

County asked to fully fund predator control

D.C. group to request exemption from Forest Service Travel Management Rule

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Mismanagement by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has led to a serious decline in mule deer populations, Wildlife Advisory Board Chairman Larry Burton told the Grant County Court on Feb. 27.

While the board had no specific recommendations for how to address ODFW management at this time, they wanted a commitment from the court to continue funding for a wildlife protection agent.

The court was asked to establish a permanent budgeted county position for a wildlife protection agent with an annual budget of \$85,000 and to hire the current contract employee, Nick Lulay.

County Judge Scott Myers agreed the county probably could continue to partially fund the position and noted that \$11,000 still remained for predator control in the current fiscal year.

The wildlife board also asked the court to fill the "already approved" posi-



Eagle photos/Richard Hanners
Grant County Wildlife Advisory Board Chairman Larry Burton spoke to the Grant County Court Feb. 27 about the need for more predator control work to protect deer populations.

tion of Grant County natural resource adviser using the "approved" job description and asked that the position be filled with a member of the wildlife board.

The court, however, indicated it had not made up its mind on how to provide for a natural resource adviser — whether it be a single person in a budgeted position, a five-member committee or a partnership with Oregon State University.

Commissioner Jim Hamsher suggested holding a discussion on filling the position in the evening so more members of the public could attend. When asked if the wildlife board had chosen a person to fill the position, Burton said no. The matter

was tabled by the court.

• Hamsher will travel to Washington, D.C., in early March with representatives from Harney, Wallowa, Malheur, Baker and Union counties to meet with Rep. Greg Walden and the National Association of Counties' Public Lands Steering Committee.

The group will carry a court-approved petition addressed to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue requesting exemption from the Forest Service's 2005 Travel Management Rule for the Malheur and Wallowa-Whitman national forests.

"Any additional regulation, such as the 2005 Travel Management Rule,



Grant County Treasurer Julie Ellison spoke to the Grant County Court Feb. 27 about cost-of-living wage increases for the next fiscal year budget.

will only harm local communities, county residents and recreational opportunities, while offering no tangible resource benefits," the petition states. "In fact, it will have negative resource consequences."

• The court approved the following volunteers for the new Water Resource Committee: Jim Driscoll, Doug Ferguson, Lance Zweygardt, Elaine Eisenbraun, Jason Kehrberg, Melanie DeJong, Shaun Robertson, Mike Martin and Justin Rowell.

• The court approved two ordinances establishing enforcement authority and a fee schedule for an intergovernmental agreement with Harney County to share costs for inspection

services for residential septic systems.

Assistant Planner Shannon Springer said property owners now rely on inspection services from the Department of Environmental Quality office in Pendleton and were receiving less than satisfactory service.

The court also approved sending a letter to the state Building Codes Division citing two pages of complaints about service. Springer said processing for permits for new construction could take 10-12 weeks, which created a hardship for contractors and property owners.

• The court approved hiring former economic development coordinator Sally Bartlett to continue track-

ing federal Secure Rural Schools Title III funding to the county. She will receive \$500 per month through the end of August while she also trains the new county economic coordinator, Allison Field, to take over the work.

• The court approved a request by Grant County Assessor David Thunell to cancel back taxes for 84 properties totaling nearly \$70,000 because they could not be collected.

• Hamsher informed the court the electronic control systems for Prairie City's newly installed variable-speed septic pumps were damaged during the power outage that struck the county in the early morning hours of Feb. 25.

• The court approved a request by Roadmaster Alan Hickerson to allow an intern to learn mechanics through a program offered by Cooley Associates of Bend. After one year of working in the Road Department, the intern could apply for a job with the county if a position is available.

• The court approved Treasurer Julie Ellison presenting a cost-of-living wage increase of 2.55 percent for the next fiscal year to the county's budget committee. The figure comes from the annual Consumer Price Index report

• The county's new website is up and running at grantcountyoregon.net.

Moving toward an art center in John Day

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Kim Randleas has been making the rounds promoting her idea of establishing an art center in the John Day area.

She presented her concept to the Grant County Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 21 and has spoken to members of the Grant County Court and the John Day City Council about her proposal.

A native of Eastern Oregon with ancestors who were homesteaders, Randleas is an established and recognized Western artist who paints Native Americans along with pioneer men, women and children in their rustic settings.

Her concept for a local art center has expanded over time to include a robust curriculum that ranges from painting, weaving, glass works, leather craft, photography and pottery to creative writing, music and theater — even business classes for artists.

Classes could be provided for children as after-school education and senior projects or fun activities with seasonal themes, such as Halloween or Christmas costumes and decorations.

As the program grows, she hopes to provide studio space for working artists and gallery space for artists to show their works. The program could also coordinate with First Friday downtown events. She envisions the program over time growing into a regional art center and a vital part of the local economy.

Randleas says she has solid numbers for a self-sustaining program, with revenue coming from tuition while fundraising and grants would provide seed money.



Eagle file photo
Artist Kim Randleas with one of her oil paintings at an exhibit in John Day in December 2017. Randleas is interested in starting an art center in John Day.

One hundred people responded to an online survey March 1 that Randleas used to gauge interest in the art center. Forty percent said they would very likely take an art, music or creative writing class in John Day, and 36 percent said they would likely take such a class.

Fifty-five percent said they or their child would be interested in painting classes, 51 percent in pottery, 46 percent in drawing, 38 percent in music, 28 percent in leather craft, 28 percent in creative writing, 26 percent in knitting or crocheting and 21 percent in printmaking.

About 15 percent said they would pay \$10-20 for a two-hour class, about 37

percent said \$20-\$30, about 16 percent said \$30-\$40 and about 37 percent said they were not familiar with the cost of art classes.

The art center would need to start small and phase up, she said. She has found a dozen people to serve on an art center committee and has lined

up teachers in a variety of fields. She also has the support of community leaders and business people. A name and location are still being decided.

Anyone interested in teaching or volunteering can contact Kim Randleas at krandleas0250@gmail.com.

New Farm Bureau directors elected



Contributed photo
New members were elected to the Grant County Farm Bureau board of directors at their Jan. 19 meeting held at the OSU Extension office in John Day: from left, Dan Driscoll, Rick Henslee, John Thomas, Jeff Thomas (vice president), Matt Allen, Roger Ediger (treasurer), Pat Holliday (secretary) and Shaun Robertson (president).

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MON-THURS 7:00
HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON: THE HIDDEN WORLD (PG)
Hiccup must seek "The Hidden World" a secret Dragon Utopia before a hired tyrant finds it first.
FRI & SAT (4:10) 7:10 9:50
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GRETA (R)
A young woman befriends a lonely widow who's harboring a dark and deadly agenda towards her.
FRI & SAT 7:20 9:55
SUN-THURS 7:20
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\$9 Adult, \$7 Senior (60+), Youth

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Blue Mountain EAGLE
541-575-0710
195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day
MyEagleNews.com