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Game and Fish captures Big Horn Mountains' bighorn sheep for transplant to Seminoes



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On Friday, helicopter pilot Mark Shelton from Native Range Capture Services of Elko, Nev., deposit a load of Devils Canyon bighorn sheep destined for the Seminoe Mountains. Twenty-five sheep were transplanted. 'The release went well,' said Greg Hiatt, Game and Fish Department wildlife biologist in Sinclair.

TRIBUNE PHOTO BY GIB MATHERS

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By Gib Mathers (mailto:gib@powelltribune.com)

Twenty-five more Big Horn Mountain bighorn sheep are making a new home in the Seminoe Mountains.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department captured 25 sheep on Friday morning from the Devils Canyon herd in the Big Horn Mountains to supplement the Seminoe Mountain herd north of Sinclair.

They accomplished their goal, said Greg Hiatt, Game and Fish wildlife biologist in Sinclair: 21 ewes, one lamb and three young rams.

The sun gradually warms the staging area at the Cottonwood Creek trailhead when the first batch of bighorn sheep arrive tethered to a helicopter.

The helicopter herds the sheep to a safe location where the gunner shoots a net over the sheep, where a net-gun capture crew catch the sheep. The crew consists of a pilot, gunner and animal handlers, known as "muggers." The muggers disembark the helicopter to calm each animal by placing a blindfold over its eyes while freeing it from the net. They hobble the animals and place them in a large mesh bag for quick transport to the staging/processing area.

With the sound like a rolled up newspaper swatting a kitchen counter, the helicopter's rotors slap the sky. Dangling beneath the helicopter, as though enveloped in cocoons, are four blindfolded bighorns. The pilot eases his machine over the staging area and gently lowers his live cargo to the ground.

Like the actors during the opening credits of the TV show MASH, Game and Fish personnel dash to the landing zone to carry the sheep back in tarps that resemble stretchers. Then the crew lay the animals on the ground to examine the sheep.

They collect blood samples and other biological samples, according to a handout provided by Tara Hodges, Game and Fish information and education specialist.

Once the exam is completed, a radio collar is attached and the sheep are carried to a straw-padded horse trailer, called a "Ewe Haul."

From there, they are transported to Rawlins and held overnight.

On Saturday morning, the animals were taken to the Seminoes for release, according to the handout.

The Devils Canyon herd population objective is 200. A summer count estimated the population at 212 sheep, Hiatt said.

Game and Fish wants to maintain a population of 200 so the sheep don't overpopulate, causing them to mingle with domestic sheep, according to the handout.



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Sometimes a combination of the germs and pathogens domestic sheep carry can kill bighorn sheep, Hiatt said.

The Seminoe herd population objective is 300 sheep, Hiatt said. There were between 60 and 70 sheep in the Seminoe Mountains prior to Friday's capture.

Game and Fish prefer Devils Canyon sheep for Seminoe relocations because both mountain ranges have similar terrain and climate. And, the Devils Canyon sheep lamb in late April or early May. That is an opportune time to deliver newborns while the Seminoe area is still green, Hiatt said.

In the late 1970s, sheep from Whiskey Mountain near Dubois were relocated to the Seminoes, but Game and Fish has not confirmed that any of those animals survived. In 2009, 20 bighorns were transplanted from Oregon. Another 20 arrived in 2010 from Oregon. Also in 2010, 12 bighorns were relocated from Devils Canyon, Hiatt said.

Presumably to keep animals calm, the people ministering to the sheep speak in hushed tones. The small crowd gathered to watch remain quiet too, fascinated with the proceedings. For the most part, the wild ungulates weather their captivity with relative calm. As the morning warms, personnel place the sheep in shallow snow drifts to keep them cool during their examination. Once the sheep are deposited in trailers, they remain docile except to occasionally kick the stall walls like horses waiting to unload at a choice pasture.

A number of volunteers assist the Game and Fish biologists in tending the bighorns.

Wendy Smith, Powell High School environmental science teacher, brought her students out to the site. Soon, they too are helping Game and Fish personnel examine the sheep.

Smith's students handle the sheep with care. "I was pretty impressed," Hiatt said. "It was a good class."

Meeteetse high schooler Jamey Olson came to assist her father, Jim Olson, Game and Fish game warden based in Meeteetse.

Olson said she is happy to help and to be near the sheep. "Seeing them like this is pretty cool."

