



The Eagle/Rylan Boggs  
**Kam Wah Chung Curator Don Merritt stands for a photo in the Kam Wah Chung Interpretive Center. He earned a master's degree in anthropology with an emphasis in archaeology from University of Montana in 2010.**

## Local museum gets new curator

Merritt wants to attract more volunteers

By Rylan Boggs  
 Blue Mountain Eagle

The Kam Wah Chung Museum has a new curator.

Don Merritt started Jan. 3 and is looking forward to re-opening the museum and interpretive center in May.

Merritt said starting in the off-season is nice because it allows him to familiarize himself with the position and history of the area.

"For the first few weeks, all I did was read all the books, all the documents and all the histories that were around so I had some familiarity with what's going on," he said.

He has been preparing for the season by completing small maintenance projects and continues to scan a plethora of documents written in Chinese that were recovered from the Kam Wah Chung building. Roughly 20,000 documents — from personal correspondence to legal documents and medical records — are being scanned to more effectively share with translators. However, some documents are written with traditional Chinese characters, making them more difficult to translate, Merritt said.

Many of the letters are from Chinese immigrant and former Kam Wah Chung owner Lung On, including personal correspondence between him and his father in China and business dealings pertaining to his car dealership.

"It's just amazing how much stuff they found that was in boxes," Merritt said. "They were pack-rats. You couldn't hardly walk into the building because they had so much stuff."

Prior to being hired at Kam Wah Chung, Merritt worked as an archaeologist for the Bureau of Land Management and, before that, as a curator at the Fremont Indian State Park in Utah.

He earned a master's degree in anthropology with an emphasis in archaeology from University of Montana in 2010.

Merritt was drawn to the area because of its remoteness and proximity to the outdoors. He enjoys hiking and studying the genealogy of his family, and is currently writing a book about Fort Owens, a trading post established in 1849 near Stevensville, Montana. He completed his thesis there and wants to document its transformation from an early outpost to a state park.

In the coming years, Merritt would like to work with the Forest Service to host archaeological events and encourage more local connection and volunteerism.

He said he's noticed many residents haven't been in the Kam Wah Chung Museum, something he hopes to change.

# Ranchers oppose cuts to wolf compensation, predator control

By Mateusz Perkowski  
 Capital Bureau

Ranchers who suffer livestock losses from predators stand to lose state support under both budget scenarios currently proposed for the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Funding aimed at predator control and compensation for livestock depredation would be cut under recommendations from Gov. Kate Brown as well as the co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, Sen. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin, and Rep. Nancy Nathanson, D-Eugene.

The proposed cuts drew objections from the livestock industry during a Feb. 22 hearing on ODA's budget before a panel of Joint Ways and Means Committee members focused on natural resources.

As the wolf population has grown in Oregon, livestock losses have been a continuing source of frustration for ranchers, said Mike Durgan of the Baker County Wolf Compensation Advisory Committee.

Even when wolves don't kill cattle, they cause health problems that are considered indirect losses and aren't compensated with state dollars, Durgan said.

Until wildlife officials find a better way to manage the predators, the livestock industry should receive state assistance, he said. "I want to make it clear I'm not advocating killing wolves today."

Oregon counties have steadfastly contributed money to their partnership with ODA and USDA's Wildlife Services division to pay for predator control, even as they've fallen short of funds for public safety and other vital services, said Craig Pope, a



Contributed photo/Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

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Polk County commissioner.

"We will have no one else to call if we let this partnership fail," Pope said. "Counties cannot make up the difference of this funding hole."

The Oregon Hunters Association and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation testified in favor of restoring the state's full contribution to the predator control program, which they say is necessary to maintain a balance between predators and deer and elk.

Under Gov. Kate Brown's recommended 2017-2019 budget, the ODA would eliminate \$460,000 in state funding for the USDA's Wildlife Services division, which kills problematic predators.

An ODA program that compensates ranchers for wolf depredation would be funded at \$211,000 under the governor's proposal, compared to \$233,000 in the 2015-2017 biennium.

The co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, meanwhile, have proposed a "budget framework" for the upcoming biennium that would decrease funding for

the wolf compensation program "and/or reduce funding for predator control."

While the co-chairs' budget framework doesn't specify the exact reductions for ODA programs, it does propose cutting state funding for all natural resource agencies to \$405 million, down from \$413.6 million during the previous biennium.

Rep. Lew Frederick, D-Portland, said he's concerned about livestock losses and supports continued assistance from the state but raised concerns about possible hunting of wolves.

While wolves aren't currently hunted in Oregon, controlled hunts could be allowed during a later phase of wolf recovery under the state's management plan for the species.

Frederick cautioned against the display of "trophy" wolves killed by hunters, which he said would erode public support for the predator control and wolf compensation programs.

"That's a political situa-

tion that will shut down a great deal," he said.

Aside from predator control, other ODA programs are on the chopping block under the proposals from Brown and the co-chairs of the Joint Ways & Means Committee.

A coalition of natural resource industry groups — including the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Association of Nurseries, Oregon Cattlemen's Association and others — urged lawmakers not to curtail those programs.

For example, the co-chairs' budget framework recommends decreasing the number of positions in ODA's agricultural water quality program and shifting food safety and pesticide programs from the general fund to program fees.

Industry representatives fear such shifts will effectively increase fees on farmers, ranchers and others.

Under Brown's budget proposal, about \$250,000 in general fund dollars would be cut from ODA's inspection program for "confined animal feeding operations," shifting the burden onto fee payers.

A biocontrol program for controlling invasive weeds would also be eliminated, saving \$250,000.

Don Farrar, Gilliam County's weed officer, argued against the proposal because biological control with predatory insects can effectively suppress large infestations of weeds.

"This program has been one of the best in the nation, and it would be sad to lose that," he said.

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