

# Juniper Ridge lacks security, accountability

When Juniper Ridge Acute Care Center opened in 2013, citizens of Grant County welcomed the jobs and mental health treatment the facility would offer. Both were desperately needed in this part of Eastern Oregon.

Our community's acceptance was based in no small part on assurances Juniper Ridge would be secure. Those assurances have been proven worthless.

In less than three years, at least three known patients have escaped the facility on Ford Road in John Day:

- In April of 2013, a patient broke out of his room and the facility. He threw rocks at staff, then took out his rage on a transport car -- smashing windows, tearing off mirrors and caving in its roof -- before being subdued by police.

- This year, in January, a patient entered the facility's fenced yard unsupervised. He broke through a corner of the fence and escaped. Local and state law enforcement officers captured him after a five-hour search.

- On Saturday, a patient who is a sex offender escaped, exploiting the same faulty fence. He was captured by Oregon State Police Officers more than 24 hours later near

Dog Creek outside of John Day.

In each instance, the executive director of Community Counseling Services, the non-profit that operates Juniper Ridge, reassured the community that the problem areas were being addressed. However, Kimberly Lindsay told the Blue Mountain Eagle Monday the integrity of the fence as a whole has not been fixed and a lawsuit has been filed against the contractor.

We cannot judge the merits of the lawsuit. But failing to immediately fix an obvious defect in security at a mental health facility is an astonishing act of neglect. Juniper Ridge is supposed to be a secure facility for a reason. Its patients are people in mental distress who are considered to be a danger to themselves or to others.

Assurances and excuses no longer are enough. Grant County Commissioners should demand an independent review of security at Juniper Ridge. State officials should assess whether Community Counseling Services is the right provider for mental health services in Grant County.

Finally, the faulty fence must be fixed -- now. The patients and community deserve better.



# 'Wolf-friendly beef' idea patronizing to ranchers

There isn't anyone who hasn't said something that sounded better in their head than it did when they said it out loud.

That's what we thought when we heard that conservation groups in Washington participating on the state's wolf advisory panel suggested helping ranchers by creating a premium label for "wolf-friendly beef" for producers who employ Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife wolf protection measures.

Dan Paul, state director of The Humane Society of the United States, said as with cage-free eggs, some consumers would be willing to pay more for beef raised with wolf protection measures.

Really? First, we'd point out that all beef raised on grazing land in wolf country is "wolf-friendly." It all can fall prey. Ranchers in Washington and Oregon can't legally shoot a wolf, as they are protected either by state or federal law.

In fact, we would argue beef protected by extensive measures championed by the panel is less friendly to wolves. If the measures work -- and producers say the results are mixed at best --

wolves have to work harder for their meal.

Second, we think the number of people who would pay more for beef in order to somehow help wolves would be small.

Though we don't necessarily think it's true, people who buy cage-free eggs believe they're getting a better quality product because of the way hens are treated. The reasoning goes that cage-free hens are exposed to less disease and stress, therefore their eggs are better.

But there is no corresponding perceived quality enhancement for "wolf-friendly" beef. The benefits from such measures go exclusively to the wolves and their champions.

Ranchers are quick to point out that to recoup the cost of the suggested counter-measures, "wolf-friendly" products would have to be priced 50 percent more than comparable conventional (wolf hostile?) products.

We'll give the wolf advocates the benefit of the doubt that they are sincere in their desire to help ranchers cope with wolves on the range. But a new marketing ploy is not a substitute for a viable

management plan that includes a full range of control options, including lethal measures for problem wolves.

And this is why ranchers are frustrated with efforts they find, at best, patronizing.

The Cattle Producers of Washington has withdrawn from the Wolf Advisory Group, calling it "inept and pointless" and saying it has prevented any action by the state Department of Fish and Wildlife in dealing with wolves that kill livestock.

Though there are some with more strident views, most ranchers at least grudgingly accept that the reintroduction of wolves into the West is a *fait accompli*. They know they'll have to find a way to survive in a new paradigm that includes another predator.

Conversely, wolf advocates and government wildlife agencies must also accept that ranchers can't be expected to provide wolves an unlimited buffet. The tab must be paid, or the losses be stopped.

State-sponsored elimination of ranchers is no more palatable than the wholesale extermination of wolves.

# Walden possible Speaker candidate?

By Steve Tool  
EO Media Group

With the sudden resignation of U.S. Rep. John Boehner as house speaker and the equally sudden withdrawal of Rep. Kevin McCarthy of his candidacy for the role, the House of Representatives finds itself with an immense vacuum to fill with seeming no one willing to take on the challenge. The Republican majority is currently awash with in-fighting between its establishment and the more conservative and vocal elements of the party.

The preferred candidate, Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, says he has no interest in the position. Ryan was probably the only representative who could garner the 218 House votes needed to take on the role.

