

FIRE

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personnel, offering his expectations for their interactions with landowners.

He called the relationship with landowners "a true partnership."

"Landowners know their lands better than anybody else," he said. "They provide invaluable information on access, fuel conditions, fire breaks, water resources, and they often have equipment that can be used in the suppression effort."

He also stressed that landowners have the right to work to fight fires on their own land, and "under no circumstances" will they be asked by ODF to leave their property.

"You have every right to be there on your land when there's a fire," he said. "Only law enforcement can ask you to leave, and we're not law enforcement officers."

But Ponte also noted the need for coordination on fires, and said it's important

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Oregon Department of Forestry's declaration of fire season brings certain restrictions on the public, forestland owners and people working in state and private forests. Among them:

- The use of fireworks, exploding targets, tracer ammunition, or any bullet with a pyrotechnic charge at its base is prohibited.
- Forest operators must have firefighting equipment on site.
- Outdoor burning is prohibited without a permit issued by ODF or a local fire department. However, most local fire departments have already suspended or will soon suspend issuing such permits.

Wildfire prevention restrictions can change quickly during the season and vary from one jurisdiction to another.

National forests, Bureau of Land Management or other federal lands fall under different restrictions and recreationists visiting or operators working on those public lands are advised to check with those federal offices for information on current restrictions.

For more information, visit www.oregon.gov/ODF/ or call the John Day Unit, 541-575-1139.

for landowners – even if taking their own action – to "tie in with us."

Ponte detailed some resources available as the season begins. The district, he said, will have about 80 seasonal employees coming on

by the end of this week.

The district also has access to state resources, including air power based in John Day and now in Fossil.

In John Day, the Type II helicopter and helitack helicopter and crew, added last

year, will be joined by a SEAT – a single engine air tanker – this season.

The SEAT, which is used as a small retardant bomber, will complement a Forest Service SEAT, and the two craft can be used effectively in tandem to attack fires.

Also new to the district this year, a Type II helicopter for bucket work will be based in Fossil.

Ponte's briefing came as the region faces persistent drought, likely through the summer. The forecast is for hotter than usual temperatures, and that follows six months of unusually dry, warm weather across the West.

Currently the entire state of Washington is under a drought emergency declaration. In Oregon, the governor has declared a drought emergency in 15 counties including Grant, Harney, Baker, Wheeler and Malheur.

Recent rains provided something of a "second greenup" in the region, Ponte noted, but the heavy fire fuels remain drier than normal.

HUNT

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In some cases, other steps may include sealing concrete cracks or holes in basements, adding a vapor barrier in crawl spaces, and limiting any time spent in areas where there is an unusual odor.

The EPA is working with OHA, the state Department of Environmental Quality and the City of John Day in the investigation.

Mike Boykin, on-scene coordinator for the EPA, said the agency is grateful for the ongoing assistance of the city departments, including fire, police and public works.

In addition to taking air samples and boring groundwater holes, EPA workers have been taking soil samples in some areas and testing water from city manholes. They also took samples from some irrigation wells this week.

According to Boykin, that's "helping to build a

picture" of the contamination.

"We do have a better idea of the way the contamination is moving, and we continue to build that picture," said Kay Morrison, EPA community involvement coordinator.

She said Boykin reported positive results in one house that had a high level of vapors that couldn't be controlled by ventilation alone. Workers taped off the basement windows, put a vent in one window, and used an industrial-size fan to pump fresh air in.

She said that created "positive pressure" that prevented the vapors from coming up from the basement floor.

That approach is an option for places with very high levels, Morrison noted, but it builds optimism that temporary solutions can be found.

She said the agency will continue to work on locating the source, with a goal of eliminating the contamination.

Spellers B-A-T-T-L-E in Bee



Contributed photos
Above: Division I winners, from left: Katrine Bogardus, second place, fourth grade, Dayville; Max Bailey, first place, fourth grade, Humbolt; Riley Roberston, third place, fifth grade, Humbolt.



Right: Primary Division winners, from left, Macy Carter, first place, third grade, Seneca; Isaac Janssen, third place, third grade, Humbolt; Nicholas Devine, second place, second grade, Monument.



Division II winners: Thomas Kreamier, third place, sixth grade, Long Creek; Cody Combs, second place, eighth grade, Grant Union; McKeely Miller, first place, eighth grade, Grant Union.



Division III winners: Marta Faulkner, first place, senior, Grant Union; Kelsey Long, second place, senior, Grant Union; Amaya Zwegardt, third place, junior, Prairie City; Robby Bullock, third place, junior, Prairie City.

GC students compete at Elks Lodge

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – Top Grant County spellers converged May 12 at the John Day Elks Lodge to test their knowledge.

Winners in the four divisions took home prizes, including a Kindle e-reader for first place, an electronic dictionary for second place, and a drawstring backpack for third.

It was the Grant County Education Service District's annual spelling bee, testing grades 1 through 12.

Participating in the event were 45 students from all county schools: Prairie City, Dayville, Long Creek, Monument, Seneca, Humbolt Elementary and Grant Union Junior-Senior High.

The winners from each division have the opportunity to compete in the Sept. 5 Oregon Spellers Statewide Spelling Championship at the Oregon State Fair in Salem.

This year's readers were Tom Winters, Stacie Holmstrom, Paul Smith and Ashley Masterson-Armicardy.

Spell checkers were Tom Winters, Stacie Holmstrom, Ashley Masterson-Armi-

cardy, Chris Cronin, Donna Becker, Andrea Combs, Vickie Ryder and Savannah Pattee.

"We would like to thank all of our volunteers that make the County Spelling Contest possible and the John Day Elks Club for the use of their building," said Holmstrom, the spelling bee coordinator.

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Congratulations Class of 2015
Silvies Valley Ranch is proud to announce the 2015 Scholarship winners! We were pleased to have received numerous applications from both Grant and Harney County students this year. Congratulations to the 2015 graduating winners - we are so excited for you as you embark on your educational journey. We are also very pleased to have awarded multi-year awards to six students: Peter Neuschwander, Jackson Thein and Jacob White for a second year, Daryl Ann Waltenburg and Shannon Croghan for a third year, and Austin Piper was awarded a scholarship for the fourth year in a row!

Congratulations from everyone at Silvies Valley Ranch to all the 2015 graduates on your great accomplishment!
2015 Scholarship Winners
Austin Piper* '12 Burns
Hunter Davis '15 Burns
Jackson Thein* '13 Burns
Jacob White* '14 Burns
Jeff Davies '15 Burns
Peter Neuschwander* '14 Crane
Daryl Ann Waltenburg* '13 Dayville
Jeremy Hand '15 Dayville
Sage Flower '15 Dayville
Gerald Carter '15 Grant Union
Jennifer McCloskey '15 Grant Union
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