

Thermopolis  
Hot Springs

# Independent Record

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## Commissioners request extension in land trust issue

by Cindy Glasson

A letter was received by the Hot Springs County Commissioners from the Wind River Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in early January, stating the agency's intent to place the H Triangle Ranch property into trust – effectively removing the land from the tax listings for Hot Springs County.

The commissioners felt the adjoining property owners should be made aware of the filing and did not feel there was enough time for those landowners or the county to reply in an adequate manner.

Immediately after the commissioners' Jan. 7 meeting, a letter was sent to the BIA in Ft. Washakie, requesting a 30-

day extension to reply to the proposal.

They were informed that the request had to be sent to the BIA office in Montana. The Montana office told them the request had to go through the Ft. Washakie office.

As of Tuesday afternoon's meeting, the commissioners still had no answer to their request for an extension, and have only until Friday to reply.

Through legal counsel Holland and Hart, the commissioners have sent another letter – again requesting an extension.

County Assessor Shelley Deromedi also sent a letter to the Northern Arapaho Business Council stating, "The Northern Arapaho Business Council authorized the purchase of H Triangle Corporation on January 8, 1990, but it does not transfer ownership of the real property from the H Triangle Livestock Company to Northern Arapaho Tribe."

Deromedi made her assessment based on warranty deeds recorded in the past.

In addition, the commissioners noticed a discrepancy between the legal description that came as an exhibit with the proposal and the actual recorded legal descriptions in the assessor's office.

If these lands were to be put in trust for the Tribe, Hot Springs County would be losing taxes on the land as the Tribe pays no taxes on real estate held in trust.

Those taxes amount to \$3,992 for the year with an additional \$1,218 assessed for Owl Creek Irrigation.

### Other business

The commissioners will be putting to bid a price proposal for a minimum site assessment required by the State Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

The assessment will be for the storage tank at the airport.

Cost for the assessment should run between \$10,000 and \$15,000, and will probably be paid for out of the emergency expenditures line in the annual budget.

## County clerk Odde resigns

The Hot Springs County Commissioners accepted the resignation of County Clerk Hans Odde at their meeting Tuesday afternoon.

Odde will be leaving his position, effective Feb. 21.

"This position has been such a fantastic experience and has given me a true appreciation for public service," Odde said. "I owe much of that appreciation to the current and past commissioners and other elected officials that I have been so fortunate to work with."

"It has been my distinct pleasure to serve the people of Hot Springs County over the past 11 years."

The Republican Central Committee will be officially notified of Odde's resignation Feb. 21 and will have 15 days after notification to submit the names of three qualified candidates to fill his position until the next election, which will be Nov. 4, 2014.

Odde will be leaving Thermopolis to accept a position as marketing director for GDA Engineers in Cody.

## Bagel making extravaganza



Ralph Witters Elementary second-grade students had a "bagel-baking extravaganza" last Friday, temporarily turning the home economics room in the vo-tech building into their own bakery to celebrate the conclusion of unit 3 of a reading series. In the photo, from left, Claire Simpson, Julia Quintanilla, Tyler Digiovanni and Adrianna Rivera tend to business while preparing some of the 80 bagels made by the students. —JoeSova photo

## Precipitation levels above average

by Drew Foster

Precipitation and snowpack levels in the Big Horn Basin and across the state were above average in December, a trend the National Weather Service says should continue through 2014.

Rain/snow levels in Thermopolis from October to December were 139 percent of normal, said Jim Fahey, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service in Riverton. Thermopolis received 3.5 inches of precipitation during the three-month stretch, Fahey said, compared to an average of 2.52 inches. Lucerne received 4 inches of precipitation, or 160 percent of its average between October and December.

"We had a wet October and we had a dry November, and our December totals were about normal," Fahey said. "(Higher precipitation levels) were mainly due to a

much-above-average October."

Big Horn Basin precipitation levels in December were 115 percent of average, while state levels were 120 percent of average last month. Statewide water-year precipitation, which runs from October through September, is averaging nearly 135 percent of normal.

### Snowpack looking good

Mountain snowpack is nearly 140 percent of average in the Big Horn Basin, and 115 to 120 percent of average statewide, which Fahey believes will lead to near-normal stream flow volumes across all major basins in Wyoming.

