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Gazette Times

VOL. 130 NO. 28 8 Pages Wednesday, July 13, 2011 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Forest service agent comes under gunfire

Law enforcement still investigating

By Andrea Di Salvo

A Umatilla National Forest service agent working in the line of duty came under gunfire in the Mallory Creek area last month.

The agent, who prefers to remain unnamed, is a hydrologist who had gone into the Mallory Creek area to place a temperature monitoring device in the stream on Thursday, June 16. According to forest service ranger Todd Buchholz, the man was working in a remote area, having parked his truck and driven an ATV about 5 miles into the rugged wilderness.

About 2 p.m., the agent had his waders on and was in the process of placing the device in the stream when he heard five or six gunshots; he then heard bullets whizzing overhead.

The agent took cover behind a nearby tree. When he heard more bullets hit the tree, he removed his orange vest, hardhat and white shirt, all of which provided visual targets for a potential shooter. He then left the tree and hid in the underbrush until dark.

When the agent missed his sign-in time, which was around 6:30 p.m., the forest service and Morrow County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) initiated search and rescue.

They agencies located the forest service employee around 1:30 a.m. on Friday, June 17. He was unharmed but sunburned, dehydrated and severely shaken. All of the agent's equipment, including the ATV, was recovered.

The forest service and other local officials then started investigating the cause of the shooting.

"We didn't know what it was, but our first thoughts were a drug-trafficking organization, because we've had grow sites in that neck of the woods in the past," said Buchholz.

Forest service crews were joined by MCSO in combing the area for signs of marijuana grows or other suspicious activity. State and federal law enforcement joined the search on Saturday. Searchers found nothing.

Buchholz says law enforcement is still investigating the area but, as of this time, has found nothing to indicate the cause of the gunfire.

Local couple brings taste of Italy to Heppner

Heppner residents don't have to travel to Rome for a taste of a traditional Italian dessert, thanks to local entrepreneurs Carmelo and Andrea Di Salvo.

The couple, who owns and operates Di Salvo's Italian Ice Cream, has been churning out their frozen treat for south Morrow County since August of 2009. It was an idea Carmelo had been pondering for a while. When he found himself between jobs, though, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to give his dream a try.

Carmelo Di Salvo scoops lemon gelato out of the Di Salvo's gelato machine in their kitchen station at Howe's About Pizza.
–Photo by Andrea Di Salvo

"I've been in business and management for many years and have made the companies I work for a lot of money," says Carmelo. "This company is different not only because it is ours, but it combines my passions for entrepreneurship and Italian food."

Both of those passions run deep. Carmelo, who grew up surrounded by his Italian family in Buffalo, NY, has an MBA in entrepreneurship and a doctorate in organizational leadership, both from Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA. For relaxation and creativity, though, he retreats to the kitchen to prepare traditional family favorites and experiment with gourmet concepts. So, he says, creating an artisan ice cream became an offshoot of that.

Andrea, a Heppner native, admits that she doesn't have a drop of Italian blood. She loves to bake, though, and used her own cooking experience to help Carmelo craft their unique recipe before launching their product at the local farmers' market.

"We actually found our first recipes online," says Andrea. "We didn't find anything that we loved, though. We kept modifying and tweaking and modifying some more until we

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High algae levels found in Willow Creek Reservoir

High algae levels found in Willow Creek Reservoir prompted a health advisory issued yesterday by Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division and Morrow County Health Department officials.

Water monitoring has confirmed the presence of blue-green algae that can produce toxins harmful to humans and animals. These algae levels are likely to be associated with dangerous toxin concentrations in the water, according to World Health Organization guidelines.

Swallowing or inhaling water droplets should be avoided, as well as skin contact with water by humans or animals.

Drinking water from Willow Creek Reservoir is especially dangerous. Oregon Public Health officials advise campers and other visitors that toxins cannot be removed by boiling, filtering or treating the water with camping-style filters.

People who draw in-home water directly from Willow Creek Reservoir are advised to use an alternative water source because private treatment systems are not proven effective in removing algae toxins. However, public drinking water systems can reduce algae toxins through proper filtration and disinfection. If people on public water systems have questions about treatment and testing, they should contact their water supplier.

Oregon health officials recommend that people who choose to eat fish from waters where algae blooms are present should remove all fat, skin and organs before cooking since toxins are more likely to collect in these tissues.

Additionally, public health officials advise that people should not eat freshwater clams from Willow Creek Reservoir. Crayfish muscle can be eaten, but internal organs and liquid fat should be discarded.

Exposure to toxins can produce symptoms of numbness, tingling and dizziness that can lead to difficulty breathing or heart problems and require immediate medical attention. Symptoms of skin irritation, weakness, diarrhea, nausea, cramps and fainting should also receive medical attention if they persist or worsen. Children and pets are particularly susceptible.

The public will be advised when the concern no longer exists.

With proper precautions to avoid water contact, people are encouraged to visit Willow Creek Reservoir and enjoy activities such as camping, hiking, biking, picnicking, catch-and-release fishing and bird watching. Boating is safe as long as speeds do not create excessive water spray, which could lead to inhalation risk.

