

BIG SKY

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PROTECT AND SERVE

Deputies checked on a homeless man who was on the side of Interstate 90. The man was extremely hot and had no water. Deputies gave him a gallon jug of water and some Doritos.

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Bozeman program helps local breweries go green

By **LEWIS KENDALL**
Chronicle Staff Writer

Following the well-documented rise of craft beer in Montana, a new Bozeman-based initiative hopes to help the state's more than 50 breweries protect the environment while padding their profits.

Brewery Sustainability Pilot, a collaboration between Montana State University's Montana Manufacturing Extension Center, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and Bozeman business operations adviser UnCommon Sense, offers comprehensive evaluations to help breweries cut down on waste and increase production efficiency.

The audits, which cost

breweries \$600, identify areas of waste, and include a review of resource inputs and outputs, as well as an assessment of employee responsibilities. Businesses then receive short- and long-term work plans and detailed return on investment calculations to help implement the suggested changes.

"We wanted to have something specifically tailored to breweries in Montana, because what is available on the national level is not the right scale," said UnCommon Sense Director Heather Higinbotham.

Since the pilot began in December, Higinbotham and MMEC process engineer Christopher Hergett have performed audits at six breweries across the state, including 406 Brewing Company in Bozeman and Nep-



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tone's Brewery in Livingston.

"These are small operations, so cost savings for them are going to have a huge impact," Higinbotham said. "But all the breweries we're working with, cost savings are not the primary reasoning. It's a combination of all of the above."

Financial considerations were only part of the incentive for opting in to the program, according to Neptune's Brewery

owner Jon Berens.

"It's good on many different levels," he said. "We're participating because it's good for community and the environment, but it's also good for business."

At the program's recommendation, Berens and his wife and co-owner Lauren Silano changed Neptune's light bulbs to LEDs and installed an 800-gallon tank to recycle water back into the brewing process.

"We didn't realize how much we were wasting. When you actually put it down on paper and track it, it's like 'Wow,'" Berens said. "We've begun to cut our bills substantially because of it."

Higinbotham plans to present the results of the program at the Montana Brewers Association conference in the fall, and eventually add a similar offering for wineries and distilleries.

"It doesn't make sense to waste resource, because it's wasting money," she said. "If I can do my part and help businesses reduce their impact, ultimately it will help benefit communities, businesses and the people they serve."

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TAKING IN THE SIGHTS AT SWEET PEA



Keira Burritt, 1, peers out from a Hangloose Hammock while sitting on her mother Tasha's lap, Friday, at Brandi and David Egnatz's booth at the Sweet Pea Festival.

RACHEL LEATHE/CHRONICLE

SBA official talks local growth, jobs at Bozeman stop

By **LEWIS KENDALL**
Chronicle Staff Writer

The U.S. Small Business Administration's regional administrator was in town Friday to learn about trends in the Gallatin Valley and offer advice to local business development officials.

Betsy Markey, who oversees Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and North and South Dakota for the SBA, spent her first visit to Bozeman touring local economic development organization **Prospera Business Network** and meeting with several local business owners.

As part of the tour, Markey was briefed on the area's various economic issues, including workforce shortages, lack of affordable housing and office space, and infrastructure hangups. Prospera officials also discussed the rapid growth of local industries like photonics, high tech and construction.

"It's going gangbusters here right now; we're overwhelmed," said Suzi White, program director for the Montana Women's Business Center in Bozeman, an extension of Prospera funded in part by the SBA. "And it's not just the soft jobs; we're doing serious projections with businesses that are projected to make millions."

White and Prospera Program Director Drew Little pointed to the \$4.75 million in grants, loans and matching funds the nonprofit leveraged to companies in Park and Gallatin counties in 2015 as a sign of the area's business growth.

The pair also cited recent infrastructure upgrades such as Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport's addition of an American Airlines flight and the soon-to-be-completed Bozeman Fiber project as positive steps toward continued economic growth.

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Third section of Big Hole fully closed to fishing

By **MICHAEL WRIGHT**
Chronicle Staff Writer

Another section of the Big Hole River is now fully closed to fishing after flows dropped below a threshold set in a drought management plan.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks announced in a news release that the Big Hole River from the Maiden Rock Fishing Access Site to the Notch Bottom Fishing Access Site is closed after flows dropped below 190 cubic feet per second.

