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LISA BAUMANN- Ravalli Republic

A black bear cub with burned paws sits in a carrier in Hamilton last August while it awaited transport to Helena for rehabilitation. The bear will be returned to the wild on Wednesday.

Burned Bitterroot bruin to be released

Bear will join abandoned friend in man-made den near Choteau

LISA BAUMANN
Staff Reporter

The black bear cub rescued from the Medicine Creek area during last year's fire season will be released Wednesday morning with another abandoned cub from the Bitterroot.

One might say the two cubs –both born last spring – have lived the good life in the state's wildlife shelter in Helena for the past six months.

When found, both bears weighed about 20 pounds. They have since tripled their weight by eating fruit and dog food, according to Ron Asheim, Fish Wildlife and Parks conservation education administrator.

"It's an easier life for them," he said.

The cubs put on weight quickly, but since they went into hibernation almost three months ago, they have not eaten.

Aasheim said the bears are probably a bit larger than cubs in the wild.

With third-degree burns on bandaged paws, the small Bitterroot bruin became famous last August, making national headlines.

The burns on his paws caused the bear to have trouble walking, according to Joe Jacquith, a Fish, Wildlife and Parks game warden who trapped the bear after it was discovered.

"The bear was found in a burned area and must have burned his paws while walking through," Jacquith said last summer.

Once in rehabilitation, the bear quickly recovered, with the bandages coming off just a few weeks after they were placed on his paws, Aasheim said.

National media will travel with the bears by snowmobile for their release to a man-made den about five miles from Choteau on Wednesday morning.

There is so much interest from the media, that all the nearby Choteau snowmobile rentals have been claimed for the day, and some members of the media remain on the waiting list.

"I don't know how everyone found out about it," Aasheim said. "People care about him."

Aasheim said their hope is that the bears will resume hibernation once they've been moved and once nature calls,

See **BEAR,** *Page 3*

Dean Vinal remembered

JENNIFER JONES – Ravalli Republic

Montana Trombone Chorale members Jim Eversole, left, and Tim Aston play with eight other trombonists in tribute to local musician Dean Vinal during Monday afternoon's memorial service at Daly-Leach Chapel in Hamilton.

Trombone tribute

Lifelong contributions of Hamilton musician, teacher recalled

JENNY JOHNSON
Staff Reporter

Nine trombones played tribute to Hamilton musician Dean Vinal at his memorial service Monday.

As a teacher and musician, Vinal, 80, left an orchestra of musicians behind when he lost a battle with cancer Feb. 10. After more than three decades of teaching music, Vinal's legacy lies in the hundreds of musicians that learned from him and listened to him.

"He inspired a life-long enjoyment and interest in music," said Rolly Peterson, who began his musical career as Vinal's student in 1951.

Rolly said he began playing the coronet when he was 11 years old and changed to the sousaphone in the seventh grade. After graduating high school in 1960, Peterson continued to play, and as an adult, he played along side Vinal in the Community Band.

Vinal taught hundreds of students the art of playing an instrument as the band director at Hamilton for almost 30 years, while his wife Gini directed the choir.

Their dedication to the community is apparent in the music program, said Scott Southwick, who succeeded Vinal as band director at Hamilton.

For example, in the late 1960s, Hamilton's music programs were cut with the failure of a mill levy, and the Vinals were both laid off from their jobs, according to Southwick. In order to keep music alive, the Vinals loaned a community music sponsor

See **VINAL,** *Page 3*

Gini and Dean Vinal.

Valley lawmaker proposes study of burning restrictions

BUDDY SMITH
Staff Reporter

Republican Rep. Rick Laible of Victor wants to know if easing restrictions on controlled burns could gradually improve Montana's air by lessening the risk of big, smoke-producing blazes.

Rules that say when open burning can occur inadvertently add to the buildup of forest and wildland fuels, and that may result in bigger fires and more air quality degradation, according to Laible's House Joint Resolution 21.