For local information contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Willow Creek Natural Resource Management Office at 541-676-9009.

Central Oregon District tightens fire prevention restrictions

The onset of high wildfire danger has prompted Oregon Department of Forestry to tighten public fire prevention restrictions in its Central Oregon District. Effective at 6 a.m. on July 9, regulated-use restrictions will take effect in the district, which encompasses 12 counties including Harney, Morrow, Grant, Wheeler, Gilliam, Umatilla, Hood River, Wasco, Deschutes, Crook, Jefferson and Lake.

District Forester George Ponte said that, while the cool, wet spring has delayed the onset of fire season, conditions are changing fast.

"The warmer, drier and breezier weather is drying out the vegetation quickly," he said. "The Central Oregon District is currently experiencing high fire danger, and we expect it to bump up to extreme over the next few days."

"Regulated use" places the following restrictions on activities in the forest:

-Smoking is prohibited while traveling, except in vehicles on improved roads.

-Open fires are prohibited, including campfires, charcoal fires, cooking fires and warming fires, except in designated areas. Portable cooking stoves using liquefied or bottled fuels are allowed. Open fires are allowed if conducted in compliance with a valid burning permit.

-Chainsaw use is prohibited between 1 p.m. and 8 p.m. Chainsaw use is permitted at all other hours if the following firefighting equipment is present with each operating saw: one ax, one shovel and one 8 oz. or larger fire extinguisher. In addition, a fire watch is required at least one hour following the use of each saw.

-Use of motor vehicles, including motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles, is prohibited except on improved roads and except for use by a landowner and employees of the landowner on their own land while conducting activities associated with their livelihood.

-Possession of the following firefighting equipment is required while traveling in a motorized vehicle in the forest (except on federal and state highways, county roads and driveways): one shovel and one gallon of water or one 2-½ pound or larger fire extinguisher. Exceptions are all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles, which must be equipped with an approved spark arrestor in good working condition.

-Use of fireworks is prohibited.

-Cutting, grinding and welding of metal is prohibited between 1 p.m. and 8 p.m. At all other times the area is to be cleared of flammable vegetation and the following fire equipment is required: one ax, one shovel and one 2-½ pound or larger fire extinguisher in good working order.

-Mowing of dried grass with power-driven equipment is prohibited between the hours of 10 a.m. and 8 p.m., except for the commercial culture and harvest of agricultural

-See FIRE PREVENTION/ PAGE FOUR

City and landowners settle Kirk Street right of way dispute

The city of Heppner and Sally and Danny McBride have apparently settled a disagreement over the use of city owner right-of-way by the McBrides on Kirk Street in Heppner.

At the council's monthly meeting in Heppner on Monday, Sally McBride was present to discuss her and her husband's usage of the right-of-way next to property on which they now live.

The dispute arose when the city of Heppner paid for a survey of Kirk Street, which lies west of Court Street, and found that the McBrides had a small RV parked on a portion of the easement between Kirk Street and Willow Creek, as well as a small shed and some construction material. A neighbor had apparently complained to the city that their use of the right-of-way was causing difficulty in using Kirk Street.

The McBrides, who live next door in a larger RV on the corner of Kirk and August Streets, have been using the easement for quite some time, until the survey revealed the true property lines. At that time they asked for a public hearing—which was held Monday—for the council to grant them use of the easement.

After much discussion, the city instructed the McBrides to move the materials and small RV off the right-of-way and that no building would be allowed. Vehicles would be okay, the council said. Sally McBride said she understood and that she and her husband would move the small RV and the shed a few feet to get off of the easement.

In a related matter, Roy and Shirley Clark, who own property on the other side of Kirk Street, were at the meeting and pointed out that the survey, which was completed by the city in May, showed that part of the property now being used as city road is actually owned by the Clarks.

"That road has been there for as long as we have," Clark said. "Why mess with it now, as long as everyone can use it as they always have," he said.

"If we let people encroach on right-of-way, then we would set a precedence and everyone could do it," Mayor Les Paustian said.

"But Roy's property comes out into the road," one person in the audience said. "If he puts up a fence on this property line, nobody is going to get across the bridge (over Willow Creek at the end of Kirk Street)," it was pointed out.

In other business, the council declined to act on an offer of $5,000 for the "HUD house," which the city now owns at 160 Chase Street. The city bought the house for $1 from the Housing and Urban Development and immediately put the property up for sale with Sykes Real Estate in Heppner. The council said it would continue to accept offers on the house and look at any others at its next council meeting.

In other business, the council instructed the city manager to begin soliciting bids for reconstructing the well casing on city well 3 down to 60 feet. It is currently at 35 feet and, because of poor water quality, the city has been mandated by the State Drinking Water Program to do the reconstruction.

-See RIGHT OF WAY/PAGE FIVE

HARVEST HOURS
Monday- Friday 7am - 6pm
Saturday 7am - 5pm
UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE
Morrow County Grain Growers
Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396 For farm equipment, visit our web site at www.mcgg.net