

VIRUS

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The first positive test was from a "pool" of mosquitoes trapped July 9 in Keating Valley. A pool consists of about 50 mosquitoes. No mosquitoes trapped in Baker Valley, or elsewhere in the 200,000-acre Vector Control District, which includes most of Baker, Bowen and Keating valleys, have tested positive for the virus this summer.

District manager Matt Hutchinson said employees have been spraying for mosquitoes in the Keating area, and will continue to do so until mosquito numbers drop.

There have been three confirmed human cases of West Nile virus in Oregon this year — two in Malheur County and one in Harney County, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

The virus has been found this summer in mosquitoes in three counties in addition to Baker — Morrow (47 pools have tested positive), Umatilla (7 pools) and Malheur (4 pools).

One horse in Union County has been infected as well.

West Nile virus in Baker County

- 2018 — no positive tests
 - 2017 — 9 mosquito pools
 - 2016 — 9 mosquito pools
 - 2015 — 4 mosquito pools
 - 2014 — 8 mosquito pools
- 4 human cases, 1 horse
- 2013 — 13 mosquito pools
 - 2012 — no positive tests
 - 2011 — no positive tests
 - 2010 — no positive tests
 - 2009 — 12 mosquito pools

Anticipating that many people will be outside during the Labor Day weekend, state health officials advise residents to take precautions to reduce their chances of being bitten by mosquitoes.

"It's very easy for people to prevent bites from mosquitoes that may carry West Nile virus," said Dr. Emilio DeBess, veterinarian at the Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division.

"Although the risk of contracting West Nile virus is low, people can take simple precautions to keep these insects at bay if they're headed outdoors."

DeBess offers these tips:

- Eliminate sources of standing water that are a breeding ground for mosquitoes. This includes watering troughs, bird baths, clogged gutters and old tires.
- If you're outdoors, especially around dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active, protect yourself by using mosquito repellents containing DEET, oil of lemon eucalyptus or Picardin, and follow the directions on the container.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants in mosquito-infested areas.
- Make sure screen doors and windows are in good repair and fit tightly.

About one in five infected people may show signs of West Nile virus. People at risk of serious illness include individuals 50 and older, and people with immune-compromising conditions, such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

West Nile symptoms may include fever above 100 degrees and severe headache, stiff neck, mental confusion, muscle weakness, shaking, paralysis or rash.

COUNCIL

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The city will lease a new 2020 Chevrolet Tahoe, equipped to accommodate a drug dog, for \$62,910 over three years from Emergency Responder Services Inc. of Nampa, Idaho. The city would then buy the vehicle for \$1.

City charter changes

The Council also discussed a plan to ask city voters to change the city charter with a measure tentatively planned for the May 2020 election.

Among the proposed changes councilors discussed involve the charter's clauses about the city selling excess real estate or personal property such as vehicles.

The charter requires the city to get voter approval to sell real estate worth more than \$5,000, and personal property worth more than \$10,000.

City Manager Fred Warner Jr. said the \$10,000 limit, which dates back several decades, doesn't reflect current values for equipment such as backhoes.

"But it really, it's kind of an arduous thing to have to get it on an election, so the topic here was to look at taking something to the voters to change the charter," Warner said.

Other possible changes include removing the clause that pays councilors \$10 per meeting, to a maximum of \$150 per year.

The Council will schedule work sessions later to decide which proposed

changes to put on the May 2020 ballot.

New well

Councilors approved a task order for \$252,022 over the next two fiscal years for final design and construction of a new drinking water well to be drilled at Quail Ridge Golf Course.

The city's 2016 Water Facilities Master Plan recommends drilling the well, which will increase the water supply and help the city deal with potential temporary reductions in water from its watershed.

In other business Tuesday the Council:

- Heard an update from the Oregon Department of Transportation on potential future projects on 10th Street and at the Hughes Lane/Pocahontas Road intersection.

- Approved a cooperative agreement with ODOT, which plans to build new sidewalks and wheelchair-accessible ramps under Interstate 84 at the Campbell Street interchange next summer. The city will be responsible for maintenance.

- Approved Fire Chief John Clark's request to sell two surplus vehicles, a 2002 Ford Crown Victoria four-door sedan, and a 1997 Ford F-350 ambulance.

