



**WILD
RIDE
AHEAD**

The Challenge of Champions is coming back to John Day this weekend

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Fire season gets an early start – again

May rains just a fond memory as dry heat returns

By **Scotta Callister**
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – The Oregon Department of Forestry launched the 2015 fire season last Saturday – about three weeks ahead of the norm.

The fire season brings extra requirements for commercial operations on lands protected by ODF.

The June 6 onset isn't much earlier than in 2014 –

As a fire season begins, owners of ODF-protected lands are urged to contact the John Day Unit and provide their phone numbers for an emergency contact data base.

Those landowners can

another dry year – when the fire season started on June 9. However, it continues a departure from past years, when the trend was for fire season to be declared closer to the first of July.

KEEP IN TOUCH

call 541-575-1139 or stop by the office, 415 Patterson Bridge Road, during business hours to provide their contact information.

The agency is creating a central list that will help fire officials contact landowners

– both resident and absentee – in the event of a fire. Officials say past efforts have been hampered by lack of complete contact information, such as cell phone numbers, to reach land owners or managers.

district forester.

In town last week for a meeting with landowners, Ponte said the dry winter and conditions were a clear concern even in April. However, May's cool weather and

above normal rainfall delayed the onset of severe burning conditions, he said.

"The cool and unsettled weather of the past several weeks has kept fuel moistures in small fuels such as grasses, needles, and twigs relatively high," Ponte said. "But we have not received enough precipitation to significantly change the ongoing drought conditions and the larger fuels remain dry with fuel moistures that are below average. The smaller fuels will dry out very quickly with the return of hot and dry conditions and this will result in the rapid increase of fire danger levels."

Over the weekend, warm, dry weather returned to the region – and forecasters say the heat is likely to continue through the summer.

With that, fire danger will increase very rapidly, and fire agencies are preparing for the possibility of a "very severe" fire season, Ponte said.

At the June 4 meeting, held at the John Day Unit office in John Day, Ponte stressed the importance of cooperation and communication with private landowners.

Ponte also emphasized that in a May 27 letter to district

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GOLD ON WHEELS!

Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY – The annual '62 Days Parade took to the streets Saturday, with candy flying through the air and four-wheelers revving their engines.

The parade entries were bolstered this year by the addition of a veritable fleet of ATVs and other vehicles representing Citizens for Public Access. The group numbered so many, organizers had to shift them to the Grant Union High School parking lot for staging, while the rest of the parade staged at Humbolt Elementary. The public lands access group won this year's Sweepstakes prize.

The Best in Theme, which comes with a \$100 check, went to the Friends of the Grant County Historical Museum.

For more photos, visit MyEagleNews.com online. For Gold Rush Run and Walk coverage, see Page B1.

Parade results

Commercial:
1st – Team National
2nd – John Day Polaris
3rd – It's a Dirty Shame

Schools/Organizations
1st – Friends of Grant County Museum
2nd – John Day and Rural Fire Department
3rd – Cinnabar Mountain Rendezvous

Horse Drawn Entry
1st – Del and Mary Raymond, grand marshals

Classic Vehicle
1st – Hal Smith, 1963 Dodge Dart
2nd – Luke Claughton, 1967 Buick

Mounted Costumed Individual
1st – Reietta Wyllie, Grant County Fair Queen

Mounted Costumed Group
1st – Rocky Top Riders 4-H

Derby Cars
1st – Tyler Nodine
2nd – Steve Patterson

The parade was the centerpiece of the two-day festival, which also included music in the park, a pancake breakfast and a tri-tip lunch, a pie social and some fast-draw shooting contests.



Grant County Fair and Rodeo Queen Rietta Wyllie waves to the crowd as she rides the route.



Del and Mary Raymond are celebrated as grand marshals in this year's '62 Days parade.



Citizens for Public Access supporters used four-wheelers and signs about roads and public use to make their point.



Cousins Morgan Molyneux, Nolan Mobley and Torie Coalwell take parade spectators back in time with the Friends of Grant County Historical Museum's award-winning float.

