

Department of Health
tracking influenza
cases in Wyoming 3

Four wrestlers capture
crowns, lead Cats
to second at invite 6

School board OKs
calendars for
2014-15, 2015-16 8

Smoking Waters Art
Guild and GLF
elect officers 14

Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW VOLUME 115, No. 5, January 30, 2014 THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443 USPS 627-300 75¢

Owl Creek Water District questions chlorine count

by Drew Foster

Owl Creek Water District representatives questioned the area's chlorine residual count in the district's water supply during the Jan. 21 Thermopolis Town Council meeting, saying the district's water is not "significantly similar" to what flows through Thermopolis town limits.

Town officials agreed last week to flush Owl Creek waterlines with additional water in an attempt to boost chlorine residual counts and continue joint monitoring at the Owl Creek connection vault west of town.

Harry Hughes, an engineer retained by the Owl Creek Water District (OCWD), said chlorine residuals in water streaming from the Owl Creek connection vault were "drastically lower" than chlorine residuals found elsewhere in Thermop. The Owl Creek waterline has been functional since October. Hughes pointed to data collected west of the Owl Creek connection on Jan. 13 that showed chlorine residual levels of 0.11 milligrams per liter. He added that chlorine residuals collected throughout Thermop over the past two years showed an average of .75 milligrams per liter.

"We do think there's a deficiency," Hughes told the town council. "You've been notified, and we'd like a remedy."

Town officials disagreed.

Mayor's Assistant Fred Crosby called the town's chlorine levels a "dynamic system" that "changes all the time." He said it wasn't fair to apply a single day's reading to long-term chlorine residual levels. He also said the two-year average was not reflective of actual chlorine residuals, which are constantly in flux.

The two-year data showed chlorine residual levels fluctuating from a low of .01 milligrams per liter on Dec. 4, 2012, to a high of 1.59 milligrams per liter on Dec. 10, 2013. Chlorine residual levels in

Thermop dropped below .1 seven times since January 2012 and showed a propensity to shift up to 1 percent during a single day's samplings.

Chlorine acts as a disinfectant in the town's water supply.

Environmental Protection Agency rules

Water plant operator Don Rood pointed to United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules that stipulate chlorine residual counts should not exceed 4 milligrams per liter and should not be lower than .02 milligrams per liter for more than four hours, explaining that both the Owl Creek and Thermop counts fall within the EPA guidelines.

Hughes referenced a line in the town's water agreement with the Owl Creek Water District that stated the provided water should "be of a quality substantially similar to that provided within the Town."

A letter presented by Hughes to the town council stated that the Owl Creek Water District operator has been "frequently checking free chlorine residuals at the OCWD pump station" and that "those data have consistently been either extremely low or no free chlorine residual." The letter continued: "Consequently OCWD has every reason to believe that they have not received the stipulated water quality from the Town as set forth in the contract since OCWD went into water service operation in October 2013."

Crosby pointed out that both town and Owl Creek water originated from the same source – the 12th Street vault just below the Roundtop tanks.

"I don't know how substantially similar you can get when the town's own people are drinking from the same system," Crosby said during last week's town council meeting.

See Chlorine page 10

Relay For Life Kickoff



Six-year-old Zerrian Stone, a cancer survivor, got messy during the Jan. 21 Relay for Life Kickoff Party at the VFW. Event coordinator Jessica Slagle hopes this year's Relay for Life walk on June 27 raises \$40,000. Last year's event raised \$33,000. – Drew Foster photo

Wyoming Main Street meeting draws lots of attention

Participation could be as a certified member or affiliate

by Joe Sovia

More than 30 local people attended a Wyoming Main Street meeting at the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center on Tuesday evening to learn more about the statewide program.

Britta Mireley, the state program manager, shared information about nine-year-old Wyoming Main Street

and answered questions about how Thermopolis could become either a certified member or affiliate of the growing program.

Wyoming Main Street – which runs under the auspices of the Wyoming Business Council – is the state-level coordinating entity that promotes and manages the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street program within the state of Wyoming. Its purpose is to assist Wyoming communities of various sizes and resource-levels with their downtown revitalization efforts. The key function is the coordination and delivery of technical services

and volunteer training to participating programs.

