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Eagle file photo

A view of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness and John Day Valley. Wilderness designations have been a sticking point in talks about revising forest plans.

Meeting in the middle

Forest plan Access Subcommittee disagrees over wilderness and wildlife designations that restrict vehicle access

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Members of the access, wilderness, habitat, and set-asides sub-committee of the Blues Mountain Intergovernmental Council are close to reaching a consensus. Still, they are at loggerheads over wilderness and wildlife designations that restrict motorized vehicle access.

The remaining 20%, the notes said, were scheduled to go before the full BIC — the group working to create forest plans for the Malheur, Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla national forests — at its Feb. 26 meeting.

According to the meeting notes, Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, and Carl Scheeler, manager of the Wildlife Program for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, both agreed to draft a set of recommendations ahead of the Feb. 26 meeting.

In a Feb. 5 phone call, Owens said there might not be that “sweet spot” in the middle for him and others.



Eagle file photo

Several large wildfires scorched portions of the Monument Rock Wilderness since 1989, including this one area near the trail from Forest Road 1370 to Monument Rock.

“Some of us believe we’ve already gone too far into the middle,” he said.

Owens said access, the most “troublesome” of all the subcommittee groups, is at an impasse regarding wilderness set-asides, identifying which areas the Forest Service designated administratively, as those areas

could go through an analysis process.

Owens emphasized access is not a simple topic.

According to the notes, the group asked the Forest Service’s Dennis Dougherty, a recreation planner, Craig Trulock, Malheur Forest supervisor, and Nick Goldstein, a

regional planner, about the process of recommending set-asides within a forest plan.

Dougherty talked about the difficulties during the last plan revision. He told the group his biggest takeaway was the need to comply and comport each component with the overarching forest plan.

Dougherty said it is important to remember the forest plan does not designate motorized usage on forest roads. Those provisions come from the travel management plan.

He also told the group that some areas are statutorily designated. Also, he said, Congress identifies certain set-asides as well.

He explained a Forest Service document, the “suitability-rating table,” used during the last revision, which lists management areas, activities, land allocations and designations that the forest can use to make access and land-use recommendations.

Dougherty said he recognized the framework as cumbersome and complicated because of the plan amendments over the years. He said it is the Forest Service’s

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Working leather

Painted Sky’s leatherworking classes fill up the first day they are offered

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Leatherworking is popular in Grant County. On Jan. 4, the leather department at Painted Sky Center for the Arts held its first class ever — and the classes are filling up the day they are offered.

“It’s been an overwhelmingly positive response and the classes fill up within the first day classes are available,” Clair Kehrberg, the lead for the leather department, said. “We did have a waitlist for both the belt making and coasters class so we will offer those two classes again.”

Kehrberg said their first class was a beginning tooling class where students learned the basics of leather, tools and how to use them, before making drink coasters with different leather patterns.

Kehrberg said the experience has been great for everybody in the department and the center.

Other leather classes provided by the center focus on making belts, earrings and hat patches. Leon Pielstick, a retired veterinarian who started leather crafting and tooling at 10, taught several beginning classes, and Heidi Brook taught as well.

Kehrberg said the leather classes provide a rewarding experience with projects students



Contributed photo

Shanna Wright works on a leather patch for a hat on Feb. 19 at Painted Sky Center for the Arts.

can enjoy or gift to others.

“With everything that’s going on in the world, people are looking for a positive experience,” Kehrberg said. “We’ve really seen with our classes the camaraderie between students doing something fun and new, and it’s been really good for people.”

Painted Sky Center for the Arts provides the basic tools and items to complete leather projects. This gives people a chance to participate without incurring the huge expenses asso-

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Oregon lawmakers to reconsider coyote-hunting derbies

Owens: Urban lawmakers attempting to legislate on unfamiliar rural matters

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

A bill outlawing coyote-killing contests has made its way back to the Oregon Legislature.

Oregonians can hunt coyotes year-round, and current regulations do not limit the number of coyotes hunters can kill.

Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, said coyotes are predators that affect the livelihood of ranchers. He said the hunting contests are one way to keep the populations down. Owens said, in the past, the state has put bounties on coyotes.

Owens said doing away with coyote derbies takes away an economic opportunity for the communities in his district. When a coyote-hunting contest comes to



Contributed photo

A coyote attacks a sheep in this photo from the USDA National Wildlife Research Center, the research arm of Wildlife Services.

Burns, he said some restaurants, bars and hotels make just as much money as they would during the biggest weekend of the year at the fair and rodeo.

Owens said the bill’s chief sponsor, Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, has a “passion” to get the legislation through and said incentivizing coyote hunts is “immoral.”

Owens said he has sat down with Witt a couple of times and told him that he thinks he is wrong.

Owens said it would “take a lot” to stop the bill from

going through.

“We’re not going to get it stopped,” Owens said.

Owens said this is another example of the west side of the state attempting to legislate on rural matters they are unfamiliar with.

“It’s wrong that we allow people with a different moral view of subjects in rural communities to pass laws against them,” he said. “It seems like the last decade, have passed laws that allow for more custom and culture, and personal choices to be acceptable.”