One ewe's ear tore during capture, but the veterinarian on site at Devils Canyon gave her a sedative and stitched her up, Hiatt said.

"The release went well," Hiatt said. The bighorns headed right into the Seminoes when they were dropped off near their new home Saturday "and immediately started feeding."

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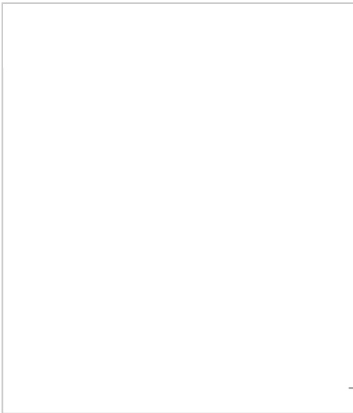
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POWELL TRIBUNE

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2021

Powell may use Absaroka excess funds for citywide street maintenance



BY KEVIN KILLOUGH Tribune News Editor

The City of Powell is considering how it will spend \$1.1 million in funding left over from an overhaul of Absaroka Street. The project — which widened the road and replaced water and sewer lines underneath — was paid for with a 1% specific purpose sales tax. Park County voters approved a \$13.66 million tax in 2014 for various projects around the county, including \$4.22 million for Absaroka Street. However, since there was some lag time between the time the tax was collected and when officials could notify vendors to stop collecting it, the tax raised more than \$14.7 million. Powell wound up receiving more than \$324,000 extra for the project, while the work itself wound up coming to \$417,000 under budget. That left the city with \$1.1 million left over. By law, that money must go toward maintaining the project approved by voters. However, Powell City Administrator Zack Thorington said it would take 20 years to spend all the money just on maintenance of Absaroka Street. At the Powell City Council's Feb. 1 meeting, Thorington proposed using some of the money for sherry seal projects throughout the city; the coating protects the road and extends its life, ultimately saving money over time on resurfacing roads. In order to reallocate the excess tax funds, the city is required to advertise its intention for 30 days and hold a public hearing. Then the council would have to pass a resolution approving the reallocation of the funds. Before voting a lot of the city's time toward the proposal, Thorington wanted to know if the council would consider the idea. Ideally, he said, the city does sherry seal treatments on city streets about once every five years. With budgets getting tighter, the city has fallen to a schedule of once every eight to 10 years. "It does get harder to balance the budget when you have big

See Funds, Page 3

FROZEN FUN



Lake Myrick and Mira, 3, head down the hill together at Homestead Park Sunday. Dozens of Powell area residents headed to the park for fun in the snow despite sub-zero temperatures. The cold is forecast to last all week, with temperatures as low as minus 10 degrees and high barely climbing above zero degrees.

SURVEY: VOTERS WORRIED ABOUT NATURAL RESOURCES

BY MARK DAVIS Tribune Staff Writer

Voters in western states say they're worried about the future of natural resources by a 2:1 margin, according to a poll across eight Rocky Mountain states. Even in Wyoming — perhaps the most conservative state in the annual State of the Rockies poll — the sentiment is in the majority. The importance of the Cowboy State's energy extraction industry was clear to its sponsors, but the trend is changing. Among more than 400 Wyoming voters who were surveyed, 67% said they would rather Congress emphasize the protection of clean water, air quality and wildlife habitat plus opportunities to recreate on public lands, while 40% said it was more important to produce more domestic energy by maximizing the amount of public lands available for responsible oil and gas drilling and mining. Wyoming was the only state in the poll where a majority of voters oppose the idea of gradually transitioning to having 25% of their energy produced from clean, renewable sources like solar, wind and hydroelectric over the next 15 years. However, support of renewable energy has

(/stories/powell-tribune-february-9-2021,29188)

Moving the Powell MakerSpace forward

BY KEVIN KILLOUGH Tribune News Editor

Leaders of the Powell MakerSpace are holding a series of focus groups with individuals from across the Big Horn Basin. The goal is to let people know the resource is available, help connect those resources with groups that will compile the data gathered from the sessions. "We're getting some really good feedback," said Shyler.

Hancock, 58, is the treasurer of the Powell MakerSpace Board of Directors and also serves as the volunteer coordinator at the facility. The board partnered with Powell Economic Partnership to utilize its expertise in the research. PEP is helping to coordinate the focus groups and get an idea of how to move the space forward.

