

Local & State

ENDANGERED WILDFLOWER IN HELLS CANYON

Attorneys present arguments in suit over grazing in Hells Canyon

By Katy Nesbitt
For the Baker City Herald

PENDLETON — Attorneys for the Forest Service and Greater Hells Canyon Council of La Grande squared off over cattle grazing in Hells Canyon Nov. 13 in Pendleton's U.S. District Court.

Judge Patricia Sullivan heard oral arguments regarding a complaint the Council filed in January claiming the Forest Service violated federal laws when it developed the Lower Imnaha Range Analysis, endangering the threatened wildflower Spalding's catchfly.

Jennifer Schwartz, representing the Council, said cattle grazing is the biggest threat to catchfly recovery. Cattle can trample plants, erode surrounding soil, especially on steep, muddy slopes, spread noxious weeds that outcompete catchfly for habitat and threaten its primary pollinator, the bumblebee.

"Most of the damage is ongoing, especially on slopes, the plant's niche habitat," Schwartz said.

Rancher Scott McClaran, whose family has grazed cattle during winter in Hells Canyon for almost a century, told Sullivan that he doesn't believe catchfly has a niche habitat, and that the flower grows in many parts of Walla Walla County.

"We have the longest running permit in the (Hells Canyon) National Recreation Area and it has the highest density of Spalding's catchfly, but we aren't even talking about 600,000 acres that hasn't been inventoried or the 400,000 ungrazed acres," McClaran said.

Department of Justice attorney Sean Martin, representing the Forest Service, told Sullivan the Range Analysis for the Lower Imnaha River area was designed to

improve habitat for catchfly, a species first documented in 2004 that has survived more than 200 years of cattle and horse grazing in the canyon, first by Nez Perce and later by white settlers.

Martin said a survey conducted this summer inventoried 800 more plants than was documented at the time of the 2015 decision.

"A Forest Service botany expert said cattle grazing is not threatening the viability of the species," Martin said. "After all these years, it is not likely to be extirpated any time soon."

The Council's complaint said the agency did not "take a hard look at the action's potential environmental consequences" and therefore its decision on grazing was arbitrary, capricious, not in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and "must be reversed and remanded."

Darlyn Parry, the Council's executive director, said, "Congress has recognized this place as deserving of special protections. We're asking the Forest Service to do a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement that adequately evaluates management alternatives that comply with the requirements of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and the mandate to protect threatened species like Spalding's catchfly."

In her argument, Schwartz, the Council's attorney, said cattle numbers on the lower Imnaha hadn't changed much since the 1950s, stating that the reduction was 140 head.

McClaran disputed that number. He said that outside of the requirements of the Range Analysis, he voluntarily reduced cattle numbers to give him more flexibility when faced with losing

grassland to wildfires, vole invasions and drought.

"We created the flexibility because we thought it was good management," McClaran said. "So to stand up there in a courtroom (and say) the numbers are about the same as the 1950s is not accurate."

All three of McClaran's daughters work the ranch and depend on the sale of their cattle for their livelihood. He said through the planning process his family made concessions, but ones they could live with.

"It was a compromise of multiple uses by a lot of different interest groups and different resources," McClaran said. "The stakeholders talked over maps to flesh out all the different opinions and ideas and Greater Hells (Canyon Council) participated in some of those meetings, but as it (the plan) moved through the process they stated their objections without alternatives," McClaran said.

According to Parry, her staff waited to see how the Forest Service would manage grazing before filing the lawsuit.

The trigger, she said, was the results of a Freedom of Information Act filed in August 2017. The complaint said the response did not include any current allotment management plans nor botanical survey monitoring data.

"We monitored how the decision was implemented," Parry said. "For example, we wanted to see if the Forest Service would follow any Fish and Wildlife Service's conservation recommendations for the project, or conduct additional monitoring of catchfly population, in order to get a sense of how the populations are doing over time."

