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# Pinedale Roundup

Newspaper of the Upper Green River Valley, Est. 1904

October 5, 2023

One Dollar



Joy Ufford photo

**Local ranchers and concerned citizens listen as BLM's Kimberlee Foster introduces the Rock Springs Field Office's draft EIS and draft RMP in the Marbleton Town Hall.**

## Public queries Rock Springs BLM drafts *Opposition mounts in state*

By Joy Ufford  
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**SUBLETTE COUNTY** – More than 60 people attended the Rock Springs Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public open house on Sept. 26 at the Marbleton Town Hall.

Nearly all questioned the BLM's recently released draft resource management plan (draft RMP) that includes part of southern Sublette County.

Rock Springs Field Office manager Kimberlee Foster explained to the standing-room-only crowd, including many area ranchers with BLM grazing permits and desert explorers – that it was the federal version of an “open house,” not a “public hearing.”

“We are not taking oral comments tonight,” Foster said. “There is no reporter here to take down comments. This is about a document. We're here to answer your questions about the document.”

### Massive read

Grazing, minerals, public access and many more issues are the relevant elements that make up the draft RMP's draft environmental impact statement (EIS) that has more than 1,300 pages in two volumes. The draft EIS was completed in August.

Its release opened 90 days through Nov. 16 for written

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## Whitman sentencing is today, Oct. 5

**SUBLETTE COUNTY** – On July 19, a 12-member jury found Chett L. Whitman, a longtime Big Piney resident, guilty of felony assault and battery with intent to injure a Daniel man during last year's Green River Rendezvous.

Whitman was found guilty of punching Chris Meeks, knocking him unconscious, and witnesses testified that Meeks was taken by surprise and did not instigate the fight behind the Cowboy Bar in Pinedale.

Whitman, represented by David McCarthy of Rawlins, testified on his own behalf that he feared Meeks and was mentally prepared to fight Meeks if he threw the first punch. He testified that he and Misty Jones, Meeks' former girlfriend, had started a romantic relationship.

Sublette County Attorney Clayton Melinkovich prosecuted the case.

The trial took place in 9th District Court before Judge Kate McKay, who ordered Whitman to be taken into custody without bond until his sentencing on Thursday, Oct. 5, at 3 p.m.

The penalty for conviction is up to 10 years in prison. Melinkovich and McCarthy will argue their sentencing recommendations before Judge McKay in 9th District Court at 3 p.m.

## Hospital District, Sublette Center contend with short staff

### Ambulance fleet aging

By Robert Galbreath  
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**PINEDALE** – Both the Sublette Center and the Sublette County Hospital District (SCHD) are experiencing difficulties in finding enough certified health-care employees to fully staff essential services in Sublette County.

Registered nurses, certified nursing

assistants, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics are in short supply in Sublette County and across the state and nation. The American Hospital Association called the health-care staff shortage in hospitals a “national emergency” in March 2022, projecting a shortage in nurses to the tune of 1.1 million by the end of that year.

A 2022 study by the American Ambulance Association stated that 39 percent of part-time EMT and 55 percent of part-time paramedic positions remained unfilled due

to an absence of qualified workers.

The shortages are forcing the Sublette Center to rely on costly traveling nurses to maintain its high level of care. The SCHD emergency medical services (EMS) are currently operating with the bare minimum of staff for each shift and the potential for burnout among current employees exists.

**The Sublette Center – expensive options**

The struggle to find nurses and CNAs

See 'SCHD' on page **A2**

## Parks' partnership to 'restore threatened whitebark pine'

By Joy Ufford  
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**WYOMING** – In December, the once-thriving whitebark pine, a staple of high western forests and a source of nutrition for grizzly bears, was listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act.

The causes of its decline – by an estimated 325 million trees – are due to white pine blister rust, climate change and pests, according to the National Park Service (NPS).

