

Local & State



Lisa Britton/For the Baker City Herald

Tying fishing flies requires dexterity and precision.

TYING

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"We had all the stuff in storage," Jocelyn said.

Now all those supplies, plus more donated by others, is organized in the room Ty shares with his little brother, Case (who, at 5, likes to try his own hand at making flies like his brother).

The boys now have cases full of flies. They use a variety of synthetic materials as well as natural supplies such as deer and elk hair, peacock herl, pheasant tail feathers, turkey feathers, and rabbit hair.

They all have books with fly designs. Chase's volume of the "Fly Tying Encyclopedia" has 1,000 patterns featuring the fly and necessary materials.

Tyler said he's mastered eight designs.

"But I'm trying to expand to learn more," he said.

Each of the three has a favorite fly: humpy (Chase); pheasant tail midge (Tyler); Royal Coachman bucktail (Ty).

None of them has a definite answer for how long a fly will last.



Lisa Britton/For the Baker City Herald

Eagle Creek Custom offers 73 types of fishing flies.

"Depends on how many fish you catch," Chase said with a grin.

"Every time they hit, they do a bit of damage," Ty added.

When asked if they save the damaged flies, Tyler smiled.

"Chase makes me," he said.

"Those hooks are ten cents!" comes the reply from the older brother.

As for what happens after

they land a fish, Chase and Ty both like to eat their catch. Tyler does not.

"He catches them, we eat them," Chase said, again with a smile toward his brother.

The time it takes these boys to tie a fly varies from as quick as a minute or two to more than seven minutes.

Their website was built with the help of Ty's dad, Wes.

It features 73 different flies — both dry (they float on the water surface) and wet (these sink).

Customers can even get in touch with the young entrepreneurs to request a custom order.

To check out Eagle Creek Custom offerings, visit eaglecreekcustom.com or email eaglecreekcustom@gmail.com

ROCK QUARRY PROPOSED NEAR PERRY, WEST OF LA GRANDE

Rock Fight, Round 2: Ranch operator counters arguments against quarry

By Phil Wright

The (La Grande) Observer

UNION COUNTY — Steve West has a goal to own the Ponderosa Ranch in the Mount Emily area overlooking the Grande Ronde Valley.

But to accomplish that, he said, he needs to get the OK from the Union County Planning Commission for a rock quarry with railroad access at the bottom of Robb's Hill Road near Perry and about a couple of miles from La Grande.

Plenty of locals, however, don't want the quarry, fearing it will produce numerous negative effects, from noise and dust pollution to harming the nearby Grande Ronde River. West, who produces the TV series "Steve's Outdoor Adventures," said he has been working diligently the past two years to ensure that is not going to happen if the quarry becomes reality.

"We're going to have everything there to not negatively impact the valley," West said. "This has been blown way out of proportion."

West and others got to make their cases on the quarry project to the planning commission during a public hearing Monday, March 8.

Keeping the ranch intact

West explained he is friends with Jim Smejkal of Banks, who bought the ranch in 1998. Smejkal about 10 years ago decided to sell the ranch, West said, and he wanted to buy it. But Smejkal, who is turning 83, "doesn't like to let anything go," West said, so they came



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

This scene is near the site of a proposed 250-acre quarry less than a mile from Perry off Interstate 84 in Union County.

"This has been blown way out of proportion."

— Steve West, who has proposed to start a rock quarry on his ranch property near La Grande

up with a deal that he would eventually buy the property from Smejkal's sons.

Except the ranch costs more than West said he could afford. The website Lands of America, which lists farms and ranches for sale, shows a \$3.7 million price for the Ponderosa.

West also said the ranch is not a tourism hotspot, but rather a special locale where he sometimes brings veterans or disabled youth to hunt. Creating a 250-acre rock quarry, though, where Robb's Hill Road meets Interstate 84,

would allow him to buy the ranch.

Not because he would be making money from the quarry that could cover the cost of the ranch but because the quarry comes with a conservation easement that would devalue the Ponderosa. If the quarry does not get approval there is no conservation easement, West said, and the days of the Ponderosa are numbered.

If he can't buy the ranch, he said, the owners will divide the property into 240-acre parcels that anyone can buy and develop housing on.

"That's bad," he said. "I'm doing everything I can to prevent that."

The quarry and the easement, he said, are the "long-term plan to protect this mountain."

Addressing quarry concerns

West said he knows well the concerns locals have about the quarry, and the project has taken those seriously and studied the right — and wrong — ways to build and operate a rock quarry. The 400-plus pages of the project's application to the county, he said, goes through the numerous issues.

"We've addressed them all," he emphasized.

The company studied berms at other quarries, for example, to understand how to dampen the noise at the pit.

"If you hear it, it will be a hum in the far distance," he said.

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5J district hires communications coordinator

By Chris Collins

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A new face has joined the Baker School District's administrative team in the newly created position of public information and communications coordinator.

"I am excited about the scope of this job," McDowell stated in a press release. "Including the ability to connect with staff, school families and the broader community."

McDowell, 40, will work full time on a 260-day annual contract and earn \$65,763 per year.

As part of her introduction to the community, Superintendent Mark Witty noted in the press release that McDowell spent more than a decade on the Community Perspective team as part of her job with the

Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, where she worked closely with the public information team.

"We were impressed with how well Ms. McDowell's background matches our current district profile," he said. "Her experience spans grant writing, project development, finance, community involvement, security, international business and public health."

Originally from Oregon's Rogue Valley, McDowell holds a Bachelor of Science degree in international business and economics from George Fox University at Newberg and a Master of Arts degree in diplomacy from Norwich University at Northfield, Vermont.

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COUNCIL

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Spriet describes the harmful effects the pandemic and its restrictions have had on Baker City's small businesses, writing that they "have been forced to weather this monumental obstacle with very little assistance from the state or federal government. Regardless, our community has adapted a great deal to business and life with every changing restrictions, closures, and uncertainty."

Spriet noted that business owners in rural areas are not as capable of withstanding the sorts of restrictions that the state has imposed during the pandemic.

"As a result, they do not have the capital to survive long periods of shutdowns that keep their doors closed to their valuable customers," Spriet wrote. "While some have been able to take advantage of the small amounts of state and federal assistance, it is not nearly enough to survive and keep workers employed. The unfortunate result for many of our local family owned businesses has been permanently shutting the doors, and service workers turning to state assistance or being forced to leave to find work."

AWARDS

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Ginger Savage, executive director at Crossroads, said the award shows the value of the effort that went into making the Oktoberfest safe but still successful.

"They honored us for the work that we did with that project," Savage said on Monday, March 8.

She said this is the first award for Crossroads from the Oregon Festival and Events Association.

"I'm just very thankful for my volunteers and to my committee. I have a committee of three for Oktoberfest and we're just over the moon excited about it," Savage said.

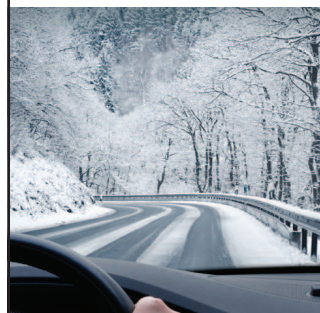
CASA Director Mary Collard said the award is also the first for the organization, whose volunteers help represent children in court hearings. CASA stands for Court-Appointed Special Advocates.

"It was, at first, such an honor that we would be nominated, but I am still in shock over hearing that we won," Collard said on Monday.

She said the gingerbread contest and tour could not have happened without the time of those who created the structures, the businesses, and her board members and friends who helped.

"It was just everybody," Collard said.

Winter is here!
Cold weather can mean icy spots in shaded areas!



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