The McClarans and

Wallowa County filed as interveners in the case and were represented by Caroline Lobdell of the Western Resources Legal Center at Lewis and Clark Law School. She argued the plaintiff's case was political and the Forest Service's decision was neither capricious nor arbitrary.

"The plaintiffs say they are not asking for an injunction, but are blaming grazing for everything," Lobdell said. "If they don't like this decision then we are back to the prior management rule with less benefit."

Todd Nash, Wallowa County Commission board chairman who's also a rancher who grazes cattle on public land, listened to the hearing via phone. He said there were relevant points made on both sides, but he believes the lower Imnaha ground is well-suited for livestock and should remain open for grazing.

"Those pastures have been used since Chief Joseph's days of grazing cattle and horses and that plant has been resilient all this time, as are the ranchers who occupied that land," Nash said.

Sullivan said as she forms her opinion in the case she would be balancing interests.

"Getting rid of grazing in this particular area of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, I don't see that happening. Now we have to figure out what to do. I have to applaud the McClarans — they are very careful conscientious ranchers who want continued survival," Sullivan said.

The judge concluded by recommending the Forest Service and the Council get together while she is working on her opinion and settle the case.

"Nothing is written in stone," Sullivan said. "There are a number of alternatives, is there a better one?"

LOCAL BRIEFING

Turkey Trot Thursday morning

The 11th-annual Turkey Trot is set for Thanksgiving morning, Nov. 22. This fun run/walk is a 5K (3.1 miles) and raises funds for the Northeast Oregon Compassion Center, a faith-based nonprofit that runs a food and clothing bank in Baker City.

The Turkey Trot will begin at 9 a.m. in front of Kicks Sportswear on Main Street. Same-day registration is from 7:30 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.

Entry is \$10, and those who were registered by Monday, Nov. 5, will receive a shirt. Register online at neoregoncompassioncenter.org/turkey-trot/ or print an entry form and mail it to Northeast Oregon Compassion Center, P.O. Box 665, Baker City, OR 97814. (Forms were due by Nov. 17; otherwise bring the registration on the day of the race.)

Participants are also asked to bring a nonperishable food item to the race to help fill the Compassion Center's food bank.

Water, coffee and hot chocolate will be available at the race's turn-around point and at the finish line. There will also be post-race food and refreshments, plus prizes for the top three finishers in individual and team competition.

Keating pinocle potlucks planned

Biweekly pinocle potlucks are scheduled this fall and winter at the Keating Fire Hall, 26502 Keating Grange Road. The potlucks start at 6 p.m., with cards to follow. Players should bring a potluck dish to share, table service and \$2 for the pinocle. Lemonade, coffee and tea will be provided.

More information is available by calling Cammie Miller at 541-523-6108 or Patti Pickard at 541-523-2943. Potlucks are scheduled for Nov. 24, Dec. 8 and 22, Jan. 5 and 19, and Feb. 2 and 16.

Inspirational holiday brunch planned

Baker City Christian Women and Stonecroft Ministries are sponsoring an inspirational holiday brunch on Saturday, Dec. 8, in Baker City.

The event will start at 10 a.m. at the Community Connection Senior Center, 2810 Cedar St. Cost is \$10, inclusive.

Guest speaker Kirsten Holmberg, a writer, speaker and public speaking coach from Eagle, Idaho, will offer a fresh perspective in her message, "Through the Trees: Finding Christ in Christmas."

In addition, Baker High School's Bel Canto choir under the direction of Hannah Violette will perform holiday favorites.

Reservations are needed by Dec. 3. To reserve a space, call Jerri Wickert at 541-523-3447 or by email at jerrjohn2@gmail.com

LDS plans day of service on Dec. 1

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is inviting people to participate in the "Light The World" campaign, including a worldwide day of service on Dec. 1.

Those interested can go to lighttheworld.org to learn about ways to share their time, talents and resources. Participants also can print a four-week calendar containing ideas on ways to serve, starting with Dec. 1.

