



**CANYON CREEK COMPLEX**

# County Court votes not to fund investigation



The Eagle/Sean Hart

Malheur National Forest Supervisor Steve Beverlin speaks at the Grant County Court meeting Feb. 24 regarding the Public Forest Commission's request for the county to fund an investigation of the Canyon Creek Complex fire. Beverlin said the agency has nothing to hide.

## Commissioners cite cost, duration, objectivity in denying request

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Despite heated testimony, the Grant County Court opted not to fund an investigation into the Canyon Creek Complex fire at the behest of the Public Forest Commission Wednesday.

Many residents — many of whom lost property in the fire — urged the commissioners to undertake the investigation, but they cited concerns such as the cost and duration of the investigation and the forest commission's request to oversee the investigation in denying the request.

Members of the forest commission said in a statement they could not ignore the devastation caused by fires on the Malheur National Forest: "The pattern of fires being uncontrolled in their early stages show evidence of questionable judgment. The responsible authority must have an attitude of fighting initial fire immediately, aggressively and relentlessly until the fires are out — not controlled, but out."

Forest commission member Dave Traylor said the county could "ill afford" another year of devastating fires, and member Tad Houpt agreed.

"There's something causing these fires to get so big," Houpt said. "... We desperately need to have this investigation done."

Dean Elliott, who lost his home in the fire, said there was no effort made to save his home. Other property owners shared similar sentiments.

Others, however, did not want the county to spend resources investigating the fire.

Dan Becker, who lost 160 acres of timber and his home, said he was not against an investigation, but he didn't want the county to pay for it. He said people often get punished after investigations, but rarely the person responsible. He also mentioned a long list of other devastating fires in the area in previous years.

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# County condemns refuge occupation

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant County Court passed a resolution condemning the armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Feb. 24.

The three-member county governing board unanimously approved the resolution after public discussion at three separate meetings.

The topic drew large crowds. People were lined up in the hall unable to enter the regular County Court meeting room at the second meeting, so the third meeting Wednesday was scheduled in the larger Circuit Court room upstairs.

The larger room was also filled to capacity, with people sitting in the jury chairs, standing along the walls and some still in the hallway.

Many people spoke out, offering opinions both for and against the resolution.

Kay Steele, Ritter, said she believed the resolution was "more relevant than ever" after the occupation ended to show Grant County's attitude. She urged the court to approve the resolution.

John Day resident Callie Moss, however, said she believed the resolution turned into a personal attack against Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer. She said everyone has different beliefs, but she was not happy with the resolution language.

"If I'm standing here with my pistol, does that make me militia?" she asked.

Elaine Mezzo, John Day, said it was not an attack on the sheriff. She said it sends a message of peace.

John Day resident Jesse Madden said he would probably support a version of the resolution, but he did not believe the current draft was complete. He said it mentioned state and federal laws but failed to mention the Constitution.

Commissioner Chris Labhart said he drafted the resolution. He said the refuge occupation reminded him of the Aryan Nation trying to locate in Grant County, and he felt the county needed to show support for Harney County.

# John Day resident garners \$50,000

Chester's Thriftway sells winning ticket

By Angel Carpenter  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — John Day resident Lisa Holland picked up a \$50,000 Powerball prize in Salem last week.

Her husband Dave Holland was the one who drew the lucky lottery numbers at Chester's Thriftway in John Day with a quick pick.

When he checked his ticket that morning on TV, Dave said to himself, "Give me a heart attack!" because he was one number off from winning millions of dollars.

"I wasn't sure how much I'd actually won," he said.

He took the ticket to Chester's to scan the bar code, and that's when he confirmed it was worth \$50,000.

Dave said he talked to a tax consultant and put the ticket in a safety deposit box. Then Lisa traveled to Salem to pick up the winnings Feb. 24.

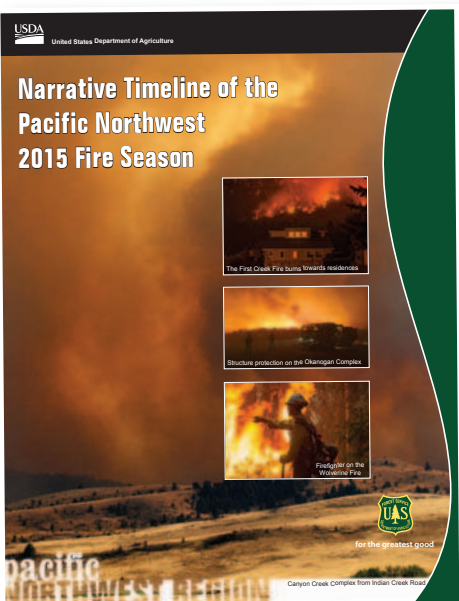
He said Lisa will purchase new countertops in their home, and he already saved up previously to buy a new trolling motor for his boat.

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The Eagle/Sean Hart

Jim Sproul speaks out in favor of an investigation into the Canyon Creek Complex fire at the Grant County Court meeting Feb. 24. After listening to testimony, the commissioners ultimately decided not to fund the investigation.



View the report online at myeaglenews.com

# Coyote hunter pleads guilty of violation in wolf shooting

Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — A Baker City man pleaded guilty Tuesday, Feb. 23, to a Class A violation of Taking a Threatened/Endangered Species for shooting a radio-collared wolf last October.

The plea hearing took place at the Grant County Justice Court in Canyon City before Judge Kathy Stinnett.

Brennon Witty, 26, formerly of John Day, had a companion charge of Hunting With a Centerfire Rifle With No Big Game Tag dismissed as part of a negotiated plea agreement.

The incident happened near Crane Prairie, south of Prairie City, while Witty was reportedly hunting coyotes on private land.



**A male wolf, OR 22, that separated from the Umatilla River Pack in February 2015, is pictured walking through a Northeast Oregon forest on Jan. 26, 2015. The lone wolf spent several weeks in Malheur County before heading from Grant County where it was shot, mistaken for a coyote.**

Courtesy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

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