

Amateur radio operators help during eclipse

Blue Mountain Eagle

Approximately 50 FCC-licensed amateur radio operators provided multilayered support to the community of Grant County during the eclipse.

The city of Portland sent a communication van along with a team to staff it. Multnomah County ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) sent a six-person team of FCC-licensed amateur radio operators to help out with communication.

The Grant County Amateur Radio Club provided equipment and personnel to assist the Grant County emergency manager with incoming and outgoing messages and information.

The Portland team provided the 10 members of the Oregon National Guard with portable radios supported by a temporary repeater installed in Canyon City. During the duration of the Multnomah County ARES visit, they repaired and programmed several radio installations for different government agencies including Burns Paiute Tribal Police, Prairie City Volunteer Fire Department and the Prairie City ambulance.

Local amateur radio operators in Dayville, Canyon City, John Day, Monument, Mt. Vernon and Prairie City staffed a 16-hour-per-day communication network on four different frequencies and kept in contact with the approximately 50 FCC licensed amateur radio operators who either live in Grant County, came to assist with communications or were visiting to view the eclipse and volunteered to help.

Beyond keeping communications channels open, there were three smoke reports and approximately 38 traffic reports that flowed through this network.

There was also a hit-and-run reported by an amateur radio operator on Highway 395 south near mile marker 60. There is no cellphone coverage in the area. Because of his report, the driver was arrested after only 20 minutes.

Three amateur radio operators were involved in this incident: the California driver who reported it, a resident of John Day who first took the call and one resident of Burns who notified dispatch from his post in the Harney County Emergency Operations Center.



Contributed photo

Amateur radio operators staffed a communication network in Grant County during the eclipse.

ODFW to kill Meacham wolves

By George Plaven
EO Media Group

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife has authorized killing two more wolves in northeast Oregon, this time from the Meacham pack in Umatilla County following a string of four attacks on cattle over the last eight days.

All four attacks happened to calves owned by the same livestock producer on the same private pasture in the Meacham area east of Pendleton. The latest incident was confirmed Aug. 19 by ODFW.

On Thursday, the agency approved killing two wolves from the Meacham pack to limit further predation. Wildlife officials have already killed three wolves this summer from the Harl Butte pack in Wallowa County after repeated conflicts with cattle.

Curt Melcher, ODFW director, said it is important to limit wolf-livestock problems, and lethal control is a needed tool when non-lethal deterrents are not enough.

"While it's disheartening for some people to see ODFW killing wolves, our agency is called to manage wildlife in a manner consistent with other land uses, and to protect the social and economic interests of all Oregonians while it conserves gray wolves," Melcher said.

The recent decisions to kill wolves in Umatilla and Wallowa counties have been controversial on both sides of the debate, for very different reasons. Conservation groups criticize ODFW for signing off on kill orders while at the same time lacking transparency and

dragging its feet on a long overdue update of the state's Wolf Management and Conservation Plan.

Ranchers, on the other hand, want to see ODFW kill entire packs that are causing them trouble on the range.

ODFW was asked to remove the entire Meacham pack, which had seven members at the end of 2016. Instead, the agency has opted for a more conservative, incremental approach.

"I am authorizing only incremental take in an effort to take as few wolves as possible while still addressing wolf-livestock conflict," Melcher said. "Following these actions, the situation will be reassessed to see if the goal of reducing depredations has been achieved."

The Meacham pack was first identified in 2014 and is believed to have at least four pups this year. No pups will be killed as part of this order.

ODFW staff may kill the wolves, or the livestock producer has also been issued what's known as a "limited duration wolf kill permit." That permit allows the producer to kill two adult or sub-adult wolves without having to first catch the predators in the act of biting, wounding or killing cattle — in other words, they can be shot on sight.

The permit is limited to the 4,000-acre timbered pasture where livestock predation has occurred. It still requires the producer to use non-lethal deterrents and remove all attractants such as bone piles.

Roblyn Brown, ODFW acting wolf coordinator, said the producer has already

spent years implementing extensive non-lethal controls and working to deter wolves on the landscape.

"Unfortunately, this year their increasing preventative efforts have not been successful in limiting wolf depredation," Brown said. "We believe lethal control is warranted in this situation, but this action will only be in place as long as cattle are still at risk. We will use incremental removal and lethal control activities will be stopped as soon as the cattle are removed from the pasture."

