County hosts EOC software demonstration

County hopes to recoup some of the roughly \$41,000 cost for custom incident tracking software to get FEMA reimbursements

By Steven Mitchell Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County hosted an online software demonstration in hopes of offsetting the roughly \$41,000 it will have to pay a Portland software company that built the county a custom software suite to track federal reimbursements.

The software expenditure, approved outside of county court in May without comparing bids from other developers, is part of the \$200,000 the COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center spent after being budgeted \$125,000, according to a document former Incident Commander Dave Dobler submitted in court May 27.

Dobler, a sheriff's deputy who stepped down as head of the EOC in June, was on the

call to members of the Association of Oregon Counties with the developer, Tryon Creek Software CEO Brendan Joyce.

In an email to the Eagle Aug. 26, Dobler said he was off duty during the call and is not being compensated by Tyron Creek, a company he has done business with in the past.

"My involvement is to help other counties manage their data and save taxpayers money," he said. "...The plan, for months, was to share the software with other counties."

Joyce said in an email to

Grant County Judge Scott Myers that County Commissioner Jim Hamsher asked him to send EOC documents to the state's auditor, Scott Learn, because the EOC was no longer functioning. Joyce said Learn was frustrated with the "multi-



Eagle file photo

Grant County Sheriff's Office Deputy Dave Dobler, the former COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center incident commander, addresses County Court in May.

tude of ways Oregon counties reported CARES expenses."

Joyce said he told Hamsher that Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the EOC software might be useful for other counties, and Hamsher agreed.

Joyce said he had previously

mentioned looking to other counties to partner and share costs on future phases. He said Grant County owns the software in its current form, and the only ongoing costs are web hosting and data storage. Joyce said those costs could be offset

if other counties also use it.

Dobler said he and Hamsher reached out to the AOC, and the association reached out to the 16 people on the call.

Dobler said he was authorized to be on the call by Hamsher, the court's liaison to the sheriff's office.

Hamsher said the court does not have to allow for a bidding process for purchases below \$150,000.

Myers said the county had declared a state of emergency, which allowed them to avoid the bidding process.

"In an emergency, we can sidestep those requirements,' he said.

The county has paid \$25,800 for the software so far, and another \$16,000 is pending, according to an email provided to the Eagle last week by County Treasurer Julie Ellison.

Dobler said the county is on the hook for roughly \$200 to \$300 in data storage and web hosting fees. He said that bringing other counties on board can help spread out and offset the ongoing costs.

In response to whether Grant County is currently using the software, Dobler said it is available to be used, but "software development takes a little bit of time.'

He said the first phase of the software was "looked at being used," but the county "scaled back the EOC substantially.'

"It did not get used to its full potential," he said. "But it is ready to. I plan on using it for search and rescue operations and for fires and floods, where we've got to carefully document to get reimbursements. And so it is available in its current form. We just have not stress-tested the software yet, because COVID has dropped off, and it was primarily designed for that."

Dobler said the software is versatile and can be used for county road projects and other incidents.

Common violations hunters should avoid

Update hunting app for electronic tagging and ensure it's downloaded correctly

> **By Rudy Diaz** Blue Mountain Eagle

The big game hunting season began Aug. 29, but common violations can hinder the experience.

Oregon State Police Sgt. Erich Timko, who supervises the John Day, Burns and Fossil fish and wildlife troopers, talked about some of the common violations hunters make while hunting for their prize.

Timko said a new problem is with electronic tagging, or e-tagging, using the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's app instead of a paper tag. The biggest issue is that people don't download the app properly, preventing the ability to provide a hunting license or tag information.

"At that point, we have no way to verify if a hunter has a valid tag or license," Timko said.

He said people should sync or update their app to the latest version with the most current information before heading out since hunters could easily lose cell service through many parts of Eastern Oregon.

"In theory, the app is supposed to work once you download the app and sync it," Timko said. "You should be able to put your phone in airplane mode and still be able to get your confirmation on your validation."

Timko said what he's seen is that people properly validate their tag electronically, but need to remember to have a tag attached to the animal as well as their confirmation number written in ink.

"As long as it's written and you can legibly see it and it's attached to the animal, you're good to go," Timko said.

Other common complaints and violations OSP receives include road hunting, criminal trespass, and waste of game meat. Timko said hunters can't lawfully hunt from any public roadway, which includes the right of way, and must know where they are hunting at all times, and need to make sure they properly salvage meat from harvested game.

