

# The Blue Mountain EAGLE

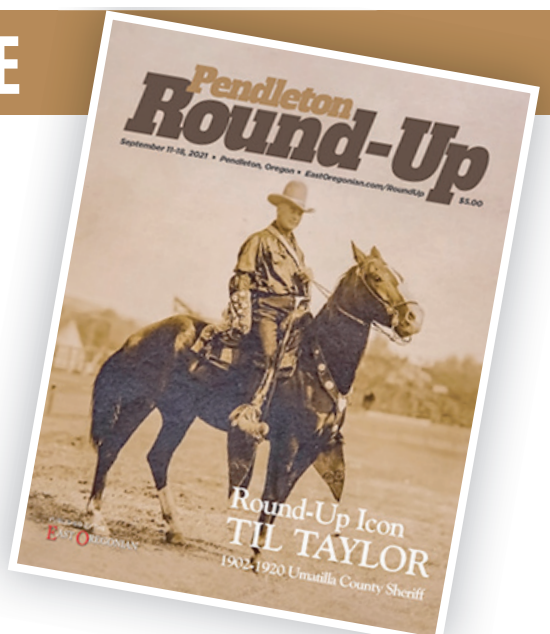
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## Where are the workers?

Workers in short supply amid year of great job growth



EO Media Group/Dean Guernsey

Help wanted signs are popping up all over Bend as local businesses seek to fill jobs that workers are choosing not to return to.



EO Media Group/Dean Guernsey

Robin Clement and her husband, co-owners of Monkless Belgian Ales in Bend, opened the pub just four months before the pandemic shut it down to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part one of a series of articles by EO Media Group to publish over the next five weeks, looking at the issue of the lack of workers for jobs in Central and Eastern Oregon, why workers are not returning to previously held jobs and how businesses are functioning without being fully staffed.

By Suzanne Roig  
EO Media Group

With record job growth in Oregon, Whitney Keatman never imagined she would have problems finding workers for her Scott Street location of Sparrow Bakery.

And she didn't. It was getting them to stay that has plagued her long-time Bend business.

In the past year Keatman, a co-owner, made 117 job offers and most were accepted. But after just three months, only about 42 workers remained. The bakery needed at minimum of 20 workers at the Scott Street location, and by the end of this summer there were six.

So last week, she made a hard decision: She will close the bakery at the Old Iron Works Arts District.

"We've been struggling for seven years with moments of success," Keatman said. "Over the years we've had on again and off again good managers. When you don't have the right

management, you have a hard time retaining workers.

"It's common for people to come and begin training and then get another job offer that competes with wages," Keatman said. "There's no allegiance. It's a competitive market for employers."

During a year of record job growth in Oregon, employers like Keatman have had the hardest time finding workers to fill positions. Companies, particularly in the leisure and hospitality industries, across the state are scrambling to find workers.

The hospitality, hotel, restaurant and tourism-related industries added 6% more jobs this year, economists say. Hiring is more competitive than ever as employers raise wages, offer signing bonuses, referral bonuses, improved benefits and even subsidies for housing. But those incentives also

## Worker Shortage



FIRST IN A 5-PART SERIES

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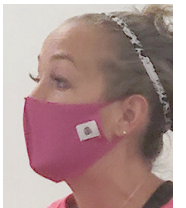
## Can John Day and Grant County officials bury the hatchet?

Police services in the city hang in the balance

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

In their first city council meeting after a local option levy to fund police failed to garner enough votes last month, John Day's elected officials weighed their options about how to move forward Aug. 24.

The city now plans to disband the police department Dec. 31 unless it receives a federal police grant. In the meantime, the city may work out a law enforcement services agreement with the county sheriff's office for more police coverage.



Heather Rookstool

John Day City Councilor Heather Rookstool said she would like to see the levy go back on the ballot in May when a double majority — more than 50% of registered voters returning ballots and more than 50% in favor of passing the measure — is not required.

Grant County's Emergency Communications Agency Dispatch Manager Valerie Maynard said she agreed with Rookstool.

She said, historically, measures typically fail in special elections because of the required double majority. In the meantime, she said, the city could fill the budget holes with COVID-19 relief dollars.

Additionally, Maynard asked that the city look at a law enforcement services contract between the county and the city.

"That would at least give us some coverage," she said. "The sheriff's office can't provide coverage without some additional funding."

Pam Durr, the wife of John Day Police Chief Mike Durr, said the mentality of many of the voters in John Day was to vote no on the levy because they were mad at City Manager Nick Green.

Durr said Glenn Palmer, former Grant County sheriff and a John Day resident, urged voters to oppose the levy.

In a post last month on Facebook, Palmer said he was "attempting to gain support in asking people to look at the option of voting no, or not voting in this election to defeat the levy."

City Councilor Gregg Haberly said, if the city of Sisters could not afford to keep its police department, how could John Day?

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## Wyden defends River Democracy Act in virtual town hall

Opponents say only 15% of waterways to be designated are actually 'rivers'

By George Plaven  
EO Media Group

Legislation that would add nearly 4,700 miles of wild and scenic rivers across Oregon would have no impact on private land or existing property rights, according to the bill's chief architect, Sen. Ron Wyden.

Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, introduced the River Democracy Act in February based on more than 15,000 public nominations from all corners of the state.

On Aug. 31, Wyden defended the bill during an hour-long virtual town hall. The legislation has faced opposition from rural counties over whether it would add new restrictions on graz-



**"PROTECTING EXISTING RIGHTS WAS PART OF OUR EFFORT TO STRIKE A BALANCE."**

—U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon

ing, timber harvest and recreational access.

Speaking from Hermiston in Eastern Oregon, Wyden pledged the bill would not go forward without "loop-hole-free, airtight" protections for private property.

Rather, he said it applies only to federal lands and was written specifically not to interfere with existing property, grazing and water rights.

"Protecting existing rights was part of our effort to strike a balance," Wyden said.

If passed, the River Democracy Act would roughly triple the number of wild and scenic rivers in Oregon.

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was established in 1968 to preserve rivers with outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values.

The bill also widens protective buffers from a quarter-mile to half-mile on both sides of designated streams, adding up to 3 million acres of protected land.

Earlier this year, the American Forest Resource Council, a regional timber trade association, conducted its own analysis of waterways nominated for inclusion in the bill. The group found that just 15% were



Contributed photo/Nick Smith  
AFRC

Bear Gulch in Southern Oregon was nominated as a Wild and Scenic River under the River Democracy Act introduced by Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley. Eastern Oregon counties oppose the bill.

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