

Gold miner loses court fight

EO Media Group

Gold miner John Wasson is leaving his claim in the Umatilla National Forest for a 60-day stint in jail.

Wasson, 74, of Irrigon, has been fighting the federal government in court since 2013 over how long he could live on Slippery Rock, a 12-acre site on the North Fork John Day River. He lost that fight in November 2018 when a jury in federal court found him guilty of depredation of government property, a felony.

"Beginning in 2012, Wasson developed a personal interpretation of mining laws that permitted him to take any action on the claim that he believed to be reasonably incident to his mining," according to the statement from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon. "Over a period of years, despite court orders, misdemeanor convictions and the U.S. Forest Service officials' repeated attempts to work with Wasson to bring his conduct into compliance, Wasson's misuse of the claim grew more expansive and egregious."

Wasson returned to court Tuesday to face sentencing, and U.S. Judge Michael H. Simon sentenced him to five years probation, including 60 days in a community corrections facility for the crime. The court also ordered Wasson to pay \$28,817 in restitution.

Billy J. Williams, U.S. attorney for the District of Oregon, said in a written statement Oregonians expect public lands to be protected from degradation and misuse and Wasson "treated Forest Service land as if it were his own, causing significant environmental damage."

He also stated his office takes these crimes seriously and will "continue to pursue those who violate our shared resources."



EO Media Group file photo

This Feb. 14, 2013, file photo shows gold miner John Wasson on his mining claim on the North Fork John Day River. Wasson was sentenced to 60 days in a community corrections facility for violating federal rules on the property.

Forest Service officials by 2017 observed Wasson established a semi-permanent encampment on the claim, violating regulations that prohibit occupancy for more than 14 days in a 30-day period without Forest Service authorization. Wasson's camp included three tents, one with a foundation Wasson constructed of treated lumber, sand and gravel; a camper;

a truck and a pop-up outhouse. Wasson had driven through a riparian area, compacting soil and native vegetation, to make a new road, according to federal prosecutors, and he created a walking path across the John Day River and used plastic sheeting to line a wing dam to hold water.

That dam, however, caught and held juvenile steelhead,

preventing them from accessing the flowing portion of the river.

The Forest Service paid a hazardous waste disposal company more than \$19,000 to remove three quarters of a ton of contaminated soil, 90 gallons of vegetable oil and quantities of pesticides, insecticides and rodenticides from the campsite.

Three arrested in John Day meth bust

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

A search warrant served on a residence on Highway 26 in John Day on March 11 led to the arrest of three people on methamphetamine charges.

Two of them, Elizabeth Pace, 41, and Olle Starnes, 48, were previously arrested in an April 30, 2018, meth bust that swept up 10 individuals in John Day and Mt. Vernon.

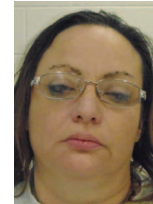
The Grant County Interagency Narcotics Team along with members of the Grant County Sheriff's Office, Oregon State Police, John Day Police Department and Grant County Parole and Probation participated in the search.

Pace and Starnes were arrested and charged with distribution of meth and distribution of meth within 1,000 feet of a school. The charges stemmed from undercover operations by the interagency team.

Also arrested was Stephanie Briney, 40, of La Grande. She was charged with unlawful possession of meth, unlawful possession of cocaine and frequenting a place where drugs were used or sold.

Illegal drug use and sales is an epidemic that is poisoning the local community, Undersheriff Zach Mobley said. The interagency team and local law enforcement officers are targeting those types of activities, he said.

Anyone who has information about illegal narcotics being used or sold in the community is asked to contact the sheriff's office at 541-575-1131 or the state police at 541-575-1363.



Elizabeth Pace



Olle Starnes

COPS AND COURTS

Arrests and citations in the Blue Mountain Eagle are taken from the logs of law enforcement agencies. Every effort is made to report the court disposition of arrest cases.