OTEC offers scholarships

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative is accepting applications for scholarships for higher education and for the annual Washington, D.C., youth tour for high school students. OTEC will award 32 scholarships for higher education: 26 for academic colleges, four for trade schools and two for lineman colleges. Scholarships for academic school are \$5,000 and the trade school scholarships are \$2,500. Applications for scholarships are available on the OTEC website, otec.com. The deadline for school scholarships is Feb. 1, 2019, and the deadline for the D.C. trip is Jan. 25.

— From staff reports and press releases

Legislative leaders must comply with sex harassment subpoenas

PORTLAND (AP) — A Multnomah County Circuit Court judge has ruled that Oregon legislative leaders must comply with subpoenas for documents and testimony in the sexual harassment investigation at the Capitol.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports

Judge Christopher Marshall said Monday the subpoenas were reasonable in scope and had been issued lawfully by the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries.

He gave lawmakers until Dec. 5 to provide documents and Dec. 18 to pro-

vide testimony.

Through their attorneys, Senate President Peter Courtney and House Speaker Tina Kotek had argued that supplying the information would jeopardize the privacy of people who had complained about misconduct.

HEART TO HEART

Coats for Kids program warms children, hearts

In 2009 the Knights of Columbus launched the national Coats for Kids initiative. Since the program's inception, the Knights of Columbus have given away more than 400,000 coats to needy children in the United States and Canada.

In 2016, our local Knights of Columbus Council No. 849 started the Coats for Kids program in Baker City. They were able to purchase two cases of coats (24 coats) thanks to generous contributors. The coats were distributed to Head Start and South Baker Intermediate staffs for needy kids.

Last year the Knights invited the community to donate toward the purchasing of coats. We received \$2,701 plus \$480 in-kind donations for a storage unit. We were able to purchase 108 coats from preschool to high school sizes and distributed 62 coats to Heat Start, Brooklyn, South Baker, and Baker

Middle School and Baker High School. Another 46 coats remained in storage.

This year to date we have received \$2,676 in community donations plus a \$599 carryover from 2017 plus the storage unit donations. We have distributed 44 coats

so far and have 62 coats in storage. We have added Haines and Keating schools, YMCA, Early Intervention and Bright Eyes preschools, Harvest Christian School and MayDay to our list of distributors. We work with staff members at each facil-

ity to distribute the coats to needy children. If we have a severe winter we have a balance in our account for the purchase of additional coats.

We want to thank the following organizations and community members who have generously donated to the growing success of this program: Lions Club of Baker; Baker County

Shriners Club; Baker City Bronc and Bull Riding Inc.; Soroptimist International of Baker County; Knights of Columbus Council No. 849; Cass and Pattie Vanderwiele; Janet Steinmetz; Wayne and Marilyn Bloom; Hal and Doni Huntington; Louise Palumbo; Doug Riggs; Betty Lou Hillman; Deborah Harris; The Grove

Team.

If you have any questions regarding this program please call Hal Huntington at 541-523-2114.

Again, thanks to all for supporting this important program.

Hal Huntington
Chairman, Knights of Columbus Council No. 849
Baker City



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MOVIE TIMES NOVEMBER 16-22

FANTASTIC BEASTS: CRIMES OF GRINDELWALD PG-13
FRI & SAT: (3:45) 6:45, 9:35 SUN: (3:45) 6:45
MON & TUES: 6:45 WED & THURS: (3:45) 6:45, 9:35

THE GRINCH PG
FRI & SAT: (4:10) 7:10, 9:45 SUN: (4:10) 7:10
MON & TUES: 7:10 WED & THURS: (4:10) 7:10, 9:45

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY PG-13
FRI & SAT: (3:50) 6:50, 9:40
SUN: (3:50) 6:50 MON&TUES: 6:50

RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET PG
STARTS WEDNESDAY 11/21!
WED & THURS: (4:00) 7:00, 9:40

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