One of the names being bandied about as an interim House Speaker is Oregon's 4th Dist. Rep. Greg Walden. Former Michigan U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers touted Walden as a possible candidate during an Oct. 8 interview with Wolf Blitzer on CNN.

"One great candidate would be Greg Walden the head of the committee responsible for electing the conference of Republicans into

the majority. He's been doing that for a few years. He knows every member; he knows the districts; he knows their political bent and he's a seasoned hand which was missing in this leadership election. He's been around a long time," Rogers said.

Walden's communications director, Andrew Malcolm, said in a phone interview Walden currently supports Ryan for the Speaker role.

"Greg thinks that Paul Ryan would be a terrific Speaker of the House, that he could certainly unify our conference," said Malcolm. "Greg believes that he is an articulate communicator, has incredible policy depth, and cares deeply about the future of this country."

Malcolm added Walden would consider running for the position if the conference asked him.

"Greg has always been willing to step in and serve Oregon and the country when needed. That being said, he has several big jobs already: representing the Second District, chairing the Communications and Technology panel, and chairing the National Republican Congressional Committee," Malcolm said.

# The House Speaker's role

The House Speaker role is defined in Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution. Surprisingly, it is not a requirement to be an elected representative to fulfill the role, although all Speakers thus far have been.

The Speaker is arguably the most important and visible role in the House. Besides acting as the intermediary between the House and the president, the Speaker does a large portion of fundraising for their party. The Speaker is also second in line for the presidency behind the vice-president.

Unlike the Senate Majority Lead-

er, who needs only a majority of votes from their own party, the House Speaker needs a majority of the 435 members of the House. For obvious reasons, Democrats are not interested in helping any Republican get the necessary 218 votes.

The most powerful and important role the Speaker plays is using his power through the Rules Committee to decide which bills and amendments make it to the House floor for discussion and vote. Many political observers say it is this power that contributes to congressional gridlock.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Recognizing the unsung heroes

I would like take a moment to recognize those unsung heroes who worked so tirelessly behind the scenes, giving of their time and energy to help those who have been displaced and effected by the Canyon Creek Complex fire.

I know Mary Weaver along with a crew of people who came daily to help wherever they were needed.

I am sure there was a loss of revenue to the Grant County Fairgrounds from events that had to be canceled because the needs of the community were put first and foremost above anything else.

We will never know the names or faces of all those who spent countless hours raising money and sending much needed items to help out.

The fire was a tragedy, causing long term devastation and lasting impact on our county.

It is a test of the human spirit when faced with uncertainty to find such support amidst the destruction.

We will forever be indebted to those who opened their hearts and their wallets to give in any way they could.

I know I don't live in the John Day area, but I have family that does, and this fire has affected all of us in one way or another.

Linda K Hunt  
Long Creek

## Sad summer of tragedies

It has been a sad summer for sure. Homes lost, our beautiful forests blackened, a tiny bear cub left running frantically around Prairie City looking for it's soon to be salami Mom, dead kittens along the road where icy hearted individuals threw them to rid themselves of the problem they created, and the deadly shooting at UCC. Could it be there is a reason or at least a partial cause behind all of these heart wrenching events that could be remedied?

The Forest Service, which manages our "public lands," threatens the public with repercussions if they stray with a shovel, or equipment onto public land to put out a fire that encompasses an acre, only to act surprised when a strong wind comes up and turns the acre in to over 100,000, threatening lives, and consuming a lifetime of work, hopes and dreams in the form of homes.

What was a tiny bear cub doing without a mother? Starving hunter, no doubt.

Who didn't bother to neuter or spay a cat, their cat, their neighbor's cat? Tough call.

Who put up the sign "gun free zone" for the UCC shooter to see (he went there, so he knew). California's chief, Jerry Brown, just declared all California schools gun free. I hope he doesn't make

the kids pay for making them a target of the next round of nuts.

Don't we get it that we can and should be accountable for our own actions, protection of our own land and children, however that looks, and whatever it takes? We have delegated the care of our public lands to people who need a dictionary to look up the word "management" just because they call it wilderness, they don't need to make it beautiful or useful again. If man wasn't here, hands off would be a given, duh. But we are here, and sick of looking at the black toothpicks where there used to be beautiful trees, for decades, we look at them.

We have become a sorry lot. Electing and re-electing people to represent us who do nothing the way we want it done, or what is really best for us all.

They just mess things up and tell us to go sit down because we don't know what is best. The incredible idiocy of some of the laws we are supposed to live by is just astounding, and the lack of personal integrity found in those we should be able to trust.

The folks in Prescott, Arizona are dealing with the same sort of aftermath of their fire, only they lost 19 young men due to a fire that was "left alone" when it was manageable. No wonder we are all mad!

Mary Brown  
Prairie City

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