

WOLF

Continued

Aguilar, who has lived in Pine Valley for 15 years, said the wolves were 10 to 12 yards from the front door of his home in the incident that happened about 7 a.m. on March 12.

"I didn't really feel good about it," Aguilar said this morning in a phone interview, referring to his decision to shoot the wolf.

He said he was motivated to kill the wolf, rather than fire a shot to try to frighten the animals away, in part by two previous encounters with wolves on his property.

One of those happened in late February of this year.

Aguilar said he was awakened about 3 a.m. by wolves howling near his home.

He said he went outside and fired 25 to 30 warning shots, hoping to haze the wolves.

Aguilar said the wolves stayed approximately where they had been — based on their howling — even after he fired.

"They weren't concerned at all by gunshots," he said.

At daylight he telephoned the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) office in Baker City. Aguilar said officials arrived that morning and confirmed, through tracks in the snow, that wolves had been in the area Aguilar indicated.

His first experience with wolves on his property happened about two years ago, on a February morning, when his two Labrador retrievers started barking.

Aguilar, who was stoking his outdoor furnace, said he saw one of his cow dogs running down a hill being chased by what he initially thought was a Shetland pony but was in fact a wolf.

"It was a huge animal," Aguilar said.

He said the wolf stopped about 35 yards away. Aguilar said he raised his arms trying to frighten the wolf, but it didn't move.

He then got his rifle and fired one shot in the wolf's direction.

Again, the wolf stood its ground.

"It was a beautiful animal, black with yellow eyes," Aguilar said. "It was not at all concerned. It just gives you a different feeling when you see an animal that big and it doesn't have any care about humans at all."

Aguilar said he fired a second shot, nearer the wolf but without trying to hit it, and at that the animal turned and ran off.

The March 12 incident started when Aguilar was working on a computer in a room on the second floor of his home.

He has his cattle herd in a calving area about 200 yards, and downhill, from the house. Aguilar said he usually leaves his cow dog, Ruger, outside to watch over the herd.

Aguilar said he heard Ruger "creating a ruckus at the front of my house."

He said he looked through a window and saw the dog near his front door with one wolf facing the dog and two others, one on either side.

Aguilar said a fourth wolf

was behind the dog, but farther away.

Aguilar said it appeared to him, based on Ruger's side to side movements, that the dog realized the wolves were "trying to flank him."

Aguilar said he ran downstairs, grabbed his .223 rifle and left the house via a side door.

He said he didn't want to go out the front door because if he had to shoot he would be aiming down the hill toward where his cattle, as well as horses, are penned.

Aguilar said that as he came around the house and saw the wolves still menacing his dog, he shot one of the wolves, which immediately went down.

He said he shot it two more times to make sure it was dead.

He said the three other wolves fled, but they apparently stopped in a draw about 500 yards away, where they howled for about 30 minutes.

Aguilar said he called the ODFW office in Baker City. He said biologists arrived and found wolf tracks around the area where his cows and calves were penned.

None of the livestock was injured, he said. He said the mother cows had formed a protective circle around their calves.

Aguilar speculates that Ruger had driven the wolves away from the cattle, and then run toward the house with the wolves pursuing.

Aguilar said he's convinced that had he not taken action, the wolves would have killed his dog.

"There's no question in my

mind," he said.

Aguilar said he has a certain appreciation for wolves.

"They're beautiful, amazing animals," he said. "Whether or not the wolves have a place in our ecosystem, I would say that they do."

But Aguilar said he believes wolves are better suited in places such as national parks and wilderness areas rather than areas near homes.

"They need to be monitored, they need to be managed appropriately," he said.

Aguilar said he appreciates the efforts ODFW has made in that regard.

The agency has fitted a tracking collar to the breeding female wolf of the Pine Creek pack, from which the wolves that chased his dog likely came.

The Pine Creek pack, which ODFW biologist Brian Ratliff said likely consists of eight wolves following Aguilar's shooting of the wolf on March 12, killed four calves and injured seven others during April 2018 in eastern Baker County. ODFW officials killed three wolves from the pack during that month.

