the generally flat trend in local calls in part to residents becoming

more accustomed to seeing cougars.

In the past, he speculates, cougars were comparatively rare so people perhaps were more likely to report sightings, even if they didn't feel that the animal posed any threat.

Although Ratliff said he has never received a report from anyone who claimed to have been attacked by a cougar in Baker County, he said cases of an individual cougar roaming in or near inhabited areas — often a young male driven out of a possible home range by an older male — are

all but certain to continue.

Ratliff said ODFW has had a "cougar attack response plan" in place for many years, and he has a kit at the Baker City office to collect evidence in the case of a possible cougar attack on a person.

### Cougar killed near Halfway this month

Just this month a Halfway hunter, Brad Cantrell, shot and killed an adult male cougar about one mile from the Halfway city limits.

Cantrell, who was hunting deer with his bow, said a game camera he had set up had taken more than a dozen photos of a cougar in an area where previously it had mainly photographed deer.

Cantrell, who works as a hunting guide but had never killed a cougar, decided to set up a ground stand near the game camera.

On Sept. 1, the Saturday of Labor Day weekend, Cantrell said he went to the site and found a pile of carcasses, including deer, mink and skunk, as well as a dog, in a patch of brush.

That evening he returned to his blind, accompanied by his girlfriend, Kristan Hafeman.

About 5:30 p.m. the couple heard what sounded like brush moving in the direction of the carcass pile.

Cantrell said he's convinced that they were listening to the cougar munching on one of the animals, probably a freshly killed deer.

"It was really nerve-racking being that close," he said.

After about 90 minutes, during which Cantrell said he had his bow ready, Hafeman grabbed his leg and said she saw the cougar.

The animal emerged from the brush about 6 to 8 yards away.

Cantrell said he fired an arrow. He heard the arrow hit the cougar but the animal jumped high and then ran away.

He called his dad and some friends to help him track the cougar. They followed a blood trail for a short distance, but with dusk falling and the blood trail leading into thick shrubbery, they decided not to continue the pursuit until the next morning, Sept. 2.

They quickly found the cougar in the morning, not far from where they stopped

searching.

"It was quite the experience, to be that close," Cantrell said.

Speaking of proximity, though, he thinks that having a mature cougar living so close to Halfway might be "too close for comfort for a lot of people."

Cantrell said he was not especially surprised to read that ODFW officials concluded that a cougar had killed Bober while she hiked in the Cascades.

He said he hopes the tragedy convinces Oregonians that the state needs to control the cougar population, and that the current law, which prohibits hunters from using dogs to track and tree cougars, might be contributing to a potentially dangerous situation.

ODFW officials estimate that the cougar population has more than doubled, from about 3,000 cats, since the ban on tracking dogs started.

The population has continued to rise even though hunters in many years have killed more cougars than they did in years before the dog ban was enacted.

ODFW attributes this in part to a vast increase in the number of hunters who have a cougar tag.

Prior to the dog ban, cougar hunts were all controlled. In 1994, the last year hunters were allowed to use dogs, which is by far the most effective method, about 385 people hunted cougars, and about 40 percent killed a cat.

In 1995 about 316 people hunted cougars, but just 11 percent were successful.

To encourage cougar hunting, ODFW cut the price of cougar tags by more than half and made the season year-round, subject to early closure if quotas are met.

The results were dramatic — in 2016 the state sold 58,000 cougar tags.

Most people who buy tags, however, don't actually go out with the sole intention of finding a cougar, according to ODFW biologists.

Rather, they are hunting deer, elk or other big game animals and want to have a cougar tag in case they see one of the elusive cats.

That rarely happens.

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