

Accident

Continued from A1

The search started about 6:15 a.m. on Saturday after Sullivan's relatives reported that they hadn't been able to find her after searching earlier that morning and on Friday night, July 15, McClay said. Sullivan was supposed to meet family for an event in Baker City Friday evening, but she didn't arrive. No one had talked with Sullivan since Thursday, July 14, when she planned to distribute salt blocks in the Bald Mountain area, McClay said.

After family and friends were unable to find Sullivan Friday night or early Saturday, they called the Sheriff's Office at 4:17 a.m. on Saturday, McClay said. Sheriff Travis Ash activated the search and rescue team at 5:11 a.m. A dozen searchers, including Ash, went out with 15 to 20 relatives and friends of Sullivan, to resume the search. McClay said Sullivan had been riding cross-country when the four-wheeler rolled. It appeared she had died on Thursday, July 14. "It was not the outcome that we hoped for," McClay said.

Grouse

Continued from A1

What makes the agreements enticing for ranchers is that they won't be burdened with additional conservation requirements or land use restrictions should the sage grouse ever be listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Sage grouse populations are cyclical. A 2020 report from the U.S. Geological Survey found that sage grouse populations across their range, which covers 11 western states, had decreased by 80% since 1965 and by 40% since 2002. According to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's 2021 sage grouse report, the estimated population of the birds in Baker County (and a small part of southern Union County) in the spring of that year was 704. That's a 42.6% increase from the estimate of 494 birds in spring 2020, but the report notes that this increase "was likely a result of the analysis methodology used to generate population estimates."

grouse habitat. A current federal law, attached as a "rider" to a 2014 budget bill, prohibits the listing of the sage grouse as an endangered species. **Monitoring habitat improvements** Tyrrell said it's too early to tell based on sage grouse numbers, whether the CCAA program has boosted grouse populations, but she believes the program is "starting to move towards seeing that ecological uplift" on project areas, which might increase populations. "It's easy to get overwhelmed by the large picture and be like 'sage grouse are doomed,'" Tyrrell said. "But it's great when you're able to see thousands of acres and say 'wow, it can actually be restored.'"

This ecological uplift is due, at least in part, to the conservation measures that landowners agree to when they enter a CCAA, which is generally a 30-year agreement. And in many cases, she said, these measures benefit ranchers as well as sage grouse habitat. For example, strategically grazing cattle can reduce fuels for wildfires that damage grazing land as well as sage grouse habitat. Livestock grazing can also reduce the spread of invasive grasses that outcompete sagebrush and native plants that both cattle and sage grouse depend on for food.

It's helping sage grouse for sure, that's the whole point," Tyrrell said. "But it's also increasing the (ecological) value of their properties. It's just one of those things that's a win-win."

The report states that sage grouse populations in the county have risen since 2014, including an average annual increase of 1.7% in the number of male grouse at "leks" — the open areas where the birds gather each spring and where the males perform the species' elaborate courting ritual, which includes inflating air sacs in their breasts and fanning their tail feathers.

Tyrrell said other projects that are included in CCAAs, such as removing water-loving juniper trees from sagebrush habitat, can also help grouse. Junipers can deplete areas of sagebrush as well as grasses and other plants sage grouse depend on. Cutting junipers frees water supplies, helping sagebrush and beneficial grasses thrive.

However, between 2005 and 2021, among leks that were surveyed in both years, the number of males present declined by 81%.

"This area has experienced a long-term population decline and has remained stagnant in recent years," the report states.

Declining populations, which have been tied to the loss of sagebrush habitat from housing, oil and natural gas exploration, mining and other developments, has prompted environmental groups to petition the federal government to protect sage grouse. The bird became a candidate for an ESA listing in 2010, prompting a movement from landowners to enroll in CCAAs or similar agreements in Oregon and elsewhere.

Landowners can cancel a CCAA with 30 days' notice, which some landowners choose to do for various reasons, usually unrelated to the length of the agreement, Tyrrell said. When they drop out they no longer have the protection from the possible restrictions if the bird is listed under the ESA.

