



# DA dispensing swift sentences to visitors

## Crime not as high as anticipated

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Rainbow Gathering attendees convicted of crimes outside the forest will face swifter sentences in the Grant County court system.

Grant County District At-

torney Jim Carpenter said temporary visitors to the county will receive executed sentences instead of probationary sentences. Instead of being issued probation for a crime, they will receive jail time.

Carpenter said he is not interested in keeping transients

in the area on probation and would prefer to have them serve their sentence and continue on.

Jayson Thompson, 30, Ohio was found guilty of third-degree theft after he attempted to steal beer from Chester's Thriftway.

Carpenter described Thompson as "essentially a

transient."

Under normal circumstances, Thompson would have been issued a sentence with a period of probation. Instead, he received seven days in jail and a \$100 fine.

Noah De Stefano, who was arrested after a stabbing at a Rainbow Gathering Spring Council meeting earlier this

month, was convicted of fourth-degree assault Tuesday. He was sentenced to 180 days in jail and ordered to pay about \$4,000 in restitution, a \$2,000 fine and \$500 in attorney fees.

However, crime related to the Rainbow Gathering hasn't been as high as Carpenter anticipated.

"There really hasn't been

as many as I thought there would have been," Carpenter said. "People there seem to do a pretty good job of self-policing."

Forest Service and local law enforcement officials have arrested a number of people related to the gathering who are making their way through the court system.

# Heated exchange erupts at meeting

## Concerns about local economy, environment discussed

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

A meeting hosted by members of the Rainbow Gathering and attended by Grant County residents got heated Wednesday night.

Within minutes, the meeting at the Canyon City Community Hall briefly dissolved into a yelling match between residents and several of the roughly 2,000 attendees already at the site south of John Day preparing for the July 1-7 Rainbow Gathering.

John Day resident Ken Mayhead demanded to know how the gathering would benefit residents and the community. He complained about the large numbers of law enforcement officers brought to town and the burden placed on taxpayers by the event.

"Taxpayers are cleaning up your mess," Mayhead said.

Rainbow attendee Gary Stubbs said the gathering purchased large quantities of food, fuel and camping equipment locally and estimated the gathering could bring as much as \$300,000 into the local economy. He also said the number of law enforcement and government employees who were in town to monitor the event would also rent rooms and eat locally.

Other residents raised fears about the gathering consuming all the food and fuel in the area. Rainbow attendees said they were working with wholesalers in the Bend area to get large quantities of food and advised local businesses to anticipate heightened demand for food and fuel in the coming weeks.



The Eagle/Rylan Boggs

Ken Mayhead, left, demands to know how the Rainbow Gathering will benefit Grant County while Rainbow Gathering attendee Kathleen Todd, right, waits to respond.

Resident Kay Steele said gathering in the forest would put stress on local wildlife and disperse them into surrounding areas.

Stubbs agreed the wildlife would be stressed and dispersed but said the ecosystem was likely to bounce back.

To attempt to assuage fears about what would be left in the wake of the gathering, Rainbow attendee Adam Finch Buxbaum read a letter from the Forest Service about the 1997 Rainbow Gathering near Prineville. The letter, from Big Summit District Ranger Susan V. Skalski, praised the Rainbow Family for their cleanup job of the forest.

Residents urged the gatherers to keep attendees respectful and stop them from being a public nuisance, citing incidents of public indecency and petty theft.

A resident brought up concerns the gathering was

bringing drugs and problems related to substance abuse into the area and said she no longer felt safe walking at night.

Stubbs said some of the people gathering were drug users, but the gathering was dedicated to helping people. He described Serenity Ridge, a drug- and alcohol-free camp at the gathering, which holds 12-step meetings.

One major concern voiced by people was attendees from the gathering staying until the eclipse in August. The attendees at the meeting said they could not speak for the group, but the general sentiment was that many at the gathering would be going to the Oregon Country Fair near Veneta in early July.

Residents also asked why the group chose a forest near a community that had recently been ravaged by wildfire. Rainbow participants acknowledged the Canyon Creek Complex fire and said,

because they mostly cooked with fires and wood stoves, they actually helped eliminate fire danger by removing downed wood.

Multiple attendees asserted it was their constitutional right to assemble on public land.

Resident Susan Church said a great part of the fear was due to xenophobia. She said the local community had problems with crime and substance abuse just like the Rainbow Gathering.

Gathering participant Eloisa Lewis said attendees rented the hall to communicate with locals and to try to get them involved. She said the meeting had been "lukewarm" and that both sides seemed afraid of each other.

Lewis extended an invitation to all unsure about the gathering to come see for themselves at the site off Forest Road 24 in the Malheur National Forest west of Seneca.

# Ranchers fume as the 'Rainbow Family' to camp on federal land

By Eric Mortenson  
EO Media Group

The U.S. Forest Service acknowledged there isn't much it can do about a "Rainbow Family" gathering expected to bring thousands of counter-culture types to the Malheur National Forest in Eastern Oregon over the next two weeks.