Mireley indicated there was a growing number of communities that have engaged Wyoming Main Street during their revitalization projects. Powell is the only town in the Big Horn Basin that is affiliated with the program. The Park County community officially came on board just last Friday. Sheridan, Buffalo, Gillette, Glenrock, Douglas, Cheyenne, Laramie, Rawlins, Green River and Evanston are either certified members or affiliates. Platte County (Wheatland) has also joined the Wyoming Main Street ranks.

"Rawlins is kind of our 'shining star,'" Mireley said, indicating the Carbon County community is focused on its downtown area through revitalization.

According to Mireley, being a Wyoming Main Street affiliate rather than a certified member would be the best fit. Being certified would mean that the member would have to have a paid manager – either full-time or part-time.

"We want to help as many communities as we can," she said. "We're very much into preservation. Wyoming Main Street has strong organization and a good marketing program."

Communities that are accepted as

certified members receive \$20,000 from the program while affiliates are each given \$7,000. The money is not directly used for revitalization; it can be used to put a plan together or for such things as training, banners and lighting projects.

Amanda Moeller, director of tourism for the Hot Springs County Lodging Tax Board and executive director of the Thermopolis-Hot Springs County Economic Development Co. (EDC), arranged the Wyoming Main Street meeting with assistance from Meri Ann Rush, executive director of the Thermopolis-Hot Springs

See Downtown page 8

Saxophobia in school



Saxophonist extraordinaire Rob Verdi practiced with the high school band on Tuesday in preparation for that evening's Saxophobia concert at the school auditorium. This was Verdi's second concert appearance in Thermopolis. Verdi plays a range of saxophones, from miniatures to instruments standing more than 6 feet tall. – Drew Foster photo

Shoshone National Forest management plan objection period ending March 26

by Cindy Glasston

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), along with the National Forest Service, has released the final land management plan documents for the Shoshone National Forest.

There is now a 60-day objection filing period that ends March 26 for the public to file any concerns they have with the final plan. The USDA and Forest Service will then have 90 days to resolve those objections or issue a written response to them.

While very little of the forest is included in Hot Springs County, the county was included in the draft plan meetings that resulted in a new preferred alternative (Alternative

G) to the initial plan.

The main differences in the preferred alternative are an inclusion of additional acreage for winter motorized recreation outside crucial winter range, changes to summer motorized recreation, changes to suitability for oil and gas surface development, and modifications to special area boundaries.

Under the preferred plan, all existing open roads and motorized trails for public use in the summer and winter are maintained, and additional lands are added for future expansion.

Total acres unavailable for motorized use are 1,909,010 acres for summer use and 1,845,600 acres for winter use.

Special areas

Eight new research natural areas are identified in the plan, totaling 69,000 acres for research, monitoring and education.

Three new special interest areas are also identified that include two geological areas and one historical area.

The plan identifies and maintains eligibility for 16 river segments into the Wild and Scenic River System.

Management direction for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and the Nez Perce National Historic Trail have also been established.

See Shoshone page 10

Hospital Board approves software purchases

by Drew Foster

Two software programs approved Tuesday evening by the Hot Springs County Hospital Board are aimed at improving patient care and reducing staff error.

The board approved the purchase of Dragon software produced by Nuance as well as Safety Zone software produced by Clarity by separate 7-0 votes during its Tuesday night meeting at the hospital. The Dragon software allows care providers to dictate patient notes into handheld microphones that transcribe the words

onto computer documents stored in the hospital's database. Hospital CEO Robin Roling described the software as being similar to a cell phone's text message transcription capability.

"It will improve efficiencies in our provider staff," Roling said.

The hospital board approved a one-time payment of \$21,520 for the Dragon software, seven microphones and initial training, as well as an annual maintenance fee of \$3,144.

Seven of the hospital's nine care providers have agreed to use the new Dragon software.

"This is a significant investment, so we need to make sure we get our bang for our buck, so to speak," Roling said.

Care providers not using the Dragon software will continue to use the hospital's current transcription service, Roling said.

The Safety Zone software will create a database of "unusual occurrence reports," which would include anything from patients receiving incorrect meals or medication to tracking patient complaints and hospital-acquired conditions, such as falls or infections. Roling said the Safety

Zone software should alert hospital staff to problematic trends in patient care.

"It's a consistent, more effective way of reporting issues," Hospital Board Chairman Bill Williams said during the meeting.

The Safety Zone software will cost \$7,500 annually to use and maintain. The hospital currently tracks such incidents with Excel spreadsheets generated in-house.

The software programs should be implemented in the next 60 days, hospital staff said Wednesday.

