

HEPPNER

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Gazette Times

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Town & Country schedule at a glance

January 12 Town and Country events are as follows:

- 10 a.m.: Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) annual meeting, St. Patrick's parish hall in Heppner.
- 12:15 p.m.: Morrow SWCD and Morrow County Livestock Growers (MCLG) lunch, St. Patrick's parish hall in Heppner.
- 1 p.m.: Morrow SWCD and MCLG 24th annual joint program, St. Patrick's parish hall in Heppner.
- 3:30 p.m.: MCLG annual meeting scheduled to start following joint program, St. Patrick's parish hall in Heppner.
- 6 p.m.: Heppner Chamber of Commerce's annual Town and Country awards begins with a no-host social hour served by Bucknum's, Morrow County Fairgrounds.
- 6:30 p.m.: Dinner buffet catered by Pudding on the Ritz, with awards to follow, Morrow County Fairgrounds.

Oregon wolf OR7 enters California

A gray wolf that started out in northeastern Oregon is now, at least temporarily, a California resident.

According to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the two-and-a-half-year-old male wolf had been wandering in southern Oregon for some time.

Since the animal has been collared with a GPS device that periodically transmits its location, biologists have been able to document its travels since it was collared in February 2011. Based on the GPS data, he is now more than 300 miles from where his journey began.

His journey, in total, has been more than twice that far, with many changes in direction. Several times he has reversed direction and returned to previous locations. Last week, the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) learned that the wolf, designated OR7, crossed the state line into northern Siskiyou County. Tracking data puts his most recent location as a few miles south of the Oregon border. It is not possible to predict his next movements, which could include a return to Oregon.

DFG continues to collaborate with ODFW and expects to receive daily location data. This information is transmitted daily

when atmospheric conditions permit. DFG will be sharing only general location information as this wolf, while in California, is protected as endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

"Whether one is for it or against it, the entry of this lone wolf into California is an historic event and result of much work by the wildlife agencies in the West," said DFG director Charlton H. Bonham. "If the gray wolf does establish a population in California, there will be much more work to do here."

Any wild gray wolf that returns to California is protected as endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

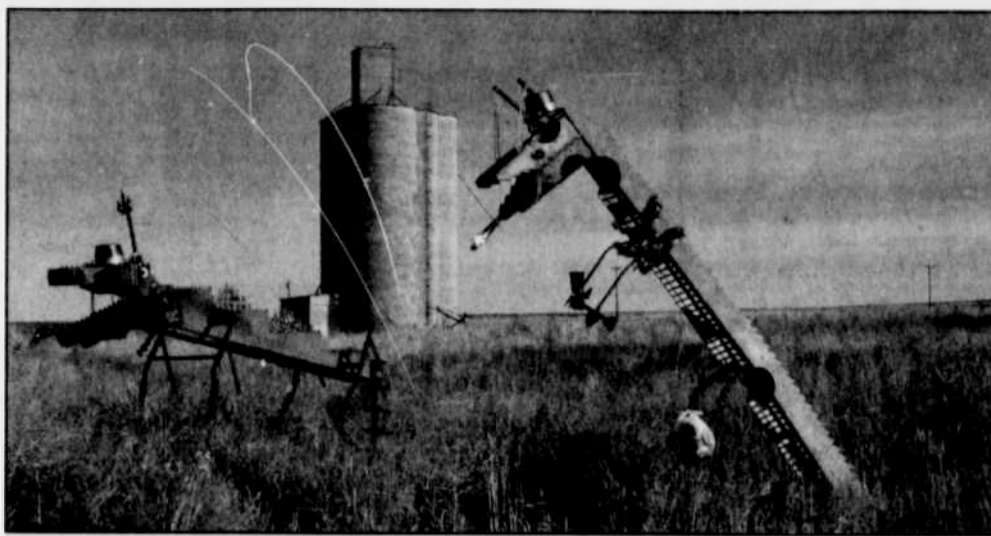
DFG has been following the recovery and migration of gray wolves in western states with the expectation that at some point they will likely reach California. The last confirmed wild gray wolf in California was killed in Lassen County in 1924. The available historic information on wolves in California suggests that while they were widely distributed, they were not abundant. DFG has been compiling historic records, life history information, reviewing studies on wolf populations in other western states, enhancing communication with other agencies

and training biologists on field techniques specific to wolves. This effort is to ensure that DFG has all necessary information available when needed; it is not a wolf management plan, and DFG does not intend to reintroduce wolves into California.

There are more than 1,600 wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains following a federal reintroduction effort which occurred in the mid-1990s. In 1999, a single wolf crossed into Oregon from Idaho, after nearly a 60-year absence in that state. There are now at least 24 wolves in Oregon in four reproducing packs. It has taken an additional 12 years for the first wolf to now reach the California border. This particular animal is exhibiting normal dispersal behavior for a young male and there is no way to predict whether he will stay in California, return to Oregon, or travel east into Nevada. Eventually, DFG expects that other wolves will reach California. Whether this will lead to the establishment of packs or simply transient individual animals is unknown.