Aguilar said he understands that Oregon law allows a person to shoot a wolf that is attacking livestock or a working dog.

But he wonders what might have happened had the wolves on March 12 threatened not Ruger, which is a working dog, but one of his two pet Labs instead.

"It's a concern," he said. "You shouldn't have to think twice about protecting your property."

WATER

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"It could slow up raining any time," Smith said with a chuckle on Tuesday morning.

The storm that started Sunday had passed to the east by Tuesday morning, after dropping more than an inch of rain in places.

Colder air followed the storm, which turned rain to snow at higher elevations and slowed the snowmelt.

Among the areas where water has spilled onto roads is a place prone to flooding during spring — the Burnt River Canyon Road between Bridgeport and Durkee in southern Baker County.

The gravel road, which runs beside the Burnt River for several miles, remains open, Smith said.

Like its fellow Snake River tributary, the Powder River, the Burnt River is blocked by a dam.

But there's a difference, and it's a significant one.

Unity Reservoir, on the Burnt River about 4 miles north of Unity, has a much smaller capacity than Phillips Reservoir on the Powder River about 16 miles southwest of Baker City — about 25,000 acre-feet in Unity compared with Phillips' 73,500 acre-feet.

Wes Morgan, who manages the Burnt River Irrigation

District and oversees the dam's operation, has been preparing for a glut of snowmelt this spring.

But the reservoir has continued to rise, and by early this week it was about 80% full.

At that level, and with water continuing to pour into the reservoir in prodigious volumes from the Burnt River's three main forks, Morgan had to release more water from the dam lest the reservoir fill.

When that happens, he has no choice but to release water at the same volume as it's flowing into the reservoir.

Morgan said he boosted the release rate to about 670 cubic feet per second (cfs) on Tuesday. That volume, combined with the flow of tributaries below the dam, caused the river to top its banks in the Burnt River Valley.

But the situation would be more dire if the reservoir were full.

Morgan said the total inflow into the reservoir on Tuesday was about 1,300 cfs — about 1,000 cfs of which was tumbling down the North Fork of the Burnt River.

Smith said he appreciates Morgan's efforts to reserve room in the reservoir to capture some of the water.

"He's done a great job of holding it down," Smith said.

He said Morgan phoned him Tuesday morning advising him to have a crew put up "high water" signs along the Burnt River Canyon Road, however.

Morgan said he also sent a warning to downstream residents letting them know that the river level would be rising.

In the past he made a lot of phone calls, but these days, Morgan said, he can accomplish much of the task with a single group text message.

Smith said he also has received reports of areas of high water in the Pine Valley near Halfway, but no roads have been damaged or closed.

As for the Powder River, which flows through Baker City, Jeff Colton, who manages the Baker Valley Irrigation District and operates Mason Dam and Phillips Reservoir, is releasing almost no water through the dam — just 7 cfs.

With the reservoir at just 28% of capacity, Colton can store almost all of the inflow rather than release it into the river.

But even with a relative trickle flowing through the dam, there was quite a bit of snow below the reservoir, and the heavy rain that fell on that snow Monday and Monday night caused a rapid rise in the river downstream from the dam starting early

Tuesday.

A river gauge in south Baker City, near Wade Williams Elks Memorial Park, recorded a rise from about 183 cfs at midnight Monday to a peak of about 400 cfs around 9:45 a.m. Tuesday.

The Powder receded after that, and as of 7 a.m. today it was at 230 cfs.

Even at its Tuesday morning peak, though, the river was well below flood stage of 667 cfs.

A shift to cooler weather, with less rain, should reduce the risk of flooding through this week, Morgan said.

He doesn't expect the next storm to cause as much trouble below Unity Dam because much of the snow that turned side streams into torrents earlier this week is gone.

The potential for flooding likely will persist, however, as the snowpack remains well above average at higher elevations.

The water content in the snow near Tipton Summit on Highway 7, part of the North Fork Burnt River drainage, is about 20% above average.