The organizers don't have a permit, and the Forest Service's response to that has angered area residents such as rancher Loren Stout, who lives near the gathering spot and has a federal grazing permit on land adjacent to it.

He said the Forest Service would punish ranchers if they ignored permit requirements and tapped a spring for drinking water like the Rainbow Family has done. Stout said it took him two years to get a National Environmental Policy Act permit to drill an exploratory mining hole.

"People are furious over

this," Stout said. "Not because it's a friggin' bunch of hippies, it's the different standards."

But Forest Service Agency Administrator Ryan Nehl said the agency will not attempt to stop the gathering.

"It's a risk-based decision," he said. "To try and kick them off the land would present a danger to employees and the public."

The gatherings have been held since the 1970s.

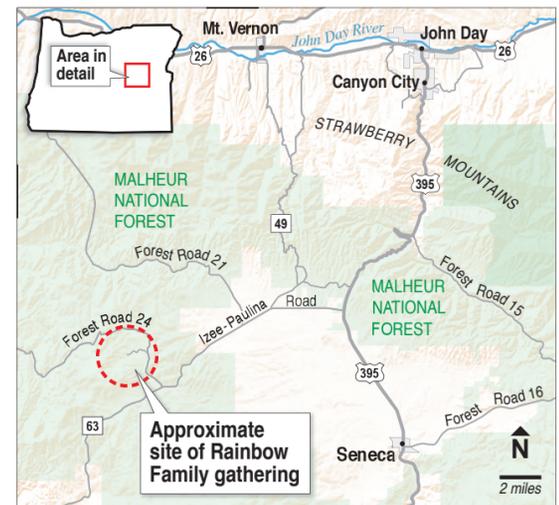
Stout said the Forest Service is "trying to put grazers out of business" but lets the Rainbow bunch do what they want.

He said the gathering spot is a major Native American archaeological site and the area has eight springs that could be damaged.

He said the "takeover of federal ground" is no different than the Bundy group's occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge headquarters. "I hate to say that," Stout said.

## Rainbow gathering

The annual Rainbow Family gathering, which could attract 10,000-30,000 people, is taking place in Flagtail Meadow on the Malheur National Forest off of Forest Road 24 west of Seneca.



Source: U.S. Forest Service

Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group

## GATHERING

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"The unauthorized users admit that they cannot control each other and that once the masses show up all they can do is try to educate," they said. "With the area they chose folks are going to be drawn to the sensitive areas and damage will occur."

Halemeier and Fertig said a wide variety of problems could occur:

- Heritage resources are at risk from digging for latrines and compost pits.

- Birds may abandon nests with young. Big game animals are at risk from increased traffic and are being displaced to less populated areas. Small mammals' habitat is being disturbed.

- The introduction and spread of invasive weeds may impact plants. Foot traffic on sensitive meadows also retards the ability of plants to occupy the site.

- Range resources are impacted by the reduction of the pasture's forage component, and livestock will disperse on trails created by gathering at-



Photos by The Eagle/Rylan Boggs

A Forest Service vehicle heads toward the entrance of the Rainbow Gathering on Monday, June 26.

tendees.

- Redband trout offspring are emerging from eggs in the gravel of Flagtail Creek, and increased sediment in the water churned up by an abundance of people in the stream could diminish their ability to take oxygen from the water — or blanket the eggs in the gravel, causing death. Waste

and biological hazards buried at the site could also infiltrate the water over time.

The Forest Service recommends one latrine for every 100 people, or 100 latrines for 10,000 attendees. Halemeier and Fertig said that could cause problems long after the attendees leave.

"The site will never be

back to normal," they said of the latrines. "That amount of waste would have never been on the site. Bacteria and potential leached effects will be long-term due to our soil types in the area."

This type of event would typically require an environmental assessment or impact statement, as required for



A hose brings water in from a creek at the Rainbow Gathering on Monday, June 26.

any ground disturbing activity on a national forest, which would take one to three years to complete due to the "scale of potential impacts and resource values in the area," they said. Because the gathering is not following the legal process, the Forest Service is responding outside of the normal process on short notice to protect the resources, more like a natural disaster.

Gathering attendees refused to sign a special use per-

mit, required for groups of 75 or more to address resource and other concerns. The Forest Service issued a design criteria document listing rules to mitigate damage to the resources, which attendees also refused to sign.

Nehl, the agency administrator, said although the event is unauthorized the Forest Service must weigh public safety and the safety of its officers when determining whether to take action on a noncompliant group. He said 20,000 attendees versus a small number of officers were "not good odds."

Nationally, the Forest Service budgets \$500,000 each year to respond to the Rainbow Gathering, which has been held annually on national forest land since 1972. The group has claimed its gatherings are protected by the First Amendment.

"It's frustrating for us too that these folks are not complying," Nehl said. "We understand we expect other forest users to comply with our rules. We want to be able to look them in the eye and say you were held to the same standards."