

BIOLOGY

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Armed with trees and tools, the group hiked away from the road to start planting the seedlings.

Before choosing a spot, each group looked up to ensure there was space for a tree, then looked around to make sure the seedling wasn't too close to a slash pile.

The team of Majestic Grove and Iriana Rosales worked fast once they chose a location.

Grove talked in low tones as she gently lowered the seedling into the ground and filled the hole.

"There we go," she said, securing soil around the base of the tree.

Mitchell said western white pines are not common these days because the species, which used to be abundant in this area, were highly prized for lumber.

As part of the lesson, Mitchell helped the classes identify types of trees. Sullivan had the students take selfies with at least five different species.

This field trip fits with the class's unit on botany and fungi.

"We've been covering basically the entire plant kingdom," Sullivan said.

Foraging for fungi

The next week, on Thursday, May 13, Sullivan's advanced biology classes headed to a different part of the forest near Sumpter. This time they weren't planting — instead they were searching for the prized morel mushroom.

In the first 10 minutes off the bus, Anna Belding came running up to Sullivan with her prize.

It was a morel, all right, but it was less than 2 inches tall.

"I was looking really hard!" Belding said.

She and her group later loaded a bag full of morels — most much larger than her first fungal find.

As the students spread out



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Anna Belding displays a diminutive morel mushroom she found in the forest near Sumpter on May 13.

across the mountainside, one group relied on advice from freshman Lily Gately, who has been mushroom hunting with her family.

"All these cones look like morels," Gately said, after inspecting a spot on the ground.

Nearby, junior Gus Terteling peered close at the forest floor.

"I feel they should be in flat, sunny areas, by water. Which is *not* where we are," he said.

Throughout the morning, each group took a turn with two employees from the U.S. Forest Service.

Lanny Flaherty, who focuses on botany and conducts field studies, talked about fungi.

Lia Spiegel, an entomologist whose work area includes the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla and Malheur national forests as well as federal land managed by the Bureau of Land Management in Eastern Oregon, talked about the

world of insects. Her specialty is bark beetles and defoliators — both of which cause illness in the forests of Eastern Oregon.

Flaherty provided a brief overview about mushrooms before the students headed off to search.

The mushroom, he said, is the fruiting body of a fungus growing underground.

"It's more equivalent to an apple on a tree," he said.

And just like an apple with seeds, the mushroom's job is to reproduce by spreading spores.

"You help fungi by harvesting and carrying them around," Flaherty said.

As part of his talk, Flaherty also gave a bit of career advice for anyone interested in natural resources. He didn't intend to work for the Forest Service, he said, but enjoys searching for fragile or endangered plants prior to a planned project, such as logging.

"I like being out in the field. I like to look for rare things," he said. "I never thought someone would pay me to go on a treasure hunt every day."

During the session with Spiegel, students were asked to find evidence of insect damage.

Terteling quickly handed over a stick marked with gouged lines.

Spiegel said it showed the path of a female beetle. The deep lines were where the beetle chewed the wood, and the shallow marks were where she laid her eggs.

Spiegel showed students more evidence with a display of tree bark and the beetles that caused the damage.

"Every tree has its own bark beetle," she said.

She also helped the students catch and identify insects in the surrounding grass and trees.

Then, armed with knowledge of fungi and insects, the science students set off on their true mission: find the morels.

Megan Hurley and Terteling kept hiking higher on the mountain on the advice of Belding's group, which had a nice collection when they took a break for lunch.

Just as Terteling announced they had 19 minutes before the bus had to leave, Hurley crouched and nudged a dirt-colored lump beside a fallen tree.

"I think ..." she said.

Sure enough, she'd found a patch of morels.

Terteling came to see and found his own morel about the same size as Belding's first 2-inch specimen.

"That is going to feed my family tonight!" Terteling claimed as he sliced through the stem and plopped the prize into his bag.

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Lia Spiegel, entomologist for the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla and Malheur national forests, points to marks left by bark beetles on a tree limb.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Forest Service employee Bill Mitchell demonstrates the use of a hoedad to plant a tree seedling.



Second Amendment resolutions face first legal test

By Lindsey Whitehurst and Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM — The first court test of whether local governments can ban police from enforcing certain gun laws is playing out in a rural Oregon county, one of a wave of U.S. counties declaring itself a Second Amendment sanctuary.

The measure that voters in the logging area of Columbia County narrowly approved last year forbids local officials from enforcing most federal and state gun laws and could impose thousands of dollars in fines on those who try.

Second Amendment sanctuary resolutions have been adopted by some 1,200 local governments in states around the U.S., including Virginia, Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas, Illinois and Florida, according to Shawn Fields, an assistant professor of law at Campbell University who tracks them. Many are symbolic, but some, like in Columbia County, carry legal force.