In several previous years, including 2008 and 2011, the combination of rain and melting snow caused flooding along the Burnt River during May.

That month is on average the wettest in Baker County.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Community Orchestra concert Friday

The Baker Community Orchestra's spring concert is set for Friday, April 12, at 7 p.m. at the Baker High School auditorium, 2500 E St. There is no admission charge and all are welcome.

The concert will feature American composer Clare Grundman's Hebrides Suite, a collection of folk songs from the isles of the Hebrides off the west coast of Scotland. The islands maintain a strong folk song tradition including the five folk songs in the suite. Also on the program is the Children's March by Percy Grainger, an arrangement of Johannes Brahms' Academic Festival Overture, a rousing march by Oregon composer Steve Hodges, and perhaps a little rock and roll.

More information is available by calling Brian Watt at 541-523-4662, and updates are posted on the Orchestra's Facebook page.

Shooting competitions this weekend

A Cowboy Action Shoot is set for Saturday, April 13, from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Powder River Sportsmen's Club's Virtue Flat range about 6 miles east of Baker City off Highway 86. Competitors are invited to bring single-action revolvers, lever-action rifles (replicas or made prior to 1896) and double-barrel or Winchester Model 97 shotguns. Shooters are also encouraged to dress in period western wear or B movie attire.

The course includes five or six stages of 25 to 30 rounds, so bring plenty of ammunition. Entry fee is \$10 per person. More information is available by calling Chuck Buchanan at 541-519-8550 or Dan McGuire at 541-212-5840.

On Sunday, April 14, there will be a steel varmint shoot at the Virtue Flat range starting at 10 a.m. Bring any nonmagnum centerfire rifle, with any sights and rest. No steel core or jacket bullets, please. Entry fee is \$10. More information is available by calling Ken Bardizian at 541-519-6772.

The course of fire:

- 5 shots at 200 meters at a steel squirrel (2x5)
- 5 shots at 300 meters at steel rabbit (3x6)
- 5 shots at 385 meters at steel chuck (6x14)
- 5 shots at 500 meters at steel coyote (16x25)

There is a time limit of five minutes for each stage.

COUNCIL

Continued from Page 1A

The resolution includes a \$4.62 increase in the monthly wastewater fee for residential customers, from \$23.26 to \$27.88. The rate for commercial customers, which is based on the amount of water used, will increase by the same percentage.

The city is raising wastewater rates to raise money for an estimated \$11 million project to build a pipeline to carry wastewater to a new storage pond east of Interstate 84.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has told officials the city will no longer be able to release treated wastewater into the Powder River about a mile north of town.

City officials expect to ask councilors to boost wastewater rates again starting July 1, 2020, probably to around \$30 per month.

The Council's initial vote on the fee resolution failed, with just three in favor and Randy Schiewe joining Andersen in abstaining.

Schiewe said he

abstained because, as a contractor, some of the fees would affect him. He later announced the potential conflict of interest but voted in favor of the resolution.

A full list of the changes is available on the city's website, www.bakercity.com

In other business Tuesday, the Council awarded two bids for a summer project to repave Washington Avenue between the Powder River and Clark Street and rebuild curbs and sidewalks on that section.

Rogers Asphalt Paving Co. was the low bidder for the repaving, at \$147,964. James Challis Construction Inc. was the low bidder for the curbs and sidewalks, at \$81,824.90.

Councilors discussed efforts to reduce the wildfire danger in the city's watershed, and they appointed Bruland as the city's spokesperson on that issue.

They also approved the first reading of an update to the city's tree ordinance, and heard updates from the Small Business Development Center and Baker City Trash Talk.



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2501 Oak Street Baker City, OR 97814

Door Prizes

Thank You

Thank you all:

My son Shawn and two buddies built my ramp;

Tom, Marilyn & Flint from Home Health;

Jim, Mike, Phil, David W., Connie B., Wendy P., Mary Jane G., Andi W., Brenda D., Jan S., Lori T., neighbors and friends.

A great big thanks for your help while I recouped from surgery.

- Sandy Wood

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