Gray wolf recovery in other western states has been controversial, particularly regarding impacts on prey populations, livestock depredation and human safety.

Scraposaurus (and pal) ring in New Year



The North Lex Scrap-A-Saurus, right, (and his new unidentified pal left) apparently rang in the new year with a little partying Saturday. When asked where they were New Year's Eve, neither would say; however, judging from the hats, party favors and beads, looks like they both had a good time. —Photo by David Sykes

Army depot finishes disposal of chemical weapons

By Andrea Di Salvo

After decades of work, the Army has incinerated the last of the deadly chemical weapons stored in the Umatilla depot, according to an Army release.

The Army announced this fall that it had incinerated the remainder of the depot's stockpile, the last of Oregon's chemical weapons and about 12 percent of the nation's supply. The concrete bunkers, or "igloos," on the base once stored 3,717 tons of chemical weapons, including VX, sarin and mustard gas. The process of safely destroying the weapons cost roughly \$2.5 billion over the years according to the Seattle Times. Last month, a team of international inspectors left after satisfying themselves that the weapons stores were, at last, gone.

"The results of a December 5-6 inspection by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and completion of all Treaty verification activities confirmed that no chemical weapons remain in storage at the Umatilla Chemical Depot and that the stockpile has been destroyed," said a statement by Army depot spokesman Michael Fletcher.

The bunkers have been sterilized, and will remain on site.

The inspection and preliminary findings report closes the facility

as a Chemical Weapons Convention storage and demilitarization site well in advance of the April, 2012 International Treaty deadline.

"This is another significant milestone achieved assuring the safety of future generations," Lieutenant Colonel Kris N. Perkins, U.S. Army Commander of the installation, said. "This achievement is a direct result of dedication to the safe completion of this project by Team Umatilla Government and Contract employees and UMCD's community partners."

The close-out inspection report also signals the departure of the international body of inspectors that has watched and verified the operations and incineration of chemical agents since May 2004.

"The Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility has hosted hundreds of OPCW inspectors representing the 188 member nations since onsite destruction verification activities began in May 2004," said Gary Anderson, UMCD Site Project Manager. "It is an honor to have been able to assist these individuals in their mission to verify the global reduction of chemical weapons."

While the surrounding communities can now breathe more easily with the destruction of the chemical threat, the

completion of the job carries a different kind of toll. According to the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce, about 600 workers will lose their jobs in coming years as the Army wraps up operations at the depot.

As the Army finishes tearing down the incinerator and doing environmental restoration, the cities around the depot are also trying to make plans for the newly-freed land. Plans include the Oregon National Guard taking over about 7,400 acres for a training complex. Two other areas would be set aside for industrial and commercial development, one of which is located in Morrow County. The possibilities give hope to towns that will see added unemployment increases in the midst of a recession.

Because the land is near the intersection of I-84 and I-82—and about equidistant from Boise, Spokane, Seattle and Portland—many say the location makes perfect sense as a distribution hub, complete with storage bunkers.

The Morrow County committee on the former depot land usage has not reached any firm decisions about the property. According to Umatilla County Commissioner Bill Hansel, inquiries have been fielded from Amazon and The Red Cross.

Town & Country awards celebrate community stars

"People, the Shining Light of Our Communities" will be the theme for the Heppner Chamber of Commerce's Town and Country Community Awards on Thursday, January 12 at the Morrow County Fairgrounds. Tickets are \$20 each and can be purchased at the Heppner Chamber, Bank of Eastern Oregon, Murray's Drugs and Community Bank.

The evening program will begin at 6 p.m. with a no-host social hour served by Bucknum's. The dinner buffet will be served at 6:30 p.m. with program activities to follow. JoAnn Lear of Pudding on the Ritz will be serving up prime rib,

stuffed chicken bundles, baked potatoes, winter vegetable blend, cranberry romaine salad, assorted breads and rolls, and blueberry cheesecake. The meal will be offered buffet-style but can be served by Heppner High School seniors if preferred.

The evening program includes a formal introduction of the Morrow County Fair and Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo Queen Maggie Collins and ambassadors Rachel Newport and Tim Nelson. A winner also will be drawn for jewelry donated by Peterson's Jewelers and a print of Zechariah Hintz photograph of the lighting storm over

Heppner. Sandy Matthews and Dale Bates are working on "Your Community on a Big Screen" for the enjoyment of participants. Finally, winners will be announced for the award categories of Youth Recognition, Business of Year, Woman of the Year, Man of the Year, Lifetime Achievement and Citizen-Educator of the Year.

Those who haven't attended before will want to put this event on their annual calendars, as the community recognizes its members for the contributions they make. Everyone is encouraged to get tickets early to ensure enough food and seating.

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