

# The INDEPENDENT

Published on the first and third Wednesdays of each month by The Independent, LLC, 725 Bridge St., Vernonia, OR 97064. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410. Deadline is noon the Friday before each issue. Publisher Clark McGaugh, clark@the-independent.net Editor Rebecca McGaugh, rebecca@the-independent.net Printed on recycled paper with vegetable based dyes

## Opinion

### Don't drink & drive Sunday

At the Super Bowl on Sunday, the New England Patriots will face off against the New York Giants. But, it doesn't seem to make a difference whether your team is playing, or which team is winning or losing... fans' emotions run high. That may contribute to the day being a big one for drunk driving.

Before you start drinking, you know you don't want to get a ticket, get arrested and put in jail, or kill yourself or someone else while drinking and driving. After you start drinking, alcohol impairs your ability to make good decisions. That's why it's so important to designate a sober driver before the party begins.

40% of traffic deaths in Oregon are attributed to drinking. There's an article on page 8 about how not to become a statistic like that.

Don't drink and drive, and don't get in a vehicle with anyone who has been drinking. Get home safely so you can enjoy many Super Bowls to come.

### A crime wave in Vernonia?

Another reason not to drink and drive in Vernonia is not to play into Police Chief Mike Conner's rhetoric. A letter from Conner, with the Community Policing Survey in your current water bill, states, "...we had been unable to well manage the upswing in general Criminal Behavior and minor violations" (during the period when only two officers were available).

We asked the Chief about that, as we hadn't heard or seen anything about a recent increase in crimes. He wasn't able to validate the statement, then said it "may have been an improper statement." He explained that the department wasn't able to be pro-active about crime prevention. Asked to clarify that statement, he said that self-generated activity was down. An example of self-generated activity was finding evidence of criminal activity during a traffic stop (such as the famous broken taillight). Some might call that "fishing".

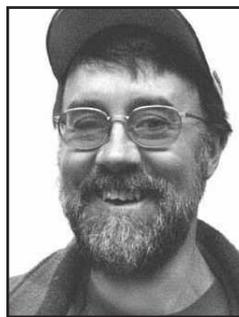
One question that should have been on the survey is, "Do you think police officers should live in the community?" When Connor was hiring, we asked if he was going to follow the city insurer's recommendation that officers live in the city. He told us, "that's illegal." We checked, it's not. Then Connor said he "misspoke."

Connor's misspeaking is of concern. A stronger attempt to be truthful and face issues openly would help him become a better police chief.



### Ike Says . . .

By Dale Webb, member Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League



Recently I was looking at the antelope tag numbers in our state and the trend is not good. Between 2009 and 2011, antelope tags have been reduced by 103. While this is not a huge decrease, it is higher than it first appears to be. Looking at the numbers, it is obvious that ODF&W traded some tags between units that decreased and areas that they term "agricultural hunts". The agricultural hunt areas are designed to keep the antelope population at a lower level to help avoid conflict with agricultural interests; of course, just how low to keep the population is subjective at best. So, adding a few more tags (42) helps offset lost tag sales in the rest of the state. The only agricultural area to lose tags was the Murderer's Creek unit, with 10. Antelope populations tend to be cyclical in nature, most likely in tune with the weather and predator cycles. Antelope populations definitely benefit when coyote populations take a hit, like the last time a distemper outbreak swept through Eastern Oregon. It takes as long as 10-14 years to draw antelope tags, so the reduction in tag numbers is not a welcome event, but keeping tag numbers artificially high when they need to be reduced would be far worse. Let's hope this trend turns around.

It will be interesting to see what ODF&W's

thinking is after this last elk season in the Saddle Mountain unit. Many of us believe that the bull elk harvest was significantly off this past season, I guess the harvest stats will tell us that answer when they come out this late spring. The puzzle though, was that ODF&W had one of the highest bull escapement counts last winter, after what many believed to be one of the higher harvest years the fall before. This seemed contrary, and now many believe that is why the harvest this year was off. Personally, I feel the harvest data is not totally accurate, there is incentive for certain harvest groups to under-report and I have been told this is going on. Second, I think it likely that ODF&W's survey methodology has a high degree of error that can influence their counts from year to year. When combined, these two factors can give a skewed look of what is actually going on in the field. Over time, though, they will show the trend that the population is taking, and the need to make adjustments. In regard to making additional adjustments, I feel that rifle hunters have taken the brunt of tag reductions in the past and more would be unjustifiable. It may be time to bring the archers into the controlled hunt format; really it is quite silly to manage a unit only partially in a controlled hunt format.

I predict that tag numbers in Eastern Oregon will continue to shrink, and drawing tags will become even more difficult than they already are. The predator situation over East is not changing for the better and with the addition of the new apex predator, the wolf, ungulate herds

Please see page 5