

# Tea Party gets first-hand account of Harney County case

Public lands at heart of Monday meeting

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
Staff Writer

Harney County ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond reported to federal prison Monday, though at least one of the family's allies believes they won't be serving their full sentences.

Dave Duquette of Hermiston works with the national nonprofit Protect the Harvest and met at length with the Hammonds in Burns before a peaceful rally broke off into an armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday.

Duquette defended the Hammonds and weighed in on the militia's presence Monday with the Greater Hermiston Area Tea Party, which lent a sympathetic ear to what they see as a gross injustice carried out by the federal government.

The Tea Party also heard from a retired U.S. district forester about the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision, and the intent to reach out to local officials in order to invoke coordination with the Forest Service — similar to recent efforts in Grant and Baker counties. About 20 people attended the meeting.

At the heart of both issues is the perceived mismanagement of public lands and domineering attitude of agencies like the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Rob Lovett, chairman of the Greater Hermiston Area Tea Party, said citizens need to unite in opposition under a single voice.

"We're talking about what seems like a government against the people," Lovett said. "We want our country back under a constitutional government, and we'll settle for nothing less."

That unity seemed to splinter in Burns, where Saturday's march on behalf of the Hammonds was overshadowed by an armed militia's occupation of the nearby Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Duquette said he has swapped messages with the group's leader, Ammon Bundy, and believes the group will eventually leave peacefully. Bundy's brother, Ryan Bundy, recently told Oregon Public Broadcasting they will go if the community wants them to go.

"My guess is this thing won't last much longer," Duquette said.

Duquette said the residents of Burns are divided about the militia's effort. However, Duquette added the occupation has gone a long way toward raising awareness about the Hammonds' case.

"There's nothing better than free press. And they got a lot of it," Duquette said.

Duquette said the Hammond sentence is "the most sickening case of government overreach I've seen." The ranchers were con-

victed of arson after setting fires that burned onto public land. A U.S. district judge initially refused to impose the mandatory five-year minimum sentence, which he said was cruel and unusual punishment, though the ruling was later overturned on appeal.

The Hammonds were resentenced and turned themselves in on Monday, though Duquette said he believes the duo will be released early. His organization, Protect the Harvest, is going to bat for the ranchers.

"It was an extreme injustice to send them away for five years," Duquette said. "I think they were done wrong. Constitutionally, I don't think it was legal what happened."

Duquette said the militia's actions aren't what he would have done, but at least people now have a better understanding of the Hammonds' plight. The Hammonds have distanced themselves from the group.

In a separate presentation, the Tea Party heard from Dave Price, a retired district forester who spent 37 years working with the Forest Service in Oregon, Washington and California. He spoke about the ongoing Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision, which is due for a final environmental report in September.

Price was critical of the Forest Service, which he said has stacked restriction upon restriction to prevent active management that has gradually built to 20-year backlog of fuels — the same fuels that are now driving bigger, hotter wildfires.

The plan does not approve specific forestry projects, but sets goals and conditions for the forests moving forward. Plans are updated every 10-15 years, though the current Blue Mountains forest plan dates back to 1990.

Just 30 percent of land in the three forests is now deemed suitable for management, Price said. The rest is locked up in wilderness areas, roadless inventory or other protected categories. The proposed forest plans call for 162 million board feet of timber available for harvest, despite the fact the area is growing at a rate of 800 million board feet per year.

"It ain't gonna work," Price said. "You're falling way behind. Something has to be done."

Lovett said the group needs to reach out to timber executives and county commissioners to come up with a local forest management plan that will allow them to invoke coordination with the Forest Service.

Lovett said the Forest Service has acted like a "quasi-dictatorship" which has led to economic losses in communities.

"We have lost much of our prosperity to this," Lovett said.

Price encouraged the group to act quickly. After 2016, he said they might not have another chance.

"It's your land. And you have a big investment," he said.

# Marching band sweeps awards at Holiday Bowl parade

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

There is going to be a lot less room in the trophy case after the Hermiston High School marching band returned from their Holiday Bowl trip last week with a lot of new hardware to display.

The band swept every award in their division on Dec. 30, beating out nine other schools for the overall grand prize at the San Diego Holiday Bowl Parade in addition to bringing home the first place trophies for best music, best percussion, best color guard, best marching, best drum major and best general effect.

