

Poachers who left five elk dead sentenced in Harney County

The Observer

BURNS — A Hines couple have been sentenced for their involvement in killing at least seven elk while shooting into the fleeing herd in December 2021.

Chris Lardy was convicted of taking a bull elk out of season and exceeding the bag limit of elk. Stephanie Lardy pled guilty to aiding/counseling in a game violation. The crime left two calves, two cows and a spike bull rotting in high-country sagebrush.

"Each hunter is responsible for every round they fire," Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Sgt. Erich Timko said. "And hunters have a responsibility to make a reasonable effort to track and retrieve potentially wounded wildlife. This is a prime example of when that is not done. These are egregious results. However, even more so on antlerless hunts, it can be difficult to pick one specific animal and stay on target. And at times, you must make that decision not to fire unless you are 100% positive you are shooting at that animal. If you cannot be 100 percent positive of your target, then you have responsibility not to take that shot."

According to officials, wit-



Oregon State Police/Contributed Photo, File

Poachers shot into a herd of about 100 elk, leaving two cows, two calves and a spike bull to waste in December 2021 in Harney County.

nesses hunting in the Juniper Unit in Harney County mid-day on Dec. 11, 2021, called the Turn In Poachers line when they saw the driver of a blue and white Suburban leave a spur road east of Oregon Highway 395 to pursue a herd of about 100 elk through open ground and sagebrush. Witnesses said the driver stopped twice as occupants fired at least 30-40 shots into the fleeing herd. OSP Troopers solved the case during a traffic stop the following day.

The Lardy couple and two

passengers in the vehicle had four tags for a late-season antlerless (cow) elk hunt. Stephanie Lardy and another person in their hunt group legally tagged two cow elk. They left five elk to waste and allegedly wounded another elk which state troopers did not find.

Evidence collected by troopers indicated the driver travelled about 300 yards through sagebrush, stopped to shoot into the herd, then continued in pursuit. After traveling about 400 additional yards through sage-

brush, they stopped again to shoot into the herd, killing two cow elk and a calf. They gutted the two cows, loaded them into their vehicle and left the area.

"There are so many facets of wrongdoing in this case," Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Big Game Program Manager Brian Wolfer said. "These people acted in blatant disregard for the elk, hunting laws and basic hunting ethics. To chase the elk with a vehicle and then leave five elk to waste because they didn't check to see what they

may have hit is almost unbelievable."

The following day, troopers from the OSP Fish and Wildlife Division followed tracks left by the vehicle and scouted the area for killed and wounded animals. Troopers located carcasses of two cows, a calf and a spike bull about 200 yards from tire tracks marking the first stop. They located a calf carcass about 60 yards from the second stop. All five elk had been left to waste and the meat was not salvageable. Troopers also found gut piles from the two legal cow elk.

Troopers conducted a traffic violation stop near the site of the shootings on a vehicle matching witness' descriptions. The driver, Chris Lardy, told troopers he and his passengers were on their way back from hunting the same area where their hunting group filled two antlerless elk tags the previous day.

When Troopers questioned him about multiple dead elk shot and left to waste the previous day, Lardy said he or one of his passengers had wounded an elk in the leg. No one in their hunting group had conducted a search for dead or wounded animals because they did not have time. Lardy said he re-

turned to the area that day hoping to fill their hunting group's two remaining tags.

"Elk in Oregon's high desert are amazingly elusive even in open country and a challenge for hunters to pursue, so it's a terrible shame to see them needlessly wasted like this," Duane Dungan, state coordinator and magazine editor for the Oregon Hunters Association, said. "Any ethical and responsible hunter knows that you only shoot at one animal, and then follow up on that animal. It's not a video game."

Chris Lardy must write and publish an apology letter in the Burns newspaper as part of his sentence. In addition, the couple must take hunter education courses to regain hunting rights following three-year suspensions and they will pay a combined \$2,500 in fines and restitution, according to Harney County officials. Chris Lardy's sentence included six days in jail, 18 months of bench probation and he is prohibited from participating in any hunting activities, including as an observer or mentor, for three years. Troopers confiscated three rifles, which were later returned.

I-84 drivers urged to be careful near Meacham

BY DICK MASON

The Observer

MEACHAM — People driving between the Kamela and Meacham exits on Interstate 84 this summer are experiencing a little bit of what it was like to make the journey more than five decades ago.

The only roadway between La Grande and Pendleton then was the two-lane Highway 30, a far cry from Interstate 84, which has at least two eastbound and two westbound lanes. Today, however, a portion of Interstate 84 is virtually a two-lane highway between Meacham and Kamela due to restoration work by the Oregon Department of Transportation being conducted on the freeway.

Currently, a portion of the free-

way between Meacham and Kamela, which normally is only a westbound section, is now a two-lane roadway with vehicles going opposite directions in each lane to allow the adjacent two lanes of eastbound freeway next to them to be restored.

Cones have been installed to divide the two lanes of traffic. The speed limit is being reduced from 70 to 50 mph in the work zone of the project to protect travelers and those working at the site.

Motorists are being urged to drive with extra caution while this work, which is expected to continue through early fall, is conducted.

ODOT spokesperson Tom Strandberg is encouraging people planning on going through this sec-

tion of the I-84 to leave earlier than normal to allow for more time to reach their destination so they are not tempted to rush through the construction zone, where extreme caution is needed.