Grant County Circuit Court

Kristopher M. Goodwin, 28, John Day, was found guilty March 6 of violating probation conditions for a 2017 harassment case, including failing to pay fines and fees and failing to complete anger management counseling. He was also found guilty of violating probation conditions for a 2018 unlawful possession of a firearm case, including failing to complete anger management counseling, community service and paying fines and fees. He was sentenced to 40 days in jail.

Grant County Sheriff

The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of March 6:

Concealed handgun licenses: 18
Average inmates: 12
Bookings: 11
Releases: 11
Arrests: 2
Citations: 3
Fingerprints: 6
Civil papers: 6
Warrants processed: 1
Asst./welfare check: 1
Search and rescue: 2
March 4: Harry Hosey, 72, Walla Walla, Washington, was cited for speeding, 44/25 zone.
March 4: Bradford Williams, 57, San Jose, California, was cited for viola-

tion of the basic rule, 74/55 zone.

March 4: Calvin Hack, 27, John Day, was cited for violation of the basic rule, 74/55 zone.

Justice Court

• Violation of basic rule: William V. Wetherald, 57, Bend, Nov. 3, 71/55 zone, fined \$165; Sharon A. Fritsch, 57, Beavercreek, Jan. 13, 78/55 zone, fined \$225.
• Exceeding speed limit: Gud F. Leal Ponce, 47, Prairie City, Feb. 3, 85/65 zone, fined \$225; Dale J. Bogardus, 51, Baker City, Feb. 13, 59/40 zone, fined \$165; Natalie C. Morgan, 41, Baker City, Feb. 15, 75/65 zone, fined \$165.
• Violation speed limit: Andrew E. Long, 55, Bend, Jan. 14, 55/30 zone, fined \$225.

• Driving uninsured: Tamara L. Michael, 48, Mt. Vernon, Jan. 3, fined \$265; Tena K. Montange, 46, John Day, Jan. 2, fined \$265; Christine N. Daum, 30, Prairie City, Feb. 15, fined \$1,000; Tanaya S. Robinson, 38, John Day, Feb. 21, fined \$200; Andria L. Kelley, 24, Mt. Vernon, Jan. 13, fined \$265.
• Driving while suspended: Tamara L. Michael, 48, Mt. Vernon, Jan. 3, fined \$440; Tena K. Montange, 46, John Day, Jan. 2, fined \$440; Joseph S. Hayzlett, 43, John Day, Dec. 26, fined \$440; William V. Wetherald, 57, Bend, Nov. 3, fined \$440; Christine N. Daum, 30, Prairie City, Feb. 15, fined \$2,000; Tanaya S. Robinson, 38, John Day,

Feb. 21, fined \$400.

• Failure to register vehicle: Tamara L. Michael, 48, Mt. Vernon, Jan. 3, fined \$115; Tena K. Montange, 46, John Day, Jan. 2, fined \$115.

• Operating a motor vehicle while using a cellphone: James R. Tippett, 39, Union, Jan. 12, fined \$265.

• Careless driving causing an accident: Ronald B. Hodge, 77, John Day, Feb. 10, fined \$340.

• Operating a motor vehicle without required light: Riley T. Clark, 22, Long Creek, Feb. 2, fined \$165.

• Michael C. Mokres, 34, Grants Pass, pleaded guilty March 6 to driving with a suspended or revoked license. He was sentenced to 30 hours community service, 18 months probation and \$708 in fines and fees. A charge of driving without insurance was dismissed.

• Gregg A. Chambers, 30, Cape Coral, Florida, pleaded guilty Feb. 28 to second-degree failure to appear. He was sentenced to 30 days jail and \$100 in fines and fees.

• Tommy J. West, 59, McMinnville, pleaded guilty Feb. 20 to second-degree criminal trespass. He was sentenced to 12 months probation and \$350 in fines and fees.

• Chance West, 19, McMinnville, pleaded guilty Feb. 20 to hunting on enclosed land. He was sentenced to 12 months probation and \$850 in fines and fees. His hunting privileges were suspended for 36 months.