> *'a study to see if there's some way we can allow some degradation, on a minimum level ... rather than risk these high levels of major degradation to the air quality.'*
>
> **- Rep. Rick Laible, Victor**

HJ 21 calls for a study of air quality concerns and forest management.

"So this bill would allow a study to see if there's some way we can allow some degradation, on a minimum level over a longer period of time, rather than risk these high levels of major degradation to the air quality," Laible said.

The study would look at prescribed burning, burning of slash piles, and would touch on agricultural burning, said Laible, a member of the House Natural Resources Committee.

Burning seasons should be regulated for air quality reasons, Laible acknowledged, but he wonders if that "burning window" could be expanded, spreading state and private open burns out longer in the year, he said, "so we don't get all that burning at once."

"Let's say a logger wants to burn a slash pile," Laible said. "They can't burn in winter because of inversions. ...At the same time, all this fuel is building up and we have no way to get rid of it."

Citing figures he said are from the state Department of Environmental Quality, last year's blazes produced 120,000 tons of nitrous oxide, compared with 32,000 tons of the stuff sent skyward at Coal Strip's electrical generating facilities, Laible said.

He said his proposed study could be expanded to look at alternatives uses for forests fuels, such as powering electrical generation facilities.

Forest holds meeting to discuss planned EIS

A public meeting to discuss how Bitterroot National Forest officials are proposing to manage tens of thousands of acres burned by last summer's fires is scheduled tonight, from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the Corvallis Grange, just of Woodside on Dutch Hill Road.

Activities being proposed will be presented and, by talking together, community members will be asked to make alternative proposals, forest officials said.

Tonight's meeting is the second in a series that began Monday night in Sula.

A fire recovery team is writing a burned area draft Environmental Impact Statement, expected to be

See **EIS,** *Page 3*

Pinesdale voters approve new water policy

LISA BAUMANN
Staff Reporter

Pinesdale voters unanimously approved their water policy at a special town meeting Saturday evening.

Fifty-two of about 300 registered voters turned out to vote in favor of the policy that was previously rejected at an annual town meeting last September.

After several citizens opposed the policy draft last fall, the board appointed a committee that held public meetings to gather input and then revised the policy.

The modified draft is a simpler version, said Hud Jessop, in a January meeting. "Before, it was too wordy and authoritative," he said.

The board and several advisors praised the most recent draft and approved it before arranging the special town meeting for Saturday.

This time around, the policy was published and mailed to those on the registered voter list so they could study it before the vote.

"It helped this hearing and helped people to understand how the policy works," Faye Hansen, clerk and recorder said. "The entire meeting lasted only 45 minutes."

The two-page water policy includes standards for meeting Montana codes, basic hook-up and billing fees and termination of service policies.

Other sections refer to wells and irrigation, Hansen said.

Specifications including water line installation, maintenance and repair, were removed from the policy by the committee and will likely become a separate document for use by the water department, Lyman Jessop said previously.

Attending voters asked minor questions and raised very little objection, Hansen said.

Upon arrival at the meeting, which took place in the Pinesdale chapel, voters received neon yellow pieces of paper used in the voting process.

In approving the policy, voters were asked to raise their hands while holding the yellow paper, according to Hansen.

Ten percent of registered voters must turn out to make the vote valid.

"It went well," she said.

The newly approved policy won't equal many changes in the way the water department handles business, Hansen said.

A similar form of the policy has been on the books as a resolution for years, according to Hansen.

The policy was created after residents had questions about the department and regulations that must be upheld by Montana law, she said.

Copies of the water policy can be obtained at Pinesdale Town Hall, Hansen said.

Good morning to...

Nigel Brown of Darby. Nigel likes logging and riding trials bikes in the mountains.

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Weather

High 36 Low 20 — *Forecast*: Mostly cloudy with patchy morning fog.

Yesterday
High 38 Low 22

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