Closures on the Big Hole are imposed based on guide-

lines set forth in the Big Hole drought management plan. This section joins the lowermost and uppermost sections of the Big Hole in being fully closed — from Saginaw Bridge on Skinner Meadows Road to the confluence of the North Fork and main Big Hole and from Notch Bottom to the confluence with the Beaverhead River.

The section from the North Fork Big Hole River to Dickie Bridge is under hoot owl restrictions, meaning it is closed to fishing from 2 p.m. to midnight every day. The section of the Big Hole River

from Dickie Bridge to Maiden Rock has no restrictions on it right now. FWP fisheries manager Travis Horton said the flows are doing fine and that temperatures are generally OK there.

Other fishing closures remain in effect, including a full closure on the Jefferson River and hoot owl restrictions on the following stretches:

- Beaverhead River from Anderson Lane to the confluence with the Big Hole River.
- East Gallatin River from Spring Hill Road Bridge to the confluence with the main Gallatin.

- Gallatin River from Sheds Bridge to the confluence with the Madison.

- Madison River from Ennis Dam to the confluence with the Jefferson River.

- Ruby River from Duncan District Road to the confluence with the Beaverhead River.

- Shields River from Daisy Dean Bridge Road to the confluence with the Yellowstone River.

- Yellowstone River from Carter's Bridge Fishing Access Site to the confluence with the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone east of Laurel.

State to allow female bighorn sheep hunt in Spanish Peaks

By **MICHAEL WRIGHT**
Chronicle Staff Writer

For the first time in many years, if not ever, the state is going to give hunters a chance to shoot female bighorn sheep in the Spanish Peaks area, signaling that the population is doing OK by state standards.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks offered 15 ewe licenses to hunters this year for Hunting District 301, which stretches from Highway 84 to south of Big Sky, a move that comes a little more than half a decade after a rough winter hammered the population and 15 years after the area was closed entirely to sheep hunting.

FWP biologist Julie Cunningham said the sheep have largely recovered, and that allowing some ewe hunting

should help keep the population steady. But, she said, the number could change from year to year.

"I'm going to be watching this population every year, very closely," Cunningham said.

Bighorn sheep are a prized trophy animal for many Montana hunters, but also an animal that has struggled with disease problems and can be susceptible to especially cold and wet winters. There are about 6,000 in the state mostly in small populations, like the one that lives in the Spanish Peaks area.

The number of sheep there had dwindled to around 50 in 2001, when FWP closed the area to any sheep hunting for a time. Numbers climbed upward in the following years, reaching 158 in 2008 — the highest count recorded there since 1980. That year, hunting resumed.

Cunningham said the population ran into trouble again in the winter of 2010 and 2011. Conditions were hard on the wild sheep. Ewes gave birth on snow, which significantly hampered lamb recruitment. Food was scarce, highway deaths increased and pneumonia took some of them out.

Before winter started, FWP had counted more than 200 sheep there. Afterward, 140 were counted. Cunningham called it "one of the worst years on record."

She blames part of the struggle on the number of sheep that were there. When a bad winter hits the area, she said, 200 sheep are "too high a load for that range to support," and that having fewer sheep there might insulate them from the worst effects of severe winters.

Since then, though, the

population has rebounded. The most recent count showed there were at least 170 sheep there, which is inside Cunningham's ideal range of between 150 and 200.

"We want to have high numbers of sheep," Cunningham said. "But I don't want to have such high numbers of sheep that they'll struggle in a bad winter."

Hunting is one way to keep those numbers in check, but some would rather FWP think about moving them and repopulating areas devoid of sheep or boosting smaller populations.

Glenn Hockett, the president of the Gallatin Wildlife Association, said that sheep populations should be allowed to grow larger than just 150 or 200 animals, and that the agency should work to connect them to other populations.

"These sheep have to have connectivity," Hockett said.

He mentioned a few other places that the sheep could be transferred to restore former populations, including a spot on the other side of the Gallatin River on a ridge that goes up to the Gallatin Crest.

FWP has translocated sheep from near Quake Lake to the Wolf Creek area in the Madison Valley each of the past two years, and Hockett said he would rather see more projects like that than ewe hunting in small populations.

"I would much rather see that if they believe there's too many sheep ... that these excess sheep be used to augment other habitat," he said.

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