

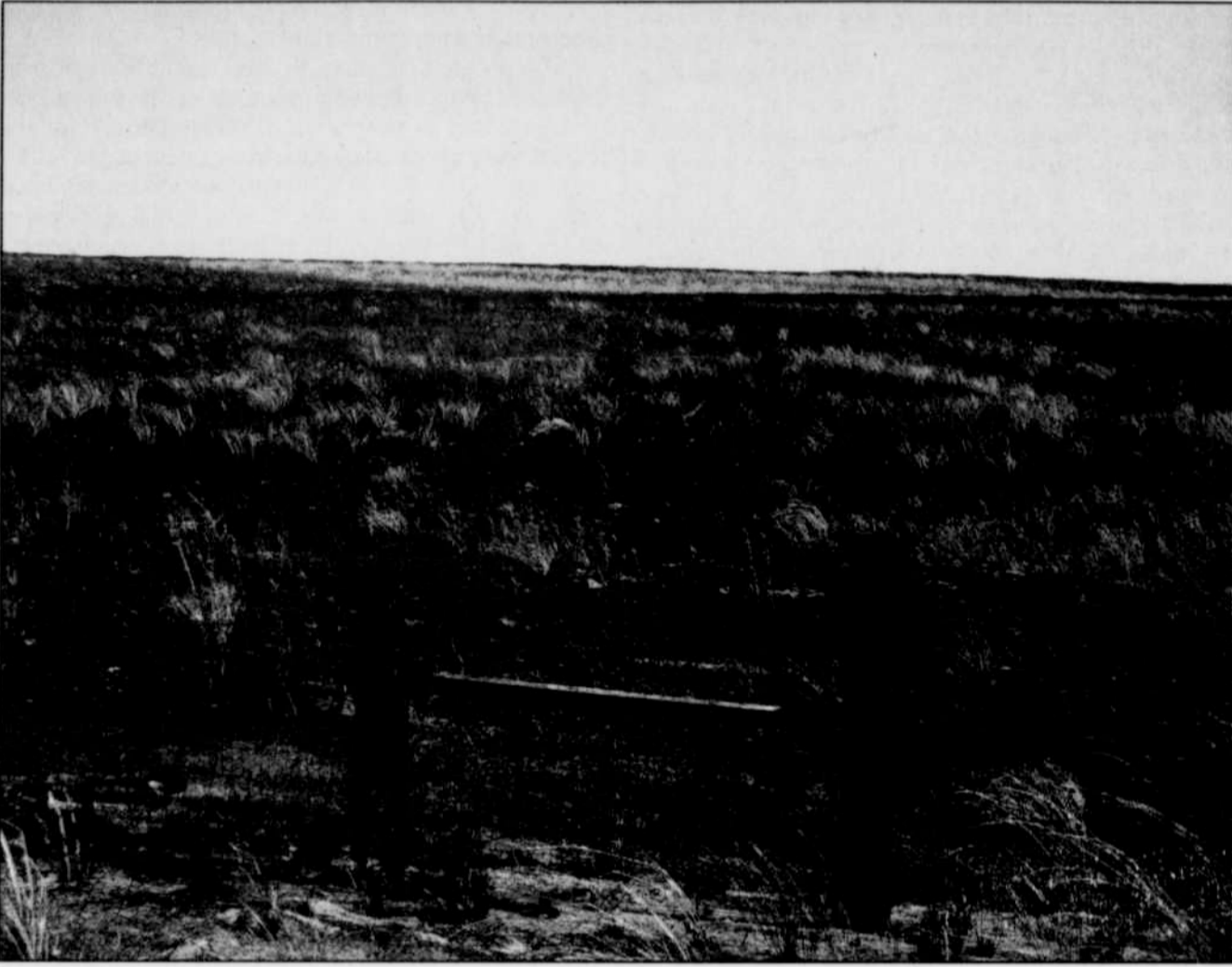
HEPPNER

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Gazette Times

VOL. 133 NO. 25 10 Pages Wednesday, July 23, 2014 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Fire season heats things up for local fire crews



Burned grassland and charred fence posts mark the path of a fire that began south of Heppner in Clark's Canyon last Wednesday. That fire, which burned thousands of acres in the Clark's Canyon and Rhea Creek areas, made the news last week, but local fire chiefs say it was a busy week overall for fire activity in the region. -Photo by David Sykes

By Andrea Di Salvo

A fire that began south of Heppner in Clark's Canyon made regional news last week, but local fire officials say it was a busy week overall, with more activity to be expected as the weather maintains good fire conditions.

The Clark's Canyon fire on Wednesday was initially estimated at around 20,000 acres, though Heppner Fire Chief Rusty Estes said it could prove to be smaller than that. Multiple regional agencies, as well as local farmers, responded to the fire. The flames burned across Clark's Canyon, jumped Hwy. 207 and crossed Upper Rhea Creek Road before crews stopped it near the intersection of Upper Rhea Creek and Sanford Canyon Road, the Morrow County Sheriff's Office reported. In all, it covered a distance of nearly

five miles. Much larger was the fire in Gilliam County, in which local firefighters joined other regional departments in providing mutual aid. Estes and Lone Rural Fire Protection District Chief Virgil Morgan said the Gilliam County fire burned from Hwy. 19 to Hwy. 74, going across Eightmile before crews stopped it at Rhea Lane.

Both fires, they said, were dangerous in their own right. "It's always dangerous, because the flames are big and they're moving fast," said Estes. "Clark's Canyon (was more dangerous) because it went several different directions up out of there and in standing wheat."

Morgan had a different opinion, saying the high winds on the Gilliam County fire made it especially

dangerous. Estes said winds that day were recorded at a sustained speed of 27 mph with gusts of up to 36 mph.