At this time last year, the Big Horn Basin sat at 90 percent of average snowpack, while Thermopolis saw 63 percent of normal precipitation.

Fahey called the early snowpack and precipitation levels "a good, healthy start" to 2014. The region should receive about 65 percent of its annual snowpack and precipitation between April and June. Fahey said it's a 50-50 chance that the current numbers hold up through spring.

"That kind of makes or breaks us, if we don't get the spring rain," he said. "It's kind of a roll of the dice."

State reservoir storages are sitting at 85 to 90 percent statewide. Nearby Boyesen Reservoir is 79.2 percent full as of Sunday, according to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

"If we have a real efficient snowmelt, there's a good chance (Boysen) could fill," Fahey said.

The region is climbing out of a recent drought that began in 2012.

## Inductees into Class of 2014 in HSC Hall of Fame honored

by Joe Sova

Many members of families of inductees were on hand at Days Inn to pay tribute to and honor the Class of 2014 that joined the Hot Springs County Hall of Fame on Saturday evening.

The inductees were William H. and Carrie Gottsche, Father Nicholas Endres, Eddie Todorovich, G.M. "Gyp" "Cookie" Hayek, and Arnold and Jessie Duhig. All are now deceased and were inducted posthumously.

After an opening by HSC Hall of Fame committee member Dick Hall, commissioner Mike Baker introduced the inductees' family members who spoke on their behalf and accepted a commemorative plaque that included the inductees' photographs.

The Gottsches were the first inductees to be enshrined.

"Their vision has been a great, great part of the building of Thermopolis," Baker said.

Gottsche Director Cheryl Shero and Gottsche Foundation board chairman John Herrin and members John Lumley and Gene Boehmke accepted the plaque on behalf of William H. and Carrie Gottsche.

"They wanted their legacy left here in Thermopolis," Shero said. "We're happy to be a part of it."

Herrin said his father was one of



Accepting plaques on behalf of 2014 Hot Springs County Hall of Fame inductees, from left, are Wedg Taylor, John Herrin, Cheryl Shero, Jeannine Todorovich, Stan Todorovich, Kay Zimmer and Father Hugo Blotsky. — Joe Sova photo

the "founding fathers" of the Gottsche Foundation.

"It's been a wonderful journey. The foundation is in great shape because of all these people," he said, pointing out the two large tables filled with Gottsche employees. "I hope (the foundation and facility) will continue for many, many years."

"We have an incredible cadre of employees," Boehmke said. "It's a labor of

love for our people."

Father Hugo Blotsky of St. Francis Catholic Church in Thermopolis accepted Father Endres' plaque and induction. He said Endres came to America from his native Belgium and had to learn the English language. Blotsky indicated that even though Endres was treated unfairly on a religious level, he overcame obstacles to make a huge impact throughout the

Big Horn Basin.

"For me he's a hero. He was a role model and ahead of his time," Blotsky said.

Stories of admiration about Todorovich could have gone well into the night. His wife Jeannine Todorovich, son Stan and Randy Wahler (who was married to Stan's sister) were among the family members at the banquet and induction. "He always had good things to say

about everybody," Jeannine said about Eddie. "They weren't afraid of him, but they respected him."

"He respected you and loved you," Stan said. He added with a wry smile, "Some of you should be in prison."

Hayek's nephew Wedg Taylor of rural Thermopolis spoke on his behalf. "His career in education was his passion. He liked and respected his students," Taylor said.

Baker read a letter from Hayek's daughter Meredith before his induction. "He inspired me to reflect on why he loved the community so much," she wrote.

Jessie Duhig's maiden name was Cover (KO-ver) and the Duhigs were represented by the Cover sisters – Jessie's nieces Kaye Zimmer, Laurie Harvey, Kenny Lou Thoen and Pat Rasmussen. Their mother was Jessie's sister.

"We were proud to have Arnold and Jessie in our family," Zimmer said. "They cared about Thermopolis and the county and the state. We appreciate the honor."

Each family of the inductees received a commemorative plaque. Identical plaques will be on display as part of the HSC Hall of Fame array on the second floor of the courthouse.

Read more anecdotes about some of the Hall of Fame inductees in the editorial on page 4 of this issue.