See MakerSpace, Page 3



Babakah Burns, executive director of the Powell Economic Partnership, shows off equipment available at the Powell MakerSpace last month, as part of a tour for one of 13 community focus groups.



Former U.S. Sen. Al Simpson, R-Cody, speaks in defense of U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., at a Thursday night meeting of the Park County Republican Party's Central Committee — shortly before the body voted overwhelmingly to censure Cheney for supporting former President Donald Trump's impeachment.

Local, state Republicans censure Cheney over impeachment vote

BY CJ BAKER Tribune Deputy Editor

A packed Thursday night meeting, leaders of Park County's Republican Party condemned U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney's vote to impeach President Donald Trump. More than three dozen members of the party's central committee voted overwhelmingly to censure Cheney. "Representative Cheney has violated the trust of her voters, failed to faithfully represent a very large majority of motivated Wyoming voters, and neglected her duty to represent the party and the will of the people who elected her to represent them," reads a portion of the Park County GOP's resolution. The two-page document criticizes the grounds by which Trump was impeached and says there was no evidence presented that Trump committed a high crime or misdemeanor. County Republicans also passed a resolution that asks Wyoming's two Republican senators, John Barrasso and Cynthia Lammie, to "stand against" the impeachment trial in the Senate. The party outside it's unconstitutional to try Trump since he "has honorably left office." In the context of Cheney's meeting, Park County Republicans Party Chairman Martin Kammer said Trump's impeachment and the House's discipline of U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., were part of efforts "to keep us from our First Amendment rights, our free speech." "If we all do our part, we can keep this nation a republic," Kammer said the gathering of more than 100 Republicans at the Cody Cowboy Church. "But if we sit on our hands and we let the liberal job run amok, as it says, it's going to get pretty rocky pretty fast." When the party later took up the measure to censure Cheney, Kammer said it was "a difficult thing to do." However, he said "whether we like someone or we don't like someone, there's right and wrong." Thorington's vote to censure Cheney was cast by vocal eyes and says, with only a few of the 11 previous committee members in attendance opposing the measure. "The only product committee member to offer a full-fledged defense of Cheney

was former U.S. Sen. Al Simpson of Cody who questioned whether the Republican Party has become the club of Trump." Park County's GOP joined their counterparts in numerous other counties in censuring Cheney. The Wyoming Republican Party followed suit on Saturday with a more strident resolution that called on the congressional "to immediately resign from her position."

HER RESPONSE

Cheney, however, immediately rejected the idea of quitting and declined to vote on her vote to impeach Trump. In an appearance on Fox News Sunday, she blamed her vote as part of her oath to support the U.S. Constitution. "The single greatest threat to

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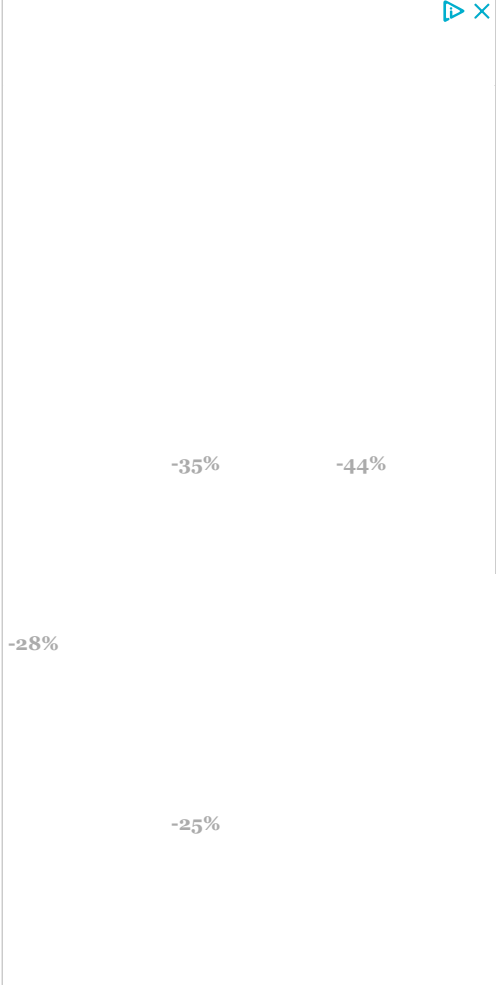
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