Both fire chiefs say they are concerned about fire conditions in the coming weeks. Though temperatures have cooled and the area has received minimal precipitation, the forecast also calls for thunderstorms. The National Weather Service

out of Pendleton issued multiple red flag warnings Tuesday morning through late Wednesday evening due to abundant lightning. Estes and Morgan agree that the land is still too dry to take that kind of pressure.

"Everything's pretty dry, and they're expecting some winds," said Morgan, "and it could be hectic if we get a lot of lightning and no rain."



The estimated burn area of the Clark's Canyon fire, which ran for nearly five miles. -Map courtesy of MCSO

Heppner gets ready for a Ruckus in the Boonies

By Andrea Di Salvo

Music lovers in the Heppner area will have the chance to raise a ruckus this Saturday, July 26, at the first-ever Ruckus in the Boonies music festival.

The festival will take place at—or rather, behind—Bucknum's Tavern in Heppner. Seventeen acts will take the stage during the event, offering up "a little bit of everything," from country to heavy metal to bluegrass and rockabilly. The festival, which is intended to be appropriate for all ages,

will cost \$5 at the gate, with gates to open at 2 p.m.; the event is expected to wind down around 1 a.m. the next morning.

Ruckus in the Boonies is the brain child of local musician Aaron "Dog Bite" Harris. Harris says that, while he frequently puts on smaller shows at Bucknum's, he's never personally tackled anything so large. He does say he's done a lot of research and is not "walking into this blindly." Harris adds that, while many may not see anything special about just another music festival, he believes it's the preservation of an art form.

"Live music is a dying art. Everything can be done on a computer and everything can be seen on YouTube. People don't want to go out as much as they did 10 years ago. It's hard on touring bands/musicians these days," he says. "As a person who has been through all the hardship of being a touring musician, I know how hard it is to find a good venue, and a good show, especially in a secluded area such as Eastern Oregon."

"We have actually been drawing in people from Portland, Seattle, Walla Walla and a few other places

just to watch the shows we put on here," he adds.

While many may not see Heppner as the logical location for a large event like this, he says there are many reasons to have a music festival here and now.

"For the last three years there's been a very large music festival for underground music in Montana called Farmageddon Fest. Last year I had a lot of the bands that toured out to Montana to play Farmageddon Fest get in contact with me about playing Heppner," Harris explains. "Heppner is located in a spot in between Idaho and Portland where it is very hard to get a gig, so Bucknum's Tavern has actually become a hot spot for touring musicians."

Harris says he started kicking around the idea of a music festival last year about this time. Then Farmageddon Fest announced it was moving to Wisconsin this year, leaving, Harris says, no music festival on the western side of the country.

"Ryan Miller came up to me after a show I did at Bucknum's and said he really wanted to do an

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Disque steps down as home health, hospice director

Health district clinics granted Tier 2 certification

By April Sykes

Robanai Disque has announced that she is stepping down as director of Pioneer Home Health and Hospice, effective September 30, Morrow County Health District CEO Dan Grigg told the MCHD Board at their meeting in Ione Monday night. He said that she will stay with the Home Health and Hospice program as a part-time RN, working 10-20 hours per week.

MCHD's clinics, Pioneer Memorial Clinic in Heppner and Irrigon Medical Clinic, have been granted a Tier 2 Patient Centered Primary Care Home certification. The certification for the program, which is part of the Oregon Health Authority,



Robanai Disque

will provide the clinics with \$6 per month per member from the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization. He said that as of April of this year, the district had 749 EOCCO patients, which amounts to \$53,928 a year for the district. Grigg said that if the Morrow County clinics receive the Tier 3 designation, the district would receive \$8 per patient per month.

Grigg added that he would also like to discover how many Morrow County EOCCO patients were assigned to the Boardman clinic, Columbia River Community Health

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Disque has been with Home Health and Hospice for over 30 years and the director since 2009.

Grigg said that the district currently plans to combine the HH&H director position with the position of clinic manager. The district has been searching for a candidate to fill the newly-created clinic manager position, but so far has been unsuccessful.

Also at the meeting, Grigg said that both of

Visitor from Poland gives a view of local life through new eyes



Janina Boruta (right) and Neva DeMayo at the St. Patrick's Senior Center senior meal site during Boruta's visit to Heppner. -Photo by David Sykes

By Andrea Di Salvo

Heppner isn't usually a tour stop for the international jet set, but the

town did recently get to view itself through the eyes of a unique visitor.

Polish woman Janina

Boruta, 39, came to Heppner on the urging of Heppner woman Neva DeMayo. The two met during DeMayo's trip to Poland two years ago as a Oregon representative of Lutheran women at the International Women's Forum in Warsaw. Boruta served as DeMayo's interpreter during part of her trip, a time of bonding that included an emotional visit to Auschwitz, DeMayo said.

Last week, though, it was DeMayo's turn to show hospitality, as well as the local sights, to her visitor from Poland. This is Boruta's first time in

America. She is in America for two weeks, but spent four days in Heppner before heading to Charlotte, NC for the Triennial Convention of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. The Polish woman said she is here to visit parishes and share what the work of the women in the Poland Evangelical Church, or

Evangelical-Augsburg, looks like.

She most likely would have spent her time in Oregon touring churches along the I-5 corridor. However, when Boruta told DeMayo she had been chosen to come to Oregon on a Lutheran women's exchange, DeMayo called the Portland office and requested that she be able

to host the Polish woman during her time in Oregon.

The request was granted, and DeMayo picked up Boruta in Portland last week.

"It (the visit) went really well. We had a wonderful time," DeMayo said. "It was so much fun to see my own community

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