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Wolves kill 2 calves in Grant County

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

GRANT COUNTY — A rancher on the Middle Fork of the John Day River has become Grant County's second producer to lose livestock to a confirmed wolf depredation.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife reported Monday, May 23, that wolves in an area known to be used by the Desolation Pack killed two calves in the evening hours of May 19.

Additionally, the ODFW report noted that a GPS collar placed wolves at the kill site around the suspected time of death of the second calf.

The report noted that the location of the bite marks and injuries to the calves was consistent with wolf attacks on live calves. The depredation, the report said, has been attributed to the Desolation Pack.

According to the report, on Saturday, May 21, a livestock producer witnessed a wolf feeding on the carcass of a 1,000-pound cow. ODFW officials estimated that the cow died the previous night and that, due to the absence of pre-mortem bite marks or hemorrhaging, the cow was found not to have been attacked while it was alive.

"The cause of death was not wolf-related and so our determination was 'Other,'" the report concluded.

The first confirmed wolf depredation in Grant County occurred in May 2021 on Roy Vardanega's Fox Valley Ranch. Vardanega reported that five of his cattle were attacked and killed, although only one of the deaths was confirmed by ODFW as wolf-related.

According to the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management 2021 Annual Report, the Desolation Pack increased from five wolves to nine this year.

A pack is defined as more than four wolves traveling together in the winter. The Desolation Pack also met the criterion of having a breeding pair. A breeding pair is an adult male and adult female with at least two pups that survived to Dec. 31 in the year of their birth.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife/Contributed Photo

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife attributed the confirmed depredation of two calves on the Middle Fork of the John Day River to the Desolation Pack.

Bennett Hall/Blue Mountain Eagle

A sign urges voters to reject a $4 million bond measure to finance a new community pool. The vote ended in a tie in early unofficial results.

Pool bond final tally expected Tuesday

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — A final count of ballots in the pool bond election was expected shortly after the Eagle hits the press on Tuesday, May 24.

One of the most controversial and contentious bond proposals in recent memory resulted in an even split in early unofficial returns on May 17, with Grant County voters casting 787 votes in favor of Measure 12-80 and 787 ballots against.

The measure was still in a dead heat on Wednesday, May 18, after four additional mail-in ballots were received, bringing the tally to 789-789.

The deadlock was broken following the counting of nine ballots from within the pool tax zone on Thursday, May 19. Since then, the tally has stood at 795 against and 792 in favor of the bond measure.

Voters who dropped their ballots in the mail on or just before Election Day will decide the outcome. A new state law allows elections officials to count ballots postmarked by Election Day if they arrive at the elections office within one week.

County Clerk Brenda Percy told the newspaper she expected to count the remaining ballots that have postmarks on or Election Day on the afternoon of Tuesday, May 24. The race has been tight from the

County struggles to patch budget

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — Grant County officials continue to grapple with potential cuts in the wake of an $800,0000 "miscalculation" discovered in the midst of deliberations on the 2022-23 budget.

During a contentious session of the Grant County Court on Wednesday, May 18, County Treasurer Julie Ellison presented multiple options for attempting to rebalance the budget.

One option, Ellison said, would be to cut all general fund and elected county employees to 36 hours a week. The savings, she said, would work out to roughly $145,000 a year. If the county were to cut those positions to 32 hours a week, the savings would work out to $289,000.

An unidentified county employee said that would not come close to filling the $800,000 hole in the county's general fund.

Carpenter

Department heads and county employees expressed their frustration with the County Court over the county's unsettled financial status.

District Attorney Jim Carpenter told the court that he is not confident that the county knows where it stands financially.

He said he makes a budget every month for his home and did the same thing for his small business when he had one. He said he could walk downstairs and show the court a printout of his department's budget, including how much money the department has and what was spent. He is not confident the county could do the same. Given that, he said, it would be irresponsible of the county to ask departments to make cuts or make any other decisions when they do not know how much money they have to work with.

"If you don't know where you are," Carpenter said, "you don't know where you can go."

Carpenter also said he would like to see where the County Court could make cuts in its own department budget. (County Judge Scott Myers has said in the past that the court has made significant cuts to its travel budget and that he has not been turning in requests for mileage reimbursement.)

Myers began the meeting by acknowledging that the budget problems have caused some "consternation" in the Grant County Courthouse lately and by asking those in the courtroom to show one another respect.

"If we treated our families the way we've been treating each other as a family lately they would be breaking up," he said.

County Commissioner Jim Hamsher suggested that, since the county does not have to adopt a budget until June 30, the county's department heads come back with recommended cuts to their budgets by the next County Court session.

County officials have been wrestling

Regional partnership taking shape

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — A potential partnership between the cities of John Day, Burns and Lakeview is taking shape — slowly, but it is taking shape.

Known as Regional Rural Revitalization Strategies (or R3 for short), the partnership is centered on combining and sharing resources that would allow the communities to better cover costs related to filling housing needs and other public improvement projects.

R3 looks to pool staff across its member cities through virtual teaming arrangements, according to a white paper on the proposal released in February. These virtual teams would work together on projects for a limited duration, which would allow the member communities to take on larger projects than they normally would without giving up their independence.

Pooling capital assets such as equipment is also a part of the plans for R3. These assets often sit unused in one jurisdiction when they could be put to use in another. Small cit-

John Day City Hall is shown on Friday, May 20, 2022. The city is looking into a partnership with Burns and Lakeview that would allow the three communities to share resources in an effort to cut costs.

ies may lack the purchasing power to acquire expensive equipment for utility line and street maintenance, among other basic needs, the white paper noted. This lack of purchasing power means rural communities often have to contract for these types of services and may have to pay extra due to the cost of bringing assets to remote rural areas.

R3 Strategies looks to break this model by assembling virtual motor pools comprised of all the available equipment of its member cities. These virtual motor pools would allow resources to become available for the entire partnership to use as the need comes up. R3 could also acquire assets on behalf of its members which they would not have been able to afford independently.

These strategies will allow the small cities that make up the partnership to "hunt as a pack" by providing