The Department of the Interior

announced plans to restore the whitebark pine under Investing in America, a \$2-billion commitment fund to advance President Joe Biden's America the Beautiful initiative to restore and conserve 30 percent of American lands and waters by 2030, also known as “30 by 30.”

On Sept. 26, the NPS announced a five-year agreement with American Forests to target initial whitebark restoration projects in Yellowstone, Grand Teton and Glacier national parks with \$44 million funded by the Inflation Reduction Act.

NPS and American Forests, called

“the first national nonprofit conservation organization,” will collaborate on where to plant native whitebark seeds directly into the ground instead of planting greenhouse seedlings, according to the NPS.

“(This) may offer a low-impact and cost-effective alternative to restore whitebark pine in remote locations,” it said.

In Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia national parks, projects would include harvesting cones from identified drought- and disease-resistant whitebark pines, then screen and cultivate seeds “to grow the

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## Welcome, Dr. Kyle Hoffman

Stay close to home for skilled surgical care.

Kyle Hoffman, MD, joins Brianne Crofts, MD, & Augusto Jamias, MD,  
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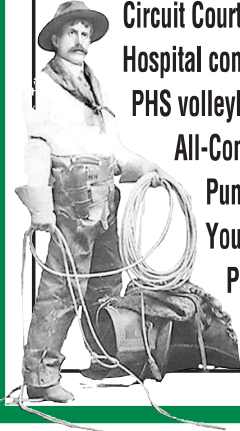


[pinedaleroundup.com](http://pinedaleroundup.com)

Official newspaper of Sublette County and the town of Pinedale.

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## Salvation for summers in Daniel

County okays special mosquito district election

By Joy Ufford  
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**SUBLETTE COUNTY** – Longtime Daniel resident Jean Hayward approached Sublette County commissioners at their Oct. 2 meeting with a landowner-supported petition to propose a new mosquito improvement district up for a special election next spring.

Chair Sam White congratulated Hayward for getting almost 80 percent of Daniel landowners' signatures, when she only needed 60 percent for an improvement district petition.

County clerk Carrie Long explained that 59 people signed Hayward's petition, accounting for 69 parcels out of the 96 total parcels of land within the proposed district.

Long told commissioners White, Dave Stephens, Mack Bradley, Tom Noble and Doug Vickrey the petition's filing with them

will be followed by a public notice, then two notices of a public hearing, the hearing and then onto the ballot.

Hayward then referred to Wyoming State Statute 22-29-113(c) to apply to the Board of Sublette County Commissioners for financial assistance to mail ballots for the special district election.

Long said that requires special envelopes and might cost \$300 to \$400 to mail out.

White asked if \$500 would be sufficient and Hayward said reimbursement to her was fine. She has spent years on this mosquito-district project, she added. "It needs to be done."

Commissioners approved the motion to fund the special mailed ballots to not exceed \$500.

"After we spray, there'll be coffee on my porch because we'll be able to sit there," Hayward joked.

## SCHD

Continued from 1A

means long-term care facilities like the Sublette Center are increasingly turning to expensive solutions to fill gaps in staffing, notably the use of temporary traveling nurses.

"Traveling staff are new for the Sublette Center," said Dawn Walker, Sublette Center administrator. "In the 12 years that I have worked at the Sublette Center, we never had to rely on traveling nurses."

Costs for traveling nurses and CNAs vary by company, but typically are "well above" \$50 an hour, Walker added. To ensure that resident care is not adversely impacted by a shortage of health-care workers, the Sublette Center is shelling out the expense, Walker continued.

The average CNA earns between \$15 and \$18 an hour, and local "economic barriers" like a lack of affordable housing in Sublette County can exacerbate the health-care staff shortage, Walker said.

To compound the issue, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is proposing new mandates regarding minimum staffing at long-term care facilities. If adopted, the mandates would increase the required number of hours for registered nurses and CNAs at places like the Sublette Center, Walker told SCHD trustees on Sept. 27.

