



AGRIBUSINESS SECTION INSIDE

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WOLVES

Grant County count up by three as state sees 9.5% increase

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

The number of wolves is increasing in Grant County and Oregon as a whole. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife reported a 9.5% statewide increase in wolves at the end of 2020 in the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management 2020 annual report.

ODFW reported 173 wolves in the state at the end of 2020, up from 158 at the end of 2019.

According to the report, there were 22 packs in the state. The report said 17 of those packs met the criteria as breeding pairs.

A breeding pair is an adult male and an adult female with at least two pups that survived to Dec. 31 the year of their birth, and a pack is four or more wolves traveling together in winter.

"The actual number of wolves in Oregon is actually higher because not all wolves present in the state are located during the winter count," the report states. "The numbers could increase if evidence is collected during 2021 of additional wolves present during 2020."

Grant County increase

In Grant County, at the end of 2019, ODFW counted two wolves in the Northside wildlife unit, five in Desolation and no wolves in Murder-

BY NO MEANS DO WE THINK THAT THIS IS THE EXACT NUMBER OF WOLVES IN THE COUNTY AT ANY TIME. BUT THIS IS WHAT WE'D CONSIDER A MINIMUM POPULATION.

Ryan Torland, John Day ODFW District Biologist

ers Creek, according to John Day ODFW District Biologist Ryan Torland. At the end of 2020, Torland said Desolation had six, Northside had three and Murderers Creek had one.

He said there is probably a second wolf in Murderers Creek that showed up after winter, but it would not be included until next year's count.

Torland said the count of the 2020 population is an estimate of the wolves present in a pack or in the area in 2020 that survived through the winter and into 2021.

See Wolves, Page A16



Getty Images



Eagle file photo

John Day Police Department.

John Day residents will vote on tax to maintain police department

If vote fails, city plans to transition police to sheriff's office

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Voters will decide the fate of the John Day Police Department.

The John Day City Council and Budget Committee met on April 20 to discuss the proposed budget for fiscal year 2021-2022 and agreed that the residents of John Day should have the opportunity to vote on a five-year levy to fund the police department.

If the levy does not pass, the city plans to transition the department to the Grant County Sheriff's Office in September.

Budget Committee member Mark Miller said the people at the town hall meeting on April 8 voiced their support of the police department and should have their say by voting.

"I think the people of the town gotta have their say," Miller said. "My comment is: Put it to the people."

The plan is to file for an emergency election Aug. 3 to request approval of John Day voters for a levy of 35 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Although the original estimate was only 10-15 cents per \$1,000, the police department's modernization expenses discussed at the budget meeting led to the increase, according to the agenda.

"There's a lot that has to happen in the lead up to the election and afterward," said John Day City Manager Nick Green.

Green said they are coordinating with their legal counsel on the ballot measure language for the local option levy.

The council will need to approve that language prior to submitting it to the county clerk for processing. The approval will need to happen at the May 11 city council meeting, according to Green. The city will then submit the ballot measure to the Grant County Clerk by May 14.

Green said the schedule is tentative until the city files the ballot measure.

Councilor Paul Smith said he was informed that the special election would cost the city between \$3,000 and \$5,000, and the measure would need a double majority for the levy to pass.

A double majority means that more than 50% of registered voters need to vote with more than 50% in favor of the measure to pass.

"If we waited until November, the election would not cost us anything, but we would not be able to collect any assessment until 2022," Smith said, 10 months later than if they held the vote in August.

See Police, Page A16

House panel ponders linking firearms storage, narrower ban

Republicans oppose both original bills

By Peter Wong
Oregon Capital Bureau

Legislation that combines proposed requirements for firearm locks and safe storage with a narrower ban on firearms in public buildings is gaining political momentum in the Oregon House.

The House Rules Committee heard a proposal to combine elements of two bills, one awaiting a vote of the full House and a second that has already passed the Senate. If it happens, the House would have to take only one vote, instead of two, on a firearms regulation bill — and the Senate would have to vote only on whether to accept the final version.



PMG file photo

Oregon legislators are considering combining two gun proposals.

"In this legislation we kind of mash them together," House Republican Leader Christine Drahan of Canby, who sits on the committee, said during a presentation April 21. Republicans were already

dead set against House Bill 2510, which awaits a vote of the full House scheduled April 26. The House Health

Care Committee advanced it March 30 on a party-line vote.

That bill would require the storage of firearms with trigger or cable locks, in a locked container or in a gun room. An offense is a Class C violation, which carries a maximum fine of \$500, unless someone under age 18 obtains access, in which case it is a Class A violation with a maximum fine of \$2,000. No jail time is imposed for violations.

Its chief sponsor is Rep. Rachel Prusak, D-West Linn, who has advocated it on behalf of a constituent since her election in 2018. She said she would support it becoming part of a broader bill.

See Firearms, Page A16

