

# The Blue Mountain EAGLE

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## Weigum recall heads to ballot

By JUSTIN DAVIS  
Blue Mountain Eagle

**JOHN DAY** — A recall effort against John Day/Canyon City Parks and Recreation District board member Lisa Weigum will be left for voters to decide after organizers collected just enough valid signatures to bring the motion to the ballot.

Recall organizers collected 295 signatures for the recall effort, just topping the 289 needed to qualify.

Charlene Morris filed the recall petition in early August and turned in signature sheets to the Grant County Clerk's Office on Nov. 1 for verification.

County Clerk Brenda Percy has set the election for Dec. 13. Percy said ballots will go out in the mail on Nov. 23, and she expects the special election to cost between \$2,000 and \$3,000.

Morris claims that Weigum broke multiple state laws governing public meetings, election publications and budgeting.



Weigum



Morris

Weigum's supporters point out that she isn't the parks and recreation district board chair and that no single individual has the authority to make decisions independent of the rest of the board.

Weigum declined to be interviewed for this story. However, in a "state-

ment of justification" filed in response to the recall petition, she called the allegations against her "unfounded" and "deceptive."

The recall effort comes on the heels of the contentious pool bond initiative that aimed to raise \$4 million toward the construction of a community pool at the Seventh Street Complex to replace the 64-year-old Gleason Pool, which was torn down to make way for an expanded Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site.

The bond measure failed in the May

election after ending in an 802-802 tie. Supporters put the initiative back onto the Nov. 8 ballot but it went down in defeat once again, this time by a count of 1,108 votes against to 1,030 in favor.

In March, Morris and Shaun Robertson filed a petition raising objections to the bond measure's ballot title, and late last year Morris' husband, John, appealed a conditional use permit granted for the pool's construction.

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Chris Collins/Baker City Herald, File

If you decide to head into the snowbound forest to cut your own Christmas tree, make sure your vehicle is prepared for the conditions, and bring along extra clothing, food and water.

## BRINGING HOME THE HOLIDAYS

### The search for the perfect Christmas tree

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

The Blue Mountains started to look like Christmas even before Halloween this year.

But the season of the jack-o'-lantern, of the overnight stomach-ache induced by too many fun-size bars, is too early to commence the search for the all-important item of holiday decor.

The Christmas tree.

The problem, of course, is preservation.

Cut your tree too early and you'll struggle to keep it healthy enough that, come Christmas, the presents stacked beneath the branches aren't buried in drifts of desiccated needles.

But with Thanksgiving looming, families across the region will be preparing for their annual trip to the mountains and the search for the tree that catches the eye from across

**"IN MOST PARTS OF THE FOREST, REMOVING SMALL TREES REDUCES THE RISK OF WILDFIRE, HELPS OTHER TREES TO GROW LARGER AND MORE FIRE-RESISTANT, AND CREATES OPEN AREAS THAT PROVIDE FORAGE FOR WILDLIFE."**

U.S. Forest Service

a grove, its shape seemingly perfect in that instant, its limbs ideal to hold the ornaments that have become heirlooms.

Each of the three national forests in the Blue Mountains — Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla and Malheur — sells Christmas tree permits for \$5. There is a household limit of five permits.

Permits are also available from many businesses, or online at [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov) (which charges an additional \$2.50 processing fee).

If you have a fourth grader in the house the permit is free. All fourth graders are eligible to receive a free permit by presenting a paper voucher printed from the Every Kid Outdoors website, <https://everykidoutdoors.gov/>.

National forest permits are valid only for public land managed by the Forest Service.

**Where to search, what to look for**

Trees, of course, tend to grow in groves. And this is a typical trait for the grand and white

firs that are a favorite Christmas tree in Northeastern Oregon forests.

When you come across a cluster of firs — especially if they're slathered in snow — it can be difficult to distinguish between a specimen with gaping gaps in its limbs or a crooked trunk, and one that would be the crowning holiday adornment for your living room.

Lest anyone worry about contributing to deforestation by cutting a Christmas tree, quite the opposite is true, Forest Service officials say.

Removing a small-diameter tree can improve forest health by reducing the competition for sunlight, water and nutrients, allowing remaining trees to grow faster.

"In most parts of the forest, removing small trees reduces the risk of wildfire, helps other trees to grow larger and more fire-resistant, and

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## Home rehab loans available

By BENNETT HALL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

**LA GRANDE** — Help is available for low-income homeowners who've been putting off making repairs around the house because the cost was too high.

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, a nonprofit social service agency covering Grant, Union, Baker and Wallowa counties, is accepting applications for its Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program, which provides zero-interest loans of up to \$24,999 to qualifying applicants.

The money can be used for a wide range of projects, including plumbing and electrical work, structural repairs, roof replacement, siding installation, painting, heating system upgrades, or new doors, windows or flooring. The loans don't have to be paid back until the owner moves out, sells the



These photos show a home before and after repairs made with funding from the Community Connection Home Rehabilitation Loan Program.

home or dies.

While there is no age requirement to apply for a loan, the program can be especially helpful for seniors living on fixed incomes and facing significant home repairs.

"Those loans can keep people in their homes," said Grant County Judge Scott Myers, who serves on the program's

loan policy committee.

To be eligible, applicants must meet certain requirements, including the following:

- Real market value of the home must be \$250,000 or less.
- Borrower must have annual income no greater than \$40,250 for an individual or

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**HOME REHABILITATION LOAN PROGRAM**

| County  | Active loans | Balance     |
|---------|--------------|-------------|
| Grant   | 11           | \$194,118   |
| Baker   | 28           | \$520,638   |
| Union   | 77           | \$1,319,889 |
| Wallowa | 21           | \$302,816   |
| Total   | 137          | \$2,337,461 |

Source: Community Connection of Northeast Oregon