Those agreements intended to preserve sage grouse habitat is the main reason the FWS decided in 2015 not to list the sage grouse as threatened or endangered. The agency cited partnerships with over a thousand ranchers in the West and restoration of more than 4 million acres of privately owned sage

Alice E. Tucker

April 21, 1943 – July 7, 2022

Alice E. Tucker, 79, of Haines, Oregon, passed away on July 7, 2022. She was born in Raleigh, NC, on April 21, 1943, to Jack and Agnes Estes and graduated from high school in Roanoke, VA. She attended Duke University in Durham, NC, and graduated in 1961 with an undergraduate degree in Biology.



She worked as a research assistant in a biochemistry laboratory in Durham, where she met her future husband, Vance A. Tucker. After marriage in 1978, she earned a Master of Library Science degree at the University of North Carolina and was a reference librarian at Duke University thereafter. Alice and Vance lived in Durham until they retired in 2001, and during this time they traveled extensively in the United States, Europe and Africa. One or both of them had visited Baker County several times since the mid-1950s, and they decided it was the best place for them. They bought a house in Rock Creek west of Haines in 2000, and Alice enjoyed the beauty of Eastern Oregon and its friendly people for the rest of her life. She loved books, classical music and opera, and collected them all. She will be remembered as a small woman who mowed the lawn on a large yellow mower, drove a dark green Jeep, and later, as Parkinson's disease progressed, a small green ATV side-by-side. She is survived by her husband, Vance. Online condolences can be shared at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

Director

Continued from A1

She replaces Timothy Bishop, who left the position in October 2021 to take a similar job in La Grande. Bishop had been the county's tourism director for 11 years. The county's transient lodging committee, which advises commissioners, recommended Hobson over two other applicants. Hobson, a Tualatin High School graduate, works in the Churchill School Publishing Library with her husband Christopher, inside the former school turned gallery, hostel, and music venue at 3451 Broadway St. in Baker City.



Jessica Hobson, Baker County's new tourism marketing director, has her office adjacent to the Chamber of Commerce at 490 Campbell St. in Baker City.

"We do book publishing, and we have a green screen here in our space that we can use to take pictures of artists, sculptures or paintings to help them put into a portfolio or a book," Hobson said. She said that work spurred her interest in marketing. When she was contracted to handle photography for a local business' grand opening, she realized she had stumbled on a community need she could fulfill. "That's what got me interested in this position, helping local businesses, and it was excellent to be able to capture that event for them," Hobson said.

"There's a lot to learn, especially there's been a lot of events going on," Hobson said. "I had the Fourth of July, then Miners Jubilee, so I hit the ground running." From her own line of work, Hobson already had the cameras, computers and tools she needed for the unique job. She plans to add to the catalog of images showcasing some of the county's most scenic spots. "We have the Hells Canyon Byway, Elkhorn Byway, I'm gonna be working along both of those to capture what's available," Hobson said. "The eat, stay, drink, play types of things. A lot of people love Hells Canyon and the Elkhorns."

Attending events, promoting the entire county

Hobson has had a busy July, stepping into the county's busy summer schedule. She said Bishop left her some resources, including contracts and a trove of photos from local events.

She's composing ads for placement in the AAA and 1859 magazines, and says she's hoping to put Baker County's attractions into the minds of even broader audiences. She's intending to shine more spotlight on local wineries, breweries and distilleries.

"I'm working with the Travel Oregon global sales team, hoping to get some more information where we can reach outside the states, internationally," she said. Fishing in Hells Canyon, especially, has some traction in international tourism. The state's Travel Oregon team is recognized for its "Slightly Exaggerated" campaign, advertisements styled in keeping with Studio Ghibli charm. "I think focusing on all the towns in the county is a big priority for me," Hobson said. "Baker City is huge and they do have a lot of help from other people besides myself, I'm going to try to help out smaller communities. Make sure their events and businesses are looked at, get them some good tourist action." With her background in visual media, Hobson is hoping to invest in new billboards and deliver the "wow factor" with all her advertising. As a

contractor she has obligations to certain design and expense criteria, but otherwise has flexibility in her new role. The county's current lodging tax ordinance, which dates to 2006, requires that the county spend 70% of the revenue for tourism marketing — which includes the marketing director and operation of a visitors center in Baker City — and 25% for economic development. The county can keep up to 5% for administrative costs. The Baker County Chamber of Commerce has the contract for operating the visitors center. Bryan Tweit is the county's economic development director. Hobson will be working public events with her camera, and business owners who want to tap the tourism market can call her at 541-523-5855 to set up an appointment. She has an office at the Visitors Center, 490 Campbell St.