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The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

are not impaired when handling

weapons. He said that driv-

ing under the influence crashes

occur every season on second-

a hunter identifies an animal

before taking a shot and to use

binoculars to look at the subject

instead of a scope in case the

hunter himself, said a hard part

of the job is seeing people who

paint hunting in a negative light

by not following the regulations

If a hunter witnesses a vio-

and taking animals unlawfully.

lation, Timko said they should

take the extra time to call it in

because OSP can't be every-

which awards people money or

preference points for informa-

tion leading to an arrest or issu-

ance of a citation for the illegal

killing or taking of wildlife or

illegally obtaining Oregon hunt-

ing or angling licenses or tags,

according to the state website.

To report violations, call 1-800-

452-7888 or *677 from a mobile

and we're going to be diligent

in enforcing these regulations,"

Timko said. "If they're consid-

ering cheating the system, we

ask that they think twice about

it because of the repercussions."

"We are going to be out there,

OSP recently started their

program,

Timko, who is an avid

object is a person.

where all the time.

Turn-in-Poachers

phone.

He also said to make sure

Oregon State Police Sgt. Erich Timko stands with antlers that confiscated by OSP.

ary roads.

required to fence or sign their property in order to enforce a trespassing call, Timko said.

'In the age now with GPS and apps, it's pretty simple to go and make sure you track yourself," Timko said. "If you do shoot an animal, and it crosses onto private property, you need to make sure you contact the landowner or OSP before going onto that property.'

Loaning or borrowing of tags is another common violation that hunters make. He said the person who drew the tag is the only person who can harvest the animal.

The exception to this rule is mentored youth hunter program, where a youth hunter ages 9-15 can use a mentor or guardian's tag.

There are several travel management areas to look out for as well, or green dots, which are road closures meant to create a better escape habitat for wildlife during the hunting

"Pay attention to those," Timko said. "Most of our Eastern Oregon units have at least one or more road closure systems in them, and they are all signed prior to entering.

Timko recommends people to make sure they review and understand the hunting synopsis and the regulations before hunting — especially if they're entering a new area.

Another violation that OSP sees, which can impact a hunters safety, is hunters riding an ATV with a loaded firearm.

"Your firearm has to be unloaded while you're traveling on an ATV," Timko said. "You can't have a round in the chamber of your firearm, and you can't have an arrow nocked'

Timko said, if hunters bring alcohol when hunting, make sure they keep it at camp and

GENERAC

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County to request noxious weeds assistance from Trump's secretary of interior

Flood ordinance vote coming in October

> By Steven Mitchell Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Court voted Aug. 26 to write a letter to President Donald Trump's Secretary of the Interior David L. Bernhardt to request assistance to mitigate invasive plant species and noxious weeds.

Grant County Judge Scott Myers said the noxious weeds, mainly medusa head, grow back after wildfires and have to be removed manually.

'You can't burn it away," he said. "It comes back, eventually.'

Myers said, if the county continues to receive Secure Rural Schools Act funding, money the federal government sets aside for schools, roads, and other municipal services, then the ranchers can address the noxious weeds problem through that program. Especially through Title II funding, that money set aside for projects on

federal lands. "Title II projects would be just perfect for that," he said.

In other county news:

 Grant County Planning Commissioner Shannon Springer updated the court on the planning commission's proposed flood ordinance. She said the proposed amendments are not changes in intent related to requirements, but instead changes to the wording.

She said the county must ensure that its flood management practices comply



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

Grant County citizen Larry Burton speaks about dwindling mule deer populations at Grant County Court Aug. 26.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

Grant County resident Loren Stout addresses the court about noxious weeds Aug. 26.

with federal guidelines in the national flood insurance program.

She said the bulk of the wording was changed to mirror the federal government. Springer said the planning commission reviewed the ordinance and recommended approval.

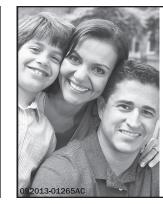
She said the Federal Emergency Management Agency is slated to complete its remapping of the Silvies watershed by the end of September. It would make more sense, Springer said, to approve the flood ordinance in October. The court approved Springer's request to push out voting on the ordinance.

• The court moved to update Safety and Risk Manager Ryan Palmer's job description. According to Myers, the update would work out to a \$3 per hour raise.

 The court approved Grant County Regional Airport Manager Haley Walker's request of \$4,478 in rent that the airport was owed by the Emergency Operations Center.



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