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Michelle Gabel/mgabel@syracuse.com-TNS
Mosquitoes can transmit West Nile virus to humans.

W. Nile found in Baker County

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

KEATING VALLEY — West Nile virus has been found in mosquitoes in Baker County for the first time this year.

The mosquitoes were trapped July 28 in the Keating Valley about 15 miles east of Baker City, said Matt Hutchinson, manager of the Baker Valley Vector Control District.

It takes about a week for test results to arrive, and Hutchinson announced the positive test on Thursday, Aug. 4.

Hutchinson is responsible for controlling mosquitoes in a 200,000-acre area that includes most of Baker, Keating and Bowen valleys.

The virus, which mosquitoes can spread to people, has been detected in mosquitoes in Baker County in all but two years (2018 and 2020) over the past decade.

Typically the virus is confined to insects and birds.

Baker County is the second Oregon county to have infected mosquitoes in 2022. Two batches of mosquitoes tested positive earlier in Malheur County.

Hutchinson sends dozens of “pools” of dead mosquitoes — each pool consists of around 10 to 50 insects — to a lab at Oregon State University where the bugs are tested for West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne diseases.

So far this summer, Hutchinson said 160 pools of mosquitoes from Baker County have been tested, with only the one positive for West Nile virus.

He sent 38 more pools for testing on Thursday, Aug. 4. Results usually arrive within five or six days, he said.

Hutchinson said he has sent about twice as many mosquito pools for testing as he did at this time a year ago, a difference he attributes to the severe 2021 drought.

With much less water around, which mosquitoes need for rearing their eggs, populations were unusually low in the county last year, he said.

This year is more typical, Hutchinson said.

The infected mosquitoes are the culex tarsalis species, a permanent water mosquito that is by far the most common carrier of West Nile virus locally.

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BLUEPRINT FOR GROWTH

John Day invests \$1.9M to jumpstart development of 100 new homes



Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle

Josh Walker uses an excavator to dig trenches for sewer lines for The Ridge on June 22, 2022. The development aims to add 23 new homes to John Day once completed.

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

Three new housing developments are under way in John Day that could add 100 new homes to the local housing supply over the next few years.

The projects are being jumpstarted by funding from the city's urban Renewal Agency as part of an effort to rebuild declining population, shore up the local tax base and address the city's housing shortage.

Constructing Oregon's first 3D-printed home is also a part of the plans for the three developments, known as The Ridge, Ironwood Estates and Holmstrom Heights.

John Day City Manager Corum Ketchum said the housing developments are part of a strategy to reverse the city's population loss of the past few decades.

“If we'd have kept up with the .5% growth we had in the '90s, our population would be at 2,200 or 2,300 people right now,” he said.

John Day established an urban renewal agency and created an urban renewal plan in June 2018, and now the URA is being used to help get the three housing developments off the ground.



Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle

Josh Walker (in white) and partner Russ Comer (in yellow) walk a road at The Ridge on Monday, Aug. 8, 2022.

The URA has taken out a loan of \$1,851,797 from Business Oregon to assist in the development of residential lots at The Ridge, Ironwood Estates and Holmstrom Heights. The loan's interest rate is 2.41% over a 20-year term.

The plan is to pay off the loan over time using tax increment financing, Ketchum said. Tax increment financing captures any increase in assessed property value within an urban renewal district, with the additional revenues being directed toward the district's stated purpose — in this

case, residential development.

Ironwood Estates

Ironwood Estates, located along Valley View Drive on the north side of John Day, is the largest of the three developments. It will add 73 new homes to the city once completed.

Ironwood is part of a subdivision that was conceived 30 years ago, according to developer Russ Young.

“It was originated by my mother and father,” Young said. “They were originally a part of Ironwood, and this was all part of a phased-out build

when they set the plat back in the early '90s.”

Young said there was a need for housing at the time, and a renewed need for housing and places to build houses exists today. The city of John Day reached out to the Youngs, which resulted in Ironwood being included in city's urban renewal district.

“There was already a template and proved concept of the subdivision up there,” Young added.

The development is currently in its second phase, with Phase 1 having provided sewer service, water and power to the property. The second phase includes the expansion of streets and utilities for the development of approximately 15.2 acres into 17 single-family residential lots.

Phase 2 of construction will also include 1,750 linear feet of new pavement through the addition of two new cul-de-sacs and all the associated utilities for development. Fiber optic internet cable will also be extended to existing lots in the development and will be added to new lots via a grant from Business Oregon, the state's economic development agency.

The estimated cost of this project is just over \$940,000. The URA will provide up to \$750,000 in cash and

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Psilocybin ban heads to ballot

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — The Grant County commissioners moved to put a measure on the Nov. 8 ballot to let voters consider banning psilocybin manufacturing and service centers in the county's unincorporated areas.

In 2020 Oregon became the first state in the nation to legalize the therapeutic, supervised use of psilocybin when Ballot Measure 109 passed with 56% of the vote. Over the last decade, research has shown psilocybin, the active hallucinogenic ingredient in what is commonly referred to as “magic mushrooms,” has been used in treating various mental health conditions, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

While the measure's supporters point to the therapeutic benefits of supervised consumption for people over 21 by licensed facilitators in clinical settings, 65% of Grant County voters rejected the measure.

County Judge Scott Myers said there are too



Andrii Zhezhera/123RF

Psilocybe cubensis, magic mushrooms.

many unanswered questions and ambiguities about how the Oregon Health Authority would license and regulate the manufacture, delivery, sale and administration of psilocybin.

The measure, which called for a two-year process to write the rules and regulations for administering the drug, created Oregon Psilocybin Services

under the health authority to oversee the formulation and rollout of the regulations.

By the end of the year, the rulemaking group is slated to establish and publish the rules on psilocybin facilitator training, licensing, client care and compliance. According to the state health authority web site, OHA will start accepting applications for licenses to manufacture, deliver and administer psilocybin in the state on Jan. 2.

The measure's backers, Myers said, should have had these basic details of the measure ironed out before they presented it to lawmakers and definitely before putting it on the ballot two years ago.

Those unknown variables, he said, are the reason he supports putting the opt-out ordinance to the county's voters. There is simply not enough information about the rules that govern the process from start to finish, including how the product is manufactured, who gets to manufacture it and who distributes it to those who use it as part of a treatment plan.

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