- Discussed complaints about noise from recent concerts. Councilors do not plan to make changes to the city's noise ordinance.

- Approved a grants of \$500 to assist with installing a new awning at 2024 Main St.

HUNTER

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Three Search and Rescue volunteers were deployed to the Desolation Unit where Owens was last known to be hunting to begin looking for him about 10:30 a.m. Monday, Galiszewski said. A deputy also joined them along with Grant County searchers.

One of the volunteer searchers found Owens' white 2018 Toyota Tacoma pickup truck Monday afternoon and traveled to a site where he could call out on his cellphone. The searcher left a flier on Owens' pickup while he left to make the call.

While the searcher was away making the call, Owens returned to his pickup about

3 p.m. and began looking for the search and rescue member to let him know he was safe, Galiszewski said.

Owens was in good condition.

"He was fine, he had just been hunting," he said.

The pickup truck was found based on three "good tips" searchers received — two in response to social media posts and one from a person the Sumpter area.

Owens had been hunting in the Desolation Unit about 6 miles west of Olive Lake, which sits about 15 miles west of Granite, Galiszewski said.

With the knowledge that Owens was safe and not ever lost in the first place, Galiszewski took the opportunity to remind people who enjoy the

outdoors, whether they be hunting, hiking or camping, to have a check-in plan for letting others know where they are and when they'll return.

Galiszewski says specific details such as "if you don't hear from me in so many days ... this is when you should start to worry," will help avoid concerns.

"Tell people where you're camping," he said. "They don't need to know your secret game spot, but let them know the coordinates of where you're parked."

Hunting apps that can be downloaded and used offline can be useful to pinpoint your location, not only for others, but also for yourself, Galiszewski said. Topographical paper maps also are available from

the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

"Make sure whoever's keeping the home fires burning knows what you're doing," he said.

Galiszewski said he understands that plans can change. But in that case, a simple text message with the new information can help soothe concerns. Even if there is no cellphone service at a particular spot, a simple text will go through once you move into an area that has service, he said.

"We're just trying to promote safety," Galiszewski said. "We want everybody to be safe out there."

"When we know where to start to look for you, it makes it a whole lot easier."

FIRE

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The blaze, which has burned in a spotty fashion over about 4,800 acres since it was started by lightning July 14, hasn't grown much over the past six days.

"The incoming hot, dry and windy weather will result in some harder runs towards the ridge top and potentially a visible smoke column on the east side," said Adam Wing, who is serving as incident commander for the fire. "We expect to see single and group tree torching in the coming days, but the fuels along the east flank become more sparse the further the fire progresses up the Minam valley."

Near the Minam River the fire has been smoldering in the scattered fuel along an avalanche chute.

Officials say the fire could spread into pockets of more dense timber in that area this week, but its progress likely would slow if it reaches the scar from a 2010 blaze.

That fire 9 years ago had the same effect that Forest Service fire managers say the Granite Gulch fire has had — consuming some of the logs, limbs and other debris that have accumulated over the past several decades.

"If all goes as expected, the increased winds should help the fire continue to meet the resource benefit objectives," Wing said.

Allowing lightning fires to reduce fuel loadings is the basis for a policy that's been in place since the early 1990s enabling the Forest Service to apply a different strategy with blazes in the Eagle Cap Wilderness than the traditional effort to douse every fire as soon as possible.

Over the past 20 years the agency has allowed more than a dozen lightning fires to burn, more or less naturally, in the Eagle Cap, which is Oregon's largest wilderness at 365,000 acres.

Combined those fires have covered several thousand acres.

The Granite Gulch fire is the largest, although Forest Service officials say that within its roughly 4,800-acre perimeter some areas haven't been burned.

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Skeeter Scourge leads to fogging

PALMER

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Palmer declined to comment about the ethics complaint.

Palmer wrote on Facebook he intends to fight the allegations. "I will be staying on until the end of my term," he wrote, "and as long as this behavior continues, I will continue to seek reelection. I will be asking the voters for an unprecedented 6th term as your Sheriff."

Grant County Judge Scott Myers said Palmer's resignation was never formalized.

"Until I had it in writing and the ink was dry, I never even considered it a feasible statement," Myers said.

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