



Kokanee Inn owners Eric Makela and Michelle Britt, at right, chat with customers Alan and Janice Gaylord, of Portland, after breakfast on Monday, May 17, 2021, on the upper deck of the inn in Joseph.

Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Wright departs The Observer, returns to EO

Andrew Cutler will fill in as La Grande editor on interim basis

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The opportunity to return home proved too much for The Observer editor Phil Wright to ignore.

Wright is returning to Pendleton to take over as news editor at the East Oregonian, beginning Monday, May 24. Wright replaces Wyatt Haupt, who left to become editor of The Daily World, in Aberdeen, Washington.

“I was not expecting this opportunity, so when it came my way I was surprised, sure,” Wright said. “But then I gave it careful scrutiny over a couple weeks. While I’m returning to the EO, the coronavirus pandemic has reshaped the newsroom I left. This really is a new challenge for me.”



Wright



Cutler

Wright returns to Pendleton after 18 months as editor of The Observer. Prior to La Grande, Wright had been a reporter for the East Oregonian for nearly 15 years, covering Umatilla County government, public safety and courts.

Wright said leaving Union County was a decision he wrestled with once the offer was made, but the opportunity to return to the newsroom he spent the bulk of his career in was too much to ignore.

“To paraphrase a certain action movie, I have a particular set of skills, and I honed those to a greater degree

See, [Wright/Page 3B](#)

Inn with the new

Kokanee Inn makes additions for third season

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — The Kokanee Inn in Joseph is offering something new this summer — bike rentals and limited alcohol sales.

The inn is not exactly a bed and breakfast, but the distinction is minimal.

“We call ourselves an inn,” co-owner Eric Makela said. “We’re basically an inn that serves breakfast.”

“This summer, we added the bike rentals,” wife and co-owner Michelle Britt said.

The former Chandler’s Inn has been owned by the Makela-Britt couple since 2018. Last year, like most businesses, the inn was hurt by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting closures.

But now, Makela said, “People are starting to travel again.”

The couple said that most of their customers come from the Portland area and the Willamette Valley, but they also draw from all over the country.

Monday, May 17, there was a car there from south-central Idaho. He said they also get customers from as far away in this country as New York, and also have drawn an international crowd. They’ve had customers from Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Belgium.

“We have such a wide variety of people. Right now, we have one couple who are 19 and a couple on the upper deck in their 80s,” Britt said. “We have families and couples and singles and hunters and backcountry skiers — just across the gamut that’s really fun.”

In fact, the 27-bed inn has handled quite a crowd. During



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Michelle Britt prepares a customer’s breakfast Monday, May 17, 2021, at the Kokanee Inn in Joseph, which she owns with husband Eric Makela.

one wrestling tournament in Joseph, a team from Portland basically filled in the inn, and they had to squeeze them in with a shoehorn. Fortunately, some of the rooms come with pull-out beds in couches, Makela said.

Among the two-dozen-plus beds are suites, single rooms and those that come with their own bathrooms or share bathrooms with others.

“We can mix and match,” he said.

The inn also does family reunions, weddings and other events.

But now, they’re getting ready to expand their offer-

ings. Makela said they have 10 mountain bikes customers can rent. He said that although there are bicycles for rent at the south end of Wallowa Lake, he doesn’t believe those rentals are as active and thinks the inn can offer more in the way of places to ride.

As for the addition of alcohol, that’s being done on a limited basis. The Joseph City Council recently approved their application. In that application, the inn will serve mimosas — breakfast drinks of champagne and orange juice — from 7-9 a.m. and they plan a happy hour 4-6 p.m. on weekends.

“We’re trying to limit it for

now, because we want to see how it goes,” Makela said.

Britt agreed.

“We’re not trying to compete with anyone,” saying they will eagerly refer people to downtown establishments for more alcoholic offerings. “We’re trying to keep it family friendly and we realize that not everyone wants a cocktail. We don’t want to be a drinking destination.”

Although their license only allows them to serve breakfast at present, they’re investigating what they can do to expand their food offerings to go with happy hour. For now, they’re envisioning some sort of snacks, as well as nonalcoholic drinks.

The couple has a son who lives in Enterprise, a daughter staying with them while she waits for college to resume in Michigan and two other daughters. They moved here most recently from the Boise area, after working in full-time consulting jobs developing energy codes for businesses. But those jobs and the inn were too much.

“It’s hard to work two full-time jobs and run the inn,” Makela said. “We decided we needed a life change, so we worked our way out of the full-time jobs and are doing this full time.”

The couple are finding their new venture satisfying.

“It’s been an amazing place to open a business,” Britt said. “We get to play in the woods as much as we want and at the same time, make a living in an amazing location.”

But the customers are No. 1, as any good innkeeper knows.

“We want to make sure they’re fully fed and caffeinated,” Makela said.

Anti-animal ag initiative raises alarm among farm groups

Effort would strip most protections for livestock producers under the state’s animal abuse laws

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

SALEM — Animal agriculture could soon be considered animal cruelty under a proposed ballot measure in Oregon.

Farm groups are pushing back against Initiative Petition 13, which would strip away most protections for livestock producers under the state’s animal abuse laws.

The result would effectively criminalize everything from slaughtering livestock to basic animal husbandry, including

branding and dehorning cattle, castrating bulls and docking horses, sheep and pigs, said Mary Anne Cooper, vice president of public policy for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

The initiative also seeks to re-classify livestock breeding and artificial insemination as sexual assault of an animal — a Class C felony.

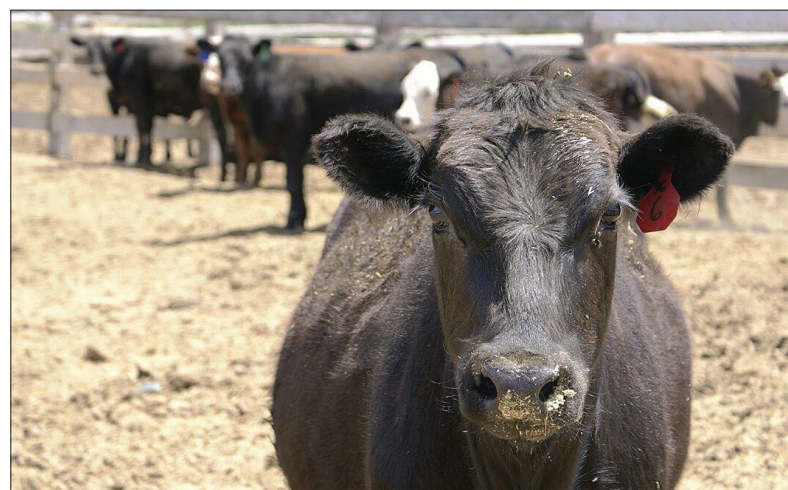
“It’s a very different tack than we have ever seen before,” Cooper said. “Basically, they’re looking to ban anything with animals that is not doctoring.”

Initiative Petition 13 was filed Nov. 2, 2020, with the Oregon Secretary of State’s office. The chief petitioner is David Michelson, a Portland animal rights activist.

A similar proposal, called the Protect Animals from Unnecessary Suffering and Exploitation, or PAUSE, Act is also being pursued in Colorado.

The Oregon regulatory recently cleared its first campaign hurdle, submitting 1,000 sponsorship signatures for verification on April 28. If approved, supporters will need to collect 112,020 signatures to place the initiative on the

See, [Initiative/Page 3B](#)



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press, File

An initiative being circulated targets animal agriculture, hunting, rodeos and wildlife management, among other activities.

See, [Board/Page 3B](#)