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## Nick Green resigns from post

John Day's innovative but controversial city manager is stepping down

By BENNETT HALL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — City Manager Nick Green is on his way out.

Green, who has served as John Day's chief executive for 5½ years, told the Eagle he planned to deliver a letter of resignation to Mayor Ron Lundbom on Tuesday, Jan. 25, and would publicly announce his decision during his annual State of the City speech at that night's

City Council meeting.

In an interview last week, Green talked about his eventful and sometimes tumultuous tenure in John Day and his hopes for the city's future.

Green said his target departure date is June 30, the end of the city's fiscal year, and he was making the announcement now to give the City Council time to hire his successor.

"There's nothing magical about that date other than it's a clean way to handle the budget," he said.

Asked why he was stepping down, Green said it was mainly in hopes of finding a better work-life balance.

"It's been great working for the city,

and I've enjoyed it, but it's very demanding," he said, citing long hours and lots of public meetings — often contentious ones.

"It's made it difficult to spend time with my family the way I wanted to do when we moved here."

### Man with a plan

Green, who has a wife and two children aged 16 and 7, came to work as John Day's city manager on June 20, 2016. He started at a salary of \$65,000 a year and is currently making just under \$80,000 annually.

Prior to taking the position, he had been living in the Seattle area, where

he worked as a senior associate with the consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton before going back to school to get a master's degree in public administration with a focus on rural economic development and local government.

His wife had grown up in John Day and still had family in the area, which made the city manager's job attractive.

Almost from the beginning, Green started shaking things up.

Faced with a shrinking population, crumbling infrastructure and a stagnant tax base, Green began looking for ways to improve the city's financial prospects.



Bennett Hall/Blue Mountain Eagle  
**John Day City Manager Nick Green stands outside City Hall on Monday, Jan. 24, 2022. Green plans to step down at the end of June.**

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## Grant Union Tournament



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

**Grant Union's Riddick Hutchison pins Irrigon's Cyrus Piel Friday, Jan. 21, 2022, at the Grant Union High School Wrestling Tournament. Hutchison placed first in his 182 weight bracket. For full coverage, see Page A8.**

## Senators weigh in on long-term stewardship contract

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley are throwing their support behind a renewal of the long-term stewardship contract for the Malheur National Forest, although not necessarily with the same operator.

In a Thursday, Jan. 20, letter to Glenn C. Asa, U.S. Forest Service regional forester for Region 6, Oregon's two U.S. senators said

the long-term contract has been a "resounding ecological and socioeconomic success." Wyden and Merkley wanted to know if the Forest Service would support another contract on the Malheur and what specific challenges or concerns (if any) the agency would have with implementing another agreement.

The 10-year stewardship contract between the Malheur National Forest and Iron Triangle is widely credited with saving John Day's last surviving lumber mill, creating hundreds of jobs, and improving forest health.

But it has also prompted criticism from some who feel the John Day-based logging company has profited at the expense of smaller rivals.

### A different approach

Stewardship contracts are fundamentally different from traditional timber sale contracts.

According to Roy Walker, a program manager with the Forest Service, the federal agency awards timber contracts by identifying an area with commercially marketable trees, marking the boundaries of the proposed timber sale, and estimating the amount of merchantable wood in the sale area.

Then, he said, the agency evaluates the fair market value of the timber and opens up a bidding process to companies that can meet bonding and other requirements.

As the Forest Service expanded its forest restoration, fuels reduction and thinning activities, Walker said, it melded forest management work, which often lacks commercial value, with timber sales.

Stewardship brings the two together, allowing the Forest Service to award the commercial value that loggers would ordinarily bid on to finance restoration work on national forest land.

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## BMH plans for next surge

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Two weeks after surging COVID-19 case counts and severe winter weather stretched Blue Mountain Hospital to its limits, the hospital has a new plan to handle the next capacity crisis.

Derek Daly, CEO of the Blue Mountain Hospital District, wrote in an email Wednesday, Jan. 19, that should the county experience another surge, the hospital would look to transfer patients to a non-traditional

hospital partner in cities such as Reno, Nevada; Spokane, Washington; or even as far as San Francisco or Salt Lake City.

Normally, patient transfers from Blue Mountain go to St. Charles Medical Center in Bend or St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in Boise.

"It really is a situation where you call for bed availability and put in transfer requests in multiple directions at the same time," Daly said.

The rapidly spreading omicron variant is putting pressure on health

systems all over the country, raising calls for additional resources. Blue Mountain was one of a half-dozen hospitals in Eastern Oregon to receive aid from the Oregon National Guard last week when Gov. Kate Brown ordered a second relief mission to support strained hospitals across the state.

According to commanding officer Bailey Frasch, the governor dispatched seven guard members to Grant County on Monday, Jan. 17.

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Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle  
**Oregon National Guard Cpl. Braedan Emang sanitizes the front door of the Strawberry Wilderness Community Clinic at Blue Mountain Hospital Monday, Jan. 24, 2022.**

## Dean debacle worries ranchers

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — Wallowa County ranchers are concerned both for the cattle under their care and their reputations in animal husbandry, not to mention the future of ranching in the county, rancher and Wallowa County Stock-growers President Tom Birkmaier said last week.

### Caring for the cattle

"As a whole, ranchers and livestock owners in this county deeply care for the health and well-being of their animals. It is important that we view this for what it is; an unfortunate situation brought on by a combination of mismanagement, poor decisions and challenging weather conditions," Birkmaier said in a written statement Wednesday, Jan. 19. "As difficult as it may have been, the cows should have been brought out of that country a month or two sooner. Our local cow-



Birkmaier



Warnock

boys are some of the best. They would've assisted the Bob Dean ranch hands and gotten the cows out of there."

Birkmaier and Adam Stein, another county rancher who was instrumental in rescuing the cattle and spotting them from the air, said that at least 29 cows are known to have perished in the deep snows and steep terrain of the Grouse Creek Ranch in the Upper Imnaha owned by Louisiana developer Bob Dean.

B.J. Warnock, who until Wednesday, Jan. 26, was manager at the ranch, said in a Jan. 2 email that when he and his ranch hands began gathering cattle in September, there were 1,613 mother cows on summer range, of which 10

were unrecoverable. He said 1,548 Dean Oregon Ranches mother cows were successfully gathered by the ranch crew before the snow. After the snow, 34 mother cows were gathered, of which 26 were Dean cattle; the others were owned by neighboring ranches. Warnock said at that time aerial and ground searches were conducted with the hope of bringing in the remaining 29 cows.

Stein confirmed Jan. 20 that he took Warnock up in his plane approximately Dec. 21 and 27 to look for the missing cattle.

"He talked like he was going to put some people on it," Stein said. "I think they had a lot going on at the time. That's why I got involved because something needed to happen."

As for the actual number of cattle lost, Birkmaier said that won't be known until herded cattle can be



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