Normally, the pasture would be used until October. However, 90 percent of the cattle have already been moved, according to ODFW. The producer has also acted quickly to remove dead livestock or weak animals that could attract wolves, and employed a range rider five days a week to monitor the pasture.

Finally, for the past two years, the producer has chosen not to use their sheep grazing allotment on national forestland adjacent to the pasture to avoid potential wolf conflicts.

Todd Nash, wolf committee chairman for the Oregon Cattlemen's Association and a Wallowa County rancher, said ODFW is being disingenuous about resolving wolf attacks by only killing only a few wolves, and not the entire pack.

"In order to be effective, you have to take out at least half the pack population, and in most cases the entire pack will need to be taken out," Nash said.

Nash added that the increased density of wolves in northeast Oregon means

that certain non-lethal tools are no longer effective, since ranchers cannot haze wolves away from one area without pushing them into another pack's territory where they are not welcome.

"There are places wolves are not going to be successful, and this is probably one of them," he said.

ODFW noted it has documented four new wolf pairs raising pups in northeast Oregon this summer, including one new pair south of Interstate 84 in the Starkey and Ukiah wildlife management units.

However, conservation groups are quick to point out Oregon's overall wolf population of 112 known animals at the end of 2016, which was largely stagnant over the previous year.

Amaroq Weiss, West Coast wolf advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity, blasted ODFW's plan to kill wolves from the Meacham pack, even after most of the affected cattle have been moved off the pasture.

"That doesn't sound like a decision to conserve wolves or protect livestock," Weiss said. "That just sounds like revenge."

Sean Stevens, director of Oregon Wild, said ODFW has no business killing wolves while working under an outdated wolf plan. He also said the agency is lacking transparency and clarity when it comes to decisions on lethal take.

"In this instance, the livestock owner could be doing everything possible, but we just don't know," Stevens said. "I think it's a bad omen for Oregon wolf recovery."

County seeks natural resource consultant

Work on Title III projects initiated

By Rylan Boggs
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County is seeking a natural resource consultant to advise the county court.

County Judge Scott Myers said he hoped the person filling the position could foster better relationships between the county and other agencies. He said the position should provide "a bridge between where we are now and where we want to be."

The consultant would work with other land management agencies and provide recommendations to the court.

The position will be open to both individuals and firms, Myers said during a Grant County Court meeting Aug. 23.

During the meeting, the court also authorized Grant County Economic Development Coordinator Sally Bartlett to proceed with several Title III projects for which the county received \$85,000. Roughly \$40,000 will support, implement and assist Firewise communities and activities. Roughly \$30,000 will be used to update community fire plans, and roughly \$10,000 will go to search and rescue operations.

The court also:

- heard a presentation from Malheur National Forest Supervisor Steve Beverlin on a draft of the travel management map where he urged the public to provide the Forest Service with feedback regarding what forest roads they wish to remain open.
- approved a request from Grant County Regional Air-



Eagle file photo

Grant County Judge Scott Myers speaks during a Grant County Court meeting.

port Manager Haley Walker to attend an Oregon Aviation Industries summit on Sept. 19 in Tillamook.

- approved a request from Walker to pay \$4,600 to Summit Power Systems to repair the airport's weather observation system.
- spoke with property maintenance specialist Nate Hughes about painting the L-building next year.
- approved a contract with the Northwest Professional Rodeo Association for a rodeo at the Grant County Fairgrounds Sept. 8-9.
- approved budget resolutions moving funds within department budgets.
- approved an amendment to an intergovernmental agreement between the county and the Oregon Health Authority to extend a contract for financing the county health department into September.
- signed a contract between Oregon State University and the county to allow a county employee access to OSU services.
- authorized a request from the district attorney's office to expend money from a Victims of Crime Act grant to purchase two iPhones, a tablet and a laptop.

Grief Support Group

Join us on Wednesday, September 7th from 3:00-4:30 for a Grief Support Group.

We will meet weekly for 10 weeks, to learn about the dynamics of grief, how to deal with and heal through grief, and to honor our loved ones who have passed on. Materials and refreshments will be provided.

Contact Michelle Gibson to register, or with questions

541-575-1648

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