Justin Michael Rothenberger

January 13, 2006 – July 13, 2022

Justin Michael Rothenberger, 16, of Baker City and formerly of Huntington, Oregon, passed away on July 13, 2022, in Baker City, Oregon. He will be interred at the Huntington Cemetery in a private family service. A celebration of life for the public will be held at 255 Lincoln Street, Huntington, Oregon, on Saturday, July 23, 2022, beginning at 2 p.m.



Justin was born on January 13, 2006. Wiley Harding Jr. and Crystal (Rothenberger) Harding raised him in Huntington, Oregon, and he attended Huntington Charter School.

He loved writing music, playing basketball, and playing video games. Justin also loved being a little brother to Derrick and Bradley; he loved on them as only a little brother could.

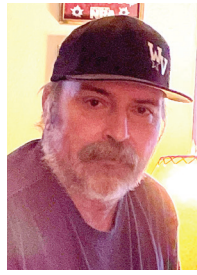
He is survived by his stepfather, Wiley Harding Jr. of Huntington, Oregon; mother, Crystal Harding of Baker City, Oregon; brother, David (Kendra) Hanks of Huntington, Oregon; sister, Hailey Harding (Broc Rinkel) of Huntington, Oregon; brother, Derrick (Jocelyn) Rothenberger of Kaneohe, Hawaii; brother, Bradley Bowman of Huntington, Oregon. He is also survived by his grandparents, Rick and Vickie Fields of Baker City, Oregon, great-grandparents, Dale and Nancy of Huntington, Oregon, as well as several aunts, uncles and cousins.

Memorial contributions may be made to a GoFundMe account at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/this-ones-for-justin>; these funds will allow the family time to grieve the loss of Justin. To leave an online condolence for the family of Justin, please visit: www.grayswestco.com.

Michael Immoos

January 3, 1964 – July 10, 2022

Michael William "Mike" Immoos, 58 passed away peacefully at home on July 10, 2022, surrounded by his family.



Mike was born on January 3, 1964, to William "Bill" and Mildred "Charlene" Immoos in Baker City, Oregon. He grew up in Richland, Oregon, and spent his childhood enjoying the outdoors and riding his bicycle all around Richland where he earned the nickname "Wheelie." When he was old enough to drive, he could be heard hot-rodming all around Eagle Valley, as he went from Wheelie to Hot Rod Mike. He attended grade school at Richland Elementary and graduated high school from Pine Eagle High School in 1982. He met the love of his life, Robyn Masterson, during high school and made her his wife on February 11th, 1984. Mike and Robyn welcomed two children, Steven and Ashley. Mike also loved spending his time hunting. He shared his love for hunting with his children and grandchildren. Mike was a dedicated and faithful husband, father and friend. He was a man of incredible integrity, who never met a stranger. He was never afraid of a hard day's work, being a forklift driver at Wallowa Forest products was his favorite job.

Mike is survived by his wife of 38 years, Robyn; children, Steven (Kayla) Immoos of La Grande, and Ashley (Marc) Christman of Enterprise; four grandchildren, Pearce and Carter Schmetzky and Caleb and Sophie Immoos; his mother, Charlene Immoos of Richland; his brother, Scott Immoos of Richland; his sister, Tammy (Ralph) Graven of Enterprise; his sister-in-law, Terese (Tony Peterson) Masterson of Prescott, AZ; and his cat Miss Kitty. Mike was preceded in death by his father and his grandparents, Lawrence and Aggie Immoos and Charlie and Babe Whitley. A celebration of life will be held at a later date.