

Wolves

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Takeaways from this year's count

In Northside, Torland said this was the first year a pup made it through the winter. He said that means the area has successful breeding, but to be considered a breeding pair, the wolves have to have two pups make it through winter.

He said they saw one pup make it through the winter in Desolation.

Torland told the Eagle there were reports during archery season of hunters seeing up to 10 wolves. He said this was possible, but the hunters were not able to substantiate the statements with pictures.

"By no means do we think that this is the exact number of wolves in the county at any time," he said. "But this is what we'd consider a minimum population."

Problems on the horizon?

Torland said in Grant County the wolves are moving into areas where they could pose more of a problem for livestock producers. He said this includes livestock wintering locations, calving areas and places where grazing permits are issued.

He said the agency is trying to communicate to landowners best practices to prevent depredation, such as picking up bone piles and removing other attractants.

In 2020, confirmed wolf depredations in the East Wolf Management Zone included seven dead cows, five injured cows, one dead llama, one injured llama, one dead working dog and one injured working dog across Baker, Union, Wallowa, Umatilla, Morrow and Harney counties, according to the report. In the West Wolf Management Zone, 15 cows were killed in Klamath County and one was killed in Jackson County.

Police

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The Budget Committee included the revenue from the local option levy in the budget if it approved. Green said, if the levy does not pass, the transition option would be triggered.

John Day City Councilor Heather Rookstool said she favors giving residents a chance to vote. However, she said people need to also understand what would happen if the levy does not pass and if the county does not want to work out a consolidation agreement.

"I like the idea of the option, but if they say no and the county says no, I want residents to understand what kind of service they're going to get," Rookstool said. "It will be emergent services only... The public needs to listen and make their voices heard because this is their one chance to do that."

Green said he doubts there will be a huge reduction in



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz

The John Day City Council and Budget Committee talk about the John Day Police Department April 20.

the quality and consistency of service as long as there is an agreement and the county honors it. However, he said the risk is that the city would lose control of the department, and the city would have to rely on the agreement.

The estimated cost for police modernization over the next five years is \$253,466, which would require a five-year levy of \$50,693 per year to cover, Green said.

John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom said another con-

cern was the voters passing the levy but the city needing to request more money to meet unexpected costs.

"Halfway through this five-year cycle, we have another union negotiation, and something might come

up in that (which) makes us come back to the voters again and say, 'We need more money.'" Lundbom said. "That's an unseen variable, but a real possibility, and that's something we need to think about too."

Firearms

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"No one is under the illusion that enacting a safe storage law will stop all gun violence," Prusak said. "Many responsible gun owners already lock up their guns. The goal of this safe-storage firearms bill is to change the behavior of the portion of gun owners whose careless actions lead to death and injury of others."

Split view of changes

The Rules Committee proposes to combine it with a narrower version of Senate Bill 554, which passed the Senate on a 16-7 vote March 25. All votes for it came from Democrats; one Democrat joined six Republicans against it, and the rest were excused or absent.

The original bill would bar all firearms from state

buildings, including the Capitol, and local governments would have the option of barring them from their own buildings. In essence, the ban would apply to the estimated 300,000 holders of concealed-handgun licenses, who are now exempt from weapons bans in public buildings.

The proposed amendment would narrow the scope of the Senate bill.

The proposed ban would apply to the Capitol, but not other state buildings. (State courts, which are often in buildings maintained by

counties, already ban weapons by orders of the presiding judges.)

It would allow boards of the seven state universities, 17 community college districts and 197 school districts to bar firearms from their buildings, but not their grounds. Unlike the Senate-passed bill, cities, counties and special districts would not be allowed to bar firearms borne by concealed-handgun licensees.

Sen. Ginny Burdick, a Democrat from Portland and a longtime supporter of firearms regulation, said the proposed change goes too far.

"I've been in this process a long time, and I understand the necessity for compromise," she said at a Rules Committee hearing. "But the amended version goes way too far in terms of weakening the bill."

Though the proposal would still bar firearms inside the Capitol, she said, "In the climate we live in, state buildings need to be included."

She also said, if school boards have discretion to bar

firearms from their buildings, their grounds need to be included, "because sports activities can get pretty hot, as we all know, and they need to be covered."

As passed by the Senate, public sidewalks and streets are excluded from regulation.

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, a Democrat from Eugene who leads the Senate Judiciary Committee, offered substitute language.

"It only seems appropriate for us to give local control to school boards, community colleges and universities to make the determination what is best for them and their properties, not just their buildings," he said.

The House committee is considering other amendments, including one by Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem, that would enable local governments to regulate firearms in public parks. He also proposed an amendment that would do away with state preemption of most local firearms ordinances — a law that dates to 1995 — but conceded it would go nowhere.

Previous killings

Oregon has experienced two notable instances of gun violence in schools.

In 1998, two died and 25 were wounded at Thurston High School in Springfield after expelled student Kipland Kinkel shot his parents to death. Kinkel, who was 15 at the time, is in a state prison. In 2015, an assistant professor and eight students died, and eight were wounded, by a student gunman at Umpqua Community College near Roseburg. The gunman took his own life.

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum said she has taken part in marches sponsored by Students Demand Action, part of the national group Everytown for Gun Safety.

"This bill makes a clear opportunity for Oregon leaders to show our young people that we hear them and we care about their safety," Rosenblum said to the committee. "It takes a small but important step in ensuring that Oregonians can learn safely without the threat of gun violence."

REPORTER

The Blue Mountain Eagle, a family-owned weekly newspaper in a stunningly beautiful Oregon community, seeks an energetic, dedicated reporter.

The Eagle is located in John Day, where seeing deer in front yards is normal and traffic is unheard of, just three hours from Bend and Pendleton. Surrounded by scenic forests and dissected by mountain streams, the location offers year-round recreational opportunities, including fishing, hunting, backpacking, camping, snowmobiling and horseback riding.

Despite the picturesque environment, the community is at the center of an evolving natural resource restoration economy, which gains statewide and even national attention.

Despite the small-town charm, the residents are engaged and politically active in local and national debates, and hard-hitting stories are never hard to find. Ongoing topics include state and federal policies, forest health, logging, public lands grazing, water supply, wildlife habitat improvements and wildfire resilience, in addition to coverage of small-town life and local government. The position offers a wealth of breaking news and enterprise opportunities.

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