Walker predicted that compliance with CMS's proposals would hit rural facilities particularly hard and cost the Sublette Center an additional \$100,000 per year.

The Sublette Center is partnering with Western Wyoming Community College to offer courses in Pinedale to certify local folks as nursing assistants. Costs to enroll in the program are covered by the Sublette Center, said Walker.

Dates for the courses are still being worked out, but the program will be open to high-school students over the age of 16, recent high school graduates and adults of any age interested in a career as a nursing assistant.

### EMS – few people 'willing to work'

A dearth of qualified EMTs and paramedics is stretching SCHD EMS to the limit. On Sept. 27, interim EMS director Jen Adam told SCHD trustees that the agency was operating with only four qualified staff per shift, translating to a single team operating in Big Piney and Marbleton and another team in Pinedale.

The situation means existing EMS staff

are constantly stepping up to fill each shift with little to no room for time off, raising the prospect of burnout, Adam added.

"We feel such a responsibility to the community that we are willing to go the extra mile," Adam said to trustees. "But I'm not sure how much longer we can go on."

Adam and her team are working overtime to recruit and hire new EMTs and paramedics. Adam announced two new hires in September and the fact that she had conducted two additional interviews on Sept. 27.

Nevertheless, it remains a challenge to "find folks willing to work," Adam remarked.

The new EMTs were in training, and Adam was looking into ways to streamline the orientation process to get new first responders up and running with their new teams as soon as possible.

In the meantime, Adam continued to ensure that the lines of communication between staff remain open and that all EMS employees have a voice in order to maintain morale.

Trustee Ashli Tatro asked Adam about options to enlist temporary traveling EMTs or paramedics. Adam responded that the costs to hire temps were "extremely expensive," but she would look into the data around the possibility.

### Agings rigs

EMS must also contend with a fleet of aging ambulances with high miles and diminishing reliability.

Adam stressed that each rig was "cleared to be on the road" by a mechanic, although the older vehicles are breaking down more frequently and experiencing "major maintenance issues."

EMS relies on a single mechanic in the state of Wyoming certified to work on emergency vehicles, Adam added.

Adam and the SCHD administrative team were poring over the budget to find funds to either purchase used rigs or remount existing vehicles. A new ambulance can cost up to half a million dollars.

EMS also looked into renting ambulances, although that option was prohibitively expensive, Adam told trustees.

EMS is currently operating with two running ambulances in Big Piney-Marbleton and 2.5 vehicles in Pinedale, Adam said. One rig was completely out of service.



## Weekly Weather Forecast

Pinedale, Wyoming • Oct. 5 - Oct. 10

### Today

**Sunrise:** 7:05 a.m. **Sunset:** 7:31 p.m.

High: **59°** Low: **24°**

RealFeel® 59° 22°

Day: Warmer with plenty of sunshine.  
Night: Clear.



### Friday

Sunny to partly cloudy.

High: **58°**  
Low: **29°**



### Saturday

Mostly sunny and pleasant.

High: **67°**  
Low: **29°**



### Sunday

Sunshine and patchy clouds.

High: **67°**  
Low: **34°**



### Monday

Sunny.

High: **59°**  
Low: **36°**



### Tuesday

Cloudy; shower in spots, afternoon rain.

High: **58°**  
Low: **35°**



## PARKS

Continued from 1A

next generation of climate-resilient forests in California."

The National Seed Strategy, which determined use of native seeds is a key to native plant restoration in national parks, will guide the national parks' projects with American Forests and the NPS in the new National Whitebark Restoration Plan, which is to be released this fall.

American Forests was founded in 1875 to lead forest conservation and partnerships such as the NPS. The organization collaborated with the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation, U.S. Forest Service, DOI bureaus of the NPS and BLM and "numerous tribal land managers."

For more about the restoration efforts, visit [SaveTheWhitebarkPine.org](http://SaveTheWhitebarkPine.org).