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## Jury: Peterson guilty on 3 felony charges

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle

A 12-person jury convicted former Monument fire chief Roy Richard Peterson on three felony counts related to theft from the fire district.

The jury found Peterson guilty of first-degree theft, first-degree aggravated theft and possession of a stolen vehicle Friday in Grant County Circuit Court after a five-day trial. He was found not guilty of another count of first-degree aggravated theft.

The charges stem from Peterson's acquisition of resources — money and equipment — for fire protection in Monument and his subsequent refusal to turn over the resources to the Monument Rural Fire District, which was formed by voters in November of 2012.

The state prosecutor, Senior Assistant Attorney General Daniel P. Wendel, said in his closing argument the first-degree theft charge was for submitting fraudulent invoices in excess of \$1,000 with a grant application to the Oregon Department of Forestry on or about Feb. 15, 2013. Wendel said Peterson used white out to submit the same invoice on different grant applications in 2011 and 2012.

Wendel said Peterson displayed a "pattern and practice" of fraud even before 2012 by submitting invoices and then canceling the order. He said Peterson also paid for repairs to his personal vehicle with fire district funds and wrote fire engine numbers on the memo line of those checks. He said Peterson used the fire district as "his personal piggy bank."

"From 2008 to 2012, the defendant took every opportunity he could to steal money from the state by submitting fraudulent invoices," Wendel said.

Peterson's attorney, D. Zachary Hostetter, said Peterson reallocated the funds to cover attorney fees incurred rather than purchasing the equipment listed on the invoices. He said Peterson also deposited his own funds into the fire district account.

Hostetter said, for all of the charges, Peterson acted under an honest claim of right, believing he was entitled to the

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# COOL FOR SCHOOL

## Grant County educators, students hit the ground running



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Students at Humbolt Elementary in Canyon City rush to their classes on the first day of school.

## Classrooms open doors as summer ends

By Angel Carpenter  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Students in Grant County stepped back into the classroom this week and last, ready to get back into the swing of reading, writing, arithmetic and much more.

Educators were ready for them, after completing training over the summer and preparing their rooms.

Prairie City School District  
Prairie City School's Superintendent

Principal Julie Gurczynski said, "It seems like just yesterday that I was wishing everyone a happy summer" and now she and the school staff have their "boots on the ground and running."

She said they are welcoming two new teachers, Nate Barber for grades 7-12 social studies and Amelia Harmon for grades kindergarten through 12 art.

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The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Humbolt second-grade teacher Jan Curtis welcomes students Monday morning. Kandice Bowe and her daughters, kindergartner Kiah (to her left) and second-grader Kirra, look at the new school books, along with Silvie Holliday, left, and Kadence Smith.

# Smells like savings

## City manager proposes progressive solution to wastewater problem

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

John Day City Manager Nick Green has proposed an innovative solution to upgrading the city's out-of-date wastewater treatment plant.

Green has proposed a hydroponic treatment plant that would use reclaimed wastewater to help grow cash crops to offset the cost of the facility.

Hydroponic waste water plants are currently in use in Europe and the United States. The Waterhub system in Atlanta, Georgia, is the first in the nation and uses hydroponically grown plants to recycle up to 400,000 gallons of water a day.

Built by the company Sus-



Eagle photos/Rylan Boggs

City Manager Nick Green poses for a photo next to one of the holding ponds for the city's wastewater treatment plant. The pond's close proximity to the river is raising concerns that contaminants may make their way into the river.

tainable Water, this type of plant could be scaled to fit the needs of John Day, Green said. If the plant were to become a

reality, it would be the second of its kind in the country.

The system involves growing vegetation over a series of

bioreactors so roots hang into the reactors providing a habitat for microbial organisms that consume organic waste.

The plants grown could be any number of cash crops including bamboo, flowers, lavender, ornamental grasses and medicinal herbs that could be regularly harvested and sold to offset the cost of the facility.

Additionally, reclaimed water from the plant could be used for irrigation, landscaping and utility operations.

The current mechanical treatment plant on Northwest Seventh Street was built in 1949 and last updated in 1978. The plant is currently under administrative review from the Oregon Department

of Environmental Quality. "Because of our proximity to the (John Day) river, our current facility will most likely not meet the more stringent permitting requirements," Green said, describing the facility as "very, very overdue" for an update.

The hydroponic plant from Sustainable Water could be funded in one of two ways. The city could privatize wastewater management by allowing Sustainable Water to build, operate and maintain a facility like Waterhub and pay off the cost of the facility over a 40-year period, while purchasing

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The Eagle/Rylan Boggs

A Prairie City School water fountain that tested over the acceptable limit for lead contamination.

## PC School shuts off water to lead-ridden fountains

### State board adopts lead testing rules

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Prairie City School District is encouraging students to bring refillable water bottles after high lead levels were found in several drinking fountains.

All local school districts tested for lead this summer after high levels were found in Flint, Michigan, city water and water at some Portland schools.

Prairie City had several water sources exceeding the Environmental Protection Agency limit. Although Neilson Research Corporation in Medford, which tested all the local samples, lists an EPA limit of .02 micrograms per liter, the EPA currently recommends action at .015 mg/L or more.

After a June 22 test showed high lead — .0945 mg/L in the old gym boys locker room and .0526 mg/L in the new gym boys locker room — Prairie City Superintendent Julie Gurczynski shut off the water to those fountains, flushed the system and ordered another test of the fountains that showed high levels.

In the second test, the fountain in the girls locker room of the old gym tested at .0285 mg/L. The drinking fountain in elementary room 2 tested at .0266 mg/L. The fountain in the elementary hallway tested at .0244. The fountain in the elementary library tested at .0178. All other areas tested below the limit.

"When I received the results from the June 22 test, I immediately shut the water off to the locations where we tested over the legal limit to minimize the exposure to students," Gurczynski said.

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