Eagle photos/Scotta Callister

Hunt goes on for JD vapor source

Officials advise fresh air to limit symptoms

By **Scotta Callister**
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – The source of chemicals seeping through the soils in a John Day neighborhood remains a mystery this week.

Environmental Protection Agency workers are continuing to take air samples in buildings near South Canyon Boulevard, while contractors drill more test holes to tap and test groundwater. Officials said most homes checked so far had no or "very low" levels of vapors, but some continue to have levels that could cause health concerns.

The preliminary results of the investigation point to gasoline, possibly with other solvents, as the cause of the vapors that began cropping up in homes and buildings, mostly in the past month but some as early as March.

The EPA defines the vapors as volatile organic compounds, or VOCs.

Oregon Health Authority officials told the Eagle last Friday that vapors from VOCs can cause headaches, dizziness or nausea, but those symptoms usually fade when the person moves into fresh air.

The OHA's Dr. Richard Leman said "prolonged exposure" can increase the risk of health problems including nerve injury and leukemia. However, he said, it would take persistent exposure – and for "months or years, not

days or weeks" – to increase the risk.

He said this situation doesn't fit that scenario.

The chemicals identified in the EPA probe are not uncommon, and people may be exposed to them briefly in routine situations, he said.

He said one positive is that, unlike some contaminants, these vapors have an odor so people can sense if they are being exposed and get away.

The OHA and Community Counseling Solutions, which operates Grant County Public Health, issued a fact sheet with the following tips:

- If you smell the chemical odor, call John Day Dispatch, 541-575-0030. Dispatchers will relay the information to the EPA to respond.

- If you smell the odor and get a headache or feel nauseated, leave the house and notify your doctor.

- Ventilate the house, basement or room where the vapors are found. If levels are found to be high, officials may help with additional steps, such as vapor barriers and gas vacuum systems.

"Sometimes, the level of volatile chemicals may remain high even after efforts to decrease it. In this case, moving to another place for a while may be needed, until the problem is under control," the statement said.

Agencies are not recommending evacuations, saying ventilation is still the best measure to address the problem for now.

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FISH STORY



The Eagle/Scotta Callister

Cajsa Timko holds the big fish caught by brother Chance at the free fishing day in Prairie City. The event drew hopeful anglers of all ages to McHaley Pond for a morning of fishing, games and a barbecue. The event was hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Malheur National Forest. More photos online at MyEagleNews.com.

New officer helping veterans

Osgood takes on duties for Grant County vets

By **Cheryl Hoefler**
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY – A new Grant County Veteran Services officer is ready to assist vets and their families who have questions on such topics as programs available and VA benefits.

Erin Osgood began the job April 27. She succeeds Bob Muenchhausen, who retired.

Osgood has been in the office at the Grant County Courthouse three days a week, while also working part-time as the accreditation coordinator at the Grant County Health Department.

Osgood comes to the job as a veteran. In the late 1990s, she served in the U.S. Army as a supply specialist and a unit armorer, including a year in Korea.

"I love to meet the veterans and listen to their stories," she said. She added that she likes "trying to figure out what services best suit them."

Osgood encourages vets and family members to come in and learn more about programs they



Erin Osgood

may qualify for. She said she would especially like to meet with veterans who've never filed a claim with the VA.

She's a member of the Community Advisory Council for the East Oregon Coordinated Care Organization, and the Grant County Committee of New Hope for Eastern Oregon

Animals, and is a 4-H leader.

She and her husband, Charles, enjoy scuba diving, travel and cruises. He is the owner of O So Good Essentials in John Day, offering massage and essential oil services.

The Osgoods have a daughter, Taylor, who will be in seventh grade at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School this fall.

The Grant County Veteran Service Office is located at the southwest corner of the Courthouse in Canyon City.

Hours are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Appointments are preferred but walk-ins are welcome. Osgood says when the U.S. flag is flying outside, the office is open.

Call the office at 541-575-1631.

