

Malheur

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2007 and Best Film & TV Music at the eWorld Music Awards in Hollywood in 2011. Bowerman met with Thomas and bonded immediately over the project.

“Chris jumped in with both feet,” Bowerman said.

Thomas and the Bowermans toured the refuge with members of the Friends of Malheur Wildlife Refuge. While Bowerman had spent plenty of time there, Thomas got his first look. Like Bowerman, he was blown away by the wildlife, the big sky and the color and texture of the hills.

“Between April and June, there’s a cacophony of bird sounds that washes over you,” Bowerman said. “It’s like the way the waves make a continuous sound.”

Thomas recorded some of those calls to insert into the symphony along with other sounds collected from the refuge. The soundtrack would join images meant to complement the music and make it a more full-body experience. The sound tech person becomes another player in the orchestra. Future orchestras that perform the symphony are expected to use the recordings.

“They are written right into the score,” Bowerman said.

Thomas said he did most of his composing walking



Chris Thomas



Two bighorn sheep spar at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

Contributed photo/Loren Irving

around in nature. Ideas don’t come when he sits down at his computer, but when he walks a trail, they often “hit like lightning.” When they strike, he sings them into his phone’s recorder.

“It’s important to be by myself,” he said, laughing.

In the beginning, the two men envisioned a 12- to-20-minute piece. After speaking with various groups of people who

care about the refuge, things expanded. Each of the groups — tribal members, birders, Friends of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and geologists — gave different input about what they thought the symphony should say.

Thomas realized he had a full symphony on his hands with five different movements. The first is “Dawning Light,” the sound of

life beginning. The second, “Sacred Basin,” tells the story of the thousands of years the Paiute people lived freely in the basin. The third, “Thunder,” came after Thomas witnessed a thunderstorm on one of his trips to the refuge. It’s the shortest, darkest movement. The fourth, Thomas’ favorite, “Curlew Scherzo,” showcases one of the refuge’s residents, the long-billed cur-

lew, and its operatic call. The final movement is a big, brass fanfare called “Awakening.”

The Central Oregon Symphony will perform the work at a world premiere in Burns in May and later in Bend. Thomas said the orchestra is considering doing a multi-city tour in the Pacific Northwest. He hopes his hometown is one of the destinations.

“It would mean the world to me to go to Pendleton,” he said.

Bowerman couldn’t be happier with the result.

“My hope is that this music will help with the healing process, including the communities affected as well as the land itself, and remind people about the special place that is the Malheur refuge,” he said. “It is pretty exciting stuff.”

ATV

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the city’s overall economic development plans, Green said.

The Transportation Commission will consider road speeds, road width and traffic volume when reviewing applications. They will also consider whether to allow ATVs on the paved roadway, the shoulder or the highway rights-of-way in a designated route.

City Councilor Gregg Haberly said he’s been

working on the legislation for about eight years. He noted that adjacent states have more lenient regulations for ATV use on state highways, and it’s already allowed in Oregon for agricultural uses.

“As long as they let bicycles, motorcycles and smart cars on highways, then they should allow ATVs too,” he said.

Changing the rules for ATVs will help the depressed economy in Grant County, Haberly said. His proposal is to allow ATVs to travel on state highways from John Day to Prairie



Contributed photo

New signs restored ATV use to Wickiup Road in July 2014, but officials urged all drivers to take it slow.

City, Long Creek, Monument and Seneca.

The state advisory committee will conduct field reviews of routes proposed for designation and consult with the county courts or commissions, the sheriff’s offices, the land management agencies that provide ATV riding opportunities and city representatives where routes would exist.

A public meeting will be held by the advisory committee, and a report will be submitted to the Transportation Commission. The committee is currently working on its first application, one submitted for the Spin-reel Dunes Access south of Reedsport.

The Grant County Court approved an ordinance



Contributed photo

A group of ATV riders make their way through a wooded area of the Morrow-Grant County OHV Park. Local officials have expressed support for allowing ATVs on designated routes on state highways within Grant County.

in 2012 that allows Class I, II and IV ATVs to use all county roads, including two-lane gravel roads, under Grant County jurisdiction. That includes quads, three-wheelers, dune buggies, custom SUVs and side-by-side ATVs.

Sheriff Glenn Palmer brought the idea to the county court after checking with the county roadmaster. His proposal was enthusias-

tically received by the court.

The city of John Day was developing a similar ordinance at the same time. The city council approved allowing ATVs on city roads, except for Main Street and South Canyon Boulevard which are state highways, by a 4-1 vote, and the ordinance went into effect April 11, 2013.

Grant County Judge Scott Myers told the Eagle

he would support proposed ATV routes on state highways if they are safe, closely monitored and opened in seasons with favorable weather. They also must be approved by the state so it’s their liability, he said.

Caldwell told the Eagle that Umatilla, Baker and Lake counties have approved similar ordinances to Grant County’s for ATV use.

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Kate Hoffman

Horses

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is probably more than 500 horses.

Stout said he’s doubtful of the Forest Service’s explanation of the incident, which he believes is illegal and in violation of a 2013 settlement agreement in which the agency agreed to reduce the wild horse population in the area.

“Why they did it, I have no idea,” Stout said. “It’s unbelievable, especially after going through a lawsuit.”

Moore said he’s likewise skeptical of the explanation that the horses were being returned after venturing off the Malheur National Forest.

“There’s a lot going on here that doesn’t make a lot of sense,” he said. “I think they’re in damage control right now.”

After Stout filed a lawsuit alleging the Forest Service had violated the Endangered Species Act, a federal judge agreed that the agency had failed to consult about the impacts of wild horses on threatened steelhead.

The judge dismissed several other claims made by Stout, and the parties

reached a settlement deal under which the agency agreed to lower the horse population to about 50-60 horses by 2016.

The Dec. 14 incident is just the latest example of the Forest Service violating the settlement, Stout said. “They couldn’t wait to break the agreement.”

Gayle Hunt, founder of the Central Oregon Wild Horse Coalition, said it would be legal for the Forest Service to return wild horses to their place of origin, but not to transfer horses from another area into a national forest.

“What’s in question here is whether these were Murderers Creek horses,” she said.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which oversees wild horses, has an “excellent” database of DNA from the Murderers Creek herd, which could confirm whether the animals originated from that area through hair and fecal samples, Hunt said.

“If that was not done, there’s a problem,” she said.