"People make bad decisions when they are in a hurry," Strandberg said.

The Oregon State Police, working in cooperation with ODOT, have an increased presence in the work zone to discourage people from speeding through it.

The two-year, \$39 million Meacham-Kamela project started in 2021. Oregon Department of Transportation crews restored roadway in the westbound and eastbound lanes of I-84 for 3-1/2 miles east of Meacham before shutting down for the

winter. ODOT is on pace to restore the remaining miles of freeway for the project by early fall, Strandberg said.

The repaving work is necessary because severe winter weather and heavy use of tire chains have rutted the roadway's asphalt surface.

"Puddles of water can form in the ruts," Strandberg said.

The puddles can cause vehicles to lose control, he said, and when they freeze they create even more hazardous conditions. Preventing such conditions from occurring is an objective of ODOT this summer.

"Ruts are dangerous," Strandberg said. "We want to keep the pavement smooth."

The westbound and eastbound lanes for slow traffic, now made of

asphalt, are being rebuilt with concrete, and the fast lanes are receiving new asphalt.

Strandberg said concrete, which is longer-lasting than asphalt, is the best fit for the slow lanes because they have such heavy truck traffic. Concrete is more expensive than asphalt but the extra cost is worth it.

"Asphalt lasts 10 to 15 years but concrete can last at least 35 years," Strandberg said.

Some portions of concrete freeway in Oregon, Strandberg said, are believed to have been in place for 50 years.

Paving work for the Meacham-Kamela project is being funded primarily with federal gas tax money.

President Biden tests positive for COVID-19, has 'mild symptoms'

BY ZEKE MILLER, CHRIS MEGERIAN AND JOSH BOAK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday, July 21 and is isolating with "very mild symptoms," the White House said, as new variants of the highly contagious virus challenge the nation's efforts to get back to normal after two and a half years of pandemic.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden had begun taking Paxlovid, an antiviral drug designed to reduce the severity of the disease. He was isolating in the family quarters of the White House and "continuing to carry out all of his duties fully," she said.

Biden's physician, Dr. Kevin O'Connor, said in a letter that Biden had a runny nose and "fatigue, with an occasional dry cough, which started yesterday evening."

Biden himself said in a video posted on Twitter: "I really appreciate your inquiries and concerns. But I'm doing well, getting a lot of work done."

Biden, 79, is fully vaccinated, after getting two doses of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine shortly before taking office, a first booster shot in September 2021 and an additional dose March 30, 2022. The president will isolate for five days and can return to his usual activities after a negative test, White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha told reporters at a briefing.

Jean-Pierre described the president's symptoms as "very mild" and said Biden had been in contact with members of the White House staff by phone and would participate in his planned meetings "via phone and Zoom from the residence."

Asked where Biden might have contracted the virus, Jean-Pierre said, "I don't think that matters." She later clarified that to say the White House was focused on how Biden was feeling and would engage in contact tracing.



Manuel Balce Ceneta/Associated Press

President Joe Biden speaks to the nation from the White House, in Washington, Tuesday, May 24, 2022, as first lady Jill Biden listens.

In the video that Biden recorded outdoors to tell the world he was OK, the videographer stood six feet away and wore an N95 mask, Jean-Pierre said. The president will stop taking his blood thinner and cholesterol medications while receiving Paxlovid.

The White House took steps to show that the president was busy working despite his diagnosis, with Biden tweeting out a picture of himself making calls from the treaty room of the White House.

The president spoke by phone to lawmakers in Pennsylvania to apologize for having to cancel his planned trip Thursday to the city of Wilkes-Barre to promote his crime prevention plans. Biden also called South Carolina Rep. Jim Clyburn to wish him a happy birthday and congratulate him on receiving an award from the NAACP.

Dr. O'Connor wrote in his letter about the president's treatment plan: "I anticipate that he will respond favorably" to Paxlovid "as most maximally protected patients do."

Jean-Pierre said Biden had tested negative on Tuesday and would stay isolated until he tests negative again.

White House chief of staff Ron Klain said in a letter to White House staff obtained by The Associated Press that "all close contacts of the president" will be informed of Biden's

positive test "per standard protocol."

First lady Jill Biden, speaking to reporters as she arrived for a school visit in Detroit, said she'd just gotten off the phone with her husband.

"He's doing fine," she said. "He's feeling good."

The first lady, who was wearing a mask, said she tested negative earlier in the day. She will keep her full schedule in Michigan and Georgia on Thursday, though she will be following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on masking and distancing, said Michael LaRosa, her spokesperson.

The president spent much of last week in Israel and Saudi Arabia. White House officials had told reporters that Biden planned to minimize contact during the trip, yet as soon as he exited Air Force One on July 13, he was fist-bumping, handshaking and even was seen in an occasional hug. The CDC says symptoms can appear two to 14 days after exposure to the virus.

Biden has had a minimal public schedule after returning from Saudi Arabia late on Saturday night, attending church the next day and helping to welcome Ukraine's first lady Olena Zelenska to the White House on Tuesday. The president traveled to Massachusetts on Wednesday to promote efforts to combat climate change.



Local Cancer Care Is Getting an Upgrade

We're committed to investing in the Fruitland community. St. Luke's Cancer Institute is installing a new linear accelerator in Fruitland this spring.

The upgrade will ensure local cancer patients who need radiation treatment will receive the very best in modern care.