The movement took off around 2018, as states considered stricter gun laws in the wake of mass shootings, including a high school shooting near Parkland, Florida, that killed 17 people and made survivors into high-profile

Baker County voters approved ordinance in 2018

In the November 2018 election, Baker County voters passed a Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance by a wide margin. The ordinance passed with 5,463 voters in favor, and 2,752 opposed.

gun control activists.

After President Joe Biden took office, conservative lawmakers in several states proposed banning police from enforcing federal gun measures, and at least one proposal in Arizona has been signed into law.

The movement hasn't yet faced a major legal challenge. The Oregon case was filed by Columbia County under an unusual provision in state law that allows a judge to examine a measure before it goes into effect. No timeline has been set for a court hearing.

"This will allow the court to tell us whether the county can actually decline to enforce certain state laws, and it will tell us how to abide by the will of the voters to the extent that we can," said Sarah Han-

son, who serves as counsel in the conservative-leaning county in deep-blue Oregon.

Supporters of the ordinance include the Oregon Firearms Federation, which said in a November statement that "extremists" and "big city radicals" were trying to curtail gun rights.

The group referenced Portland protests opposing police brutality that occasionally turned violent last summer and called the ordinance a "common sense" step that would "ensure your right and ability to defend your life and the lives of your loved ones."

The ordinance would ban the enforcement of laws like background check requirements and restrictions on carrying a gun, though it would have exceptions for others, including keeping firearms from convicted felons.

The Oregon Firearms Federation didn't respond to a request for comment on the court case.

Sheriff Brian Pixley has expressed support, saying in a March statement that one of his responsibilities is to uphold people's Second Amendment rights and that he's eager to "move forward with the will of the voters."

The measure is divisive locally, though, and four residents filed court documents

opposing it. One, Brandee Dudzic, referenced the strict gun safety drills she learned in military medic training, saying she values the right to own a gun but believes it should come with safety measures like background checks and secure storage.

A gun shop owner in Columbia County said he supports background checks and believes that "state law trumps the county law." But he voted in favor of the Second Amendment measure on principle.

"We need to make sure that people are safe. We need to make sure that people are responsible," he said. "But as more rules are in place, we just need to make sure that we're not overregulated."

He spoke on the condition he not be identified because some of his customers take a hard line against gun restrictions and he didn't want to lose their business.

Everytown Law, an affiliate of the group Everytown for Gun Safety, is pushing for the measure to be overturned. Managing Director Eric Tirschwell said it would be the nation's first court test amid the current wave of Second Amendment sanctuary laws.

Everytown argues that the ordinance violates the

U.S. Constitution, which says federal law supersedes state law, as well as the state Constitution and an Oregon law that gives the state power to regulate firearms.

The decision won't have a direct effect outside Oregon but could send a message.

"This case is important and should send the message that where state or local jurisdictions attempt to unconstitutionally or unlawfully nullify gun safety laws, we are prepared to and will go to court," Tirschwell said.

Other laws trying to blunt the effect of federal gun restrictions haven't fared well in court, including a 2009 Montana measure that made guns and ammunition manufactured in the state exempt from federal law and a similar 2013 measure in Kansas.

Many of the latest wave of measures, though, take a different tack by focusing on the actions of local police, including punishments like fines.

In terms of federal law, gun

rights advocates may have a successful legal argument under the so-called anti-commandeering doctrine, which says the U.S. government can't make state and local officials enforce federal law, said Darrell Miller, a professor of law at Duke Law School and co-faculty director of the Duke Center for Firearms Law. He agreed that the Oregon case is the first of its kind.

Local enforcement of state law, meanwhile, is another matter. Most states don't have similar provisions in their own legal codes, and Oregon's attorney general said in court documents that the Columbia County ordinance is "incompatible" with criminal law and the duties of county officials.

"To the extent the local government is trying to say, 'We're also not going to enforce state law either' that's a much more difficult and complicated position," Miller said. "The authority of the state over localities is much, much stronger."

LIBRARY

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But starting June 1, Stokes expects that masks will be optional for everyone inside the library.

"We won't be policing vaccination cards," Stokes said. "We will support our visitors' personal decisions to dress and behave how they like as long as it doesn't violate our Code of Conduct policy."

Use of the Library2Go digital catalog or drive-up window service is highly recommended for persons at-risk for a severe COVID-19 infection, or otherwise uncomfortable with the return to normal policy.

June 1 also marks the one-year anniversary since the libraries reopened following a pandemic-prompted closure starting in March 2020. Checkout of physical books and other materials was stopped from March 28 through May

17, while digital services were available throughout.

With UV light sanitation, early adoption of mask wearing for staff, and improving air filtration and ventilation in buildings, libraries have remained open through most of the pandemic period, without any workplace outbreaks.

Stokes said the library district administration and staff are grateful for the community engagement and support this past 15 months and patience.

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