Shaelynn Boyd, a senior who plays percussion in the band, described a scene of jubilation when the band found out they had won everything.

"Everyone was cheering and laughing and crying," she said.

The announcement came while the band was getting ready to play at the halftime show of the Holiday Bowl Wednesday night, when the nation watched the Wisconsin Badgers beat the USC Trojans, 23-21.

Boyd said getting ready for the trip meant a lot of extra practicing and hard work fundraising, but in that moment there were no regrets.

"It was all worth it," she said. "All the time we put in and the struggles we had, it was all worth it."

The awards meant a lot to the mentors who went along for the trip, too.

Adrian Rodarte, the band's color guard instructor, said he was as ecstatic as the kids about the win. Rodarte was captain of the color guard during his senior year at Hermiston



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY DANIELLE HARVEY

Hermiston High School took first place in the AA division for the Holiday Bowl parade in San Diego on Wednesday.

High School in 1999-2000 and then watched the band go through a rebuilding period when it didn't take any major trips again until this year.

"I grew up in Hermiston, and just to see the band come back alive and grow ... it has been just surreal," he said.

Rodarte said the color guard didn't have much time to learn the routine for the halftime show after receiving videos of it, and it was also a tight schedule choreographing and learning a routine for the parade, but the group seemed to have taken his words to heart when he pushed them to give it their all.

"I made sure they knew, 'You need to take this seriously. You're representing your school and your state,'" he said.

Band director Paul Dunsmoor said he went down to San Diego confident the



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY DANIELLE HARVEY

Hermiston High School took first place in the AA division for the Holiday Bowl parade in San Diego on Wednesday.

band would measure up well, but to win first place in every category while competing against nine other similarly sized bands from around the country was a "huge surprise."

He said he hoped the students gained a lot of self-confidence from the experience and also learned from the other bands they interacted with while re-

hearsing for the halftime show.

After working hard to help the band shine in San Diego, Dunsmoor won't soon forget the cheering, crying, hugging and flurry of selfie-taking with the trophies that happened after the awards were handed out.

"They were so excited," he said. "It was incredible."

# Hermiston man joins list of missing men in area

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

A Hermiston man's family is worried about his whereabouts after three weeks without any contact from him.

Family and friends say they haven't seen Joel Luna, 36, since Dec. 15, 2015. His stepmother Michelle Luna said his phone is turned off and a car he borrowed around that time hasn't been found.

Michelle said it isn't uncommon for him to take off for a few days at a time. He had recently returned from visiting a friend in the Grand Coulee area in Washington. But he has never gone weeks without any contact with his three daughters in Boardman or other family members.

"Somebody should have heard from him," she said.

The family filed a missing person's report and has been spreading the word on Facebook and with fliers, but so far haven't had any luck in locating him.

Joel is Hispanic, 5'7", 170 pounds with brown eyes and dark hair. He has a piercing on his chin, several tattoos and usually wears facial hair. His last

known vehicle was a blue 1998 Mercury Sable with Oregon plate number 185 FGV.

Luna's family aren't the only ones still searching for a loved one in the area.

John Getman, 78, is still missing after wandering away from a family member's home in Irrigon about 2 a.m. on Nov. 16, 2015.

Getman has Alzheimer's disease and had recently moved to Irrigon from New York. Several people later reported seeing him walking along nearby roads that morning but search and rescue efforts were unsuccessful in locating him.

He is described 6 feet tall, 190 pounds with short gray hair and brown eyes. He was last seen wearing a heavy brown Carhartt

jacket, brown plaid shirt, blue jeans and sneakers.

Marcus Wise, 27, of Hermiston has been missing since June 18, 2015 but his family and friends haven't given up their efforts to distribute fliers with his picture on them in the hopes that someone comes forward with information on his whereabouts.

According to them, he left for a walk with his dog in the Riverfront Park area

on June 18. The dog was found wandering around the west end of town later that day, but Wise was nowhere to be found and his family hasn't seen him since.

Anyone with information on the whereabouts of the three men can contact Hermiston Police Department at 541-567-5519 or Morrow County Sheriff's Department at 541-676-5317.



John Getman



Joel Luna



Marcus Wise

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