• Colton J. David, 23,

Dayville, pleaded guilty Feb. 6 to driving with a suspended license. He was sentenced to 30 hours community service and \$1,185 in fines and fees.

• Jacob C. Brown, 30, John Day, pleaded guilty Feb. 28 to keeping a dog as a nuisance. He was ordered to pay a \$500 fine.

• Spencer R. Polzel, 42, Redmond, pleaded guilty Dec. 19 to hunting without a game tag. He was ordered to pay a \$440 fine.

Oregon State Police

March 3: Following a traffic stop for no license plate light on Highway 26 east of John Day, Sheila A. Owens, 49, John Day, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol. Her blood alcohol content was allegedly 0.17 percent.

March 3: Following a traffic stop for crossing the fog line on Highway 26 in Dayville, Mark D. Reasoner, 52, John Day, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol. His blood alcohol content was allegedly 0.328 percent.

March 4: Responded to a residence on Dog Creek Road in John Day and arrested John C. Hopper, 56, John Day, for failing to register as a sex offender.

Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 135 calls during the week of March 4-10, including:

• **John Day Police Department**

March 4: Responded to

a noninjury crash on West Main Street in John Day.

March 6: Dispatched to a noninjury crash on South Canyon Boulevard.

March 7: Following a traffic stop on South Canyon Boulevard at Fourth Street, Tammy Hoherz, 49, Bentley, North Dakota, was cited for driving while using a cellphone.

March 9: Advised of shots fired on East Main Street in John Day.

March 9: Responded to an empty home near the Seventh Street Complex in John Day for suspicious circumstances.

March 10: Received a 911 call for an intoxicated suicidal person on North Canyon Boulevard.

March 10: Advised of a theft near the Grant County Fairgrounds in John Day.

• **Oregon State Police**
March 5: Advised about calves on Highway 26 near Dog Creek Road.

March 5: Received a report of a traffic hazard on Highway 26 near Laycock Creek Road.

March 8: Advised of a jackknifed semi truck with no injuries on Highway 395 near Ritter Butte Summit.

March 10: Received a report of a black calf on Highway 26 in Mt. Vernon.

• **Grant County Sheriff's Office**

March 4: Advised of a theft on Northwest Bridge

Street in John Day.

March 9: Search and rescue personnel responded for persons stuck in a cabin on Dixie Creek Road in Prairie City.

March 9: Received a report of a theft on South Humbolt Street in Canyon City.

March 9: Advised of rocks on Highway 26 in Picture Gorge.

• **John Day ambulance**
March 5: Dispatched to Park Avenue in Seneca for a 911 call.

March 7: Paged to a mobile home park on West Main Street in John Day for a 79-year-old man.

March 7: Responded to Northeast Seventh Street in John Day for a man with a nose bleed.

March 8: Dispatched to Highlan Drive in Mt. Vernon.

March 10: Transported a patient to the airport in John Day.

• **Grant County Probation and Parole**

March 5: Arrested Melissa A. Haynes, 28, John Day, on a Umatilla County warrant.

• **John Day public works**

March 5: Received a call for a burst water line on Southwest Brent Drive in John Day.

• **John Day fire**

March 6: Responded to an electrical fire on North Canyon City Boulevard.

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AMERICAN LEGION

The American Legion came to life in Paris, France, March 15-17, 1919. War-weary members of the American Expeditionary Forces, who had fought to victory in World War One and remained in Europe, and were restlessly awaiting passage home, gathered for what became known as the Paris Caucus. In the months that followed the armistice of November 11, 1918, they had time to think about life after the war and what they might do...

In support of their wounded comrades,
In honor of the fallen,
To help surviving spouses and orphans,
To protect the democracy they pledged their lives to defend,
And to chart a new course for future generations of Americans.
These troops envisioned a different kind of veterans association. It would be like none before it, or any that would follow.

**American Legion Dinner at the John Day Senior Center,
6 p.m., Friday, March 15 | Dinner by Donation**

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