



This week in sports
Polson, MAC sweep softball week **B1**

Lake County Leader

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Ranchers ask city to act on tumbleweed infestation

By **EMILY MESSER**
Reporter

Ranchers Steve and Susie Speckert, who own a 400-acre ranch off Highway 35, approached the Polson City Commission on Monday, April 6, to bring awareness to the tumbleweed causing havoc to their ranch.

The weeds are blowing across Highway 35 into their fields, sprinkler lines, equipment and fences. The “daunting task” of removing the tangled weeds from just one windstorm late last year took 300 hours over four to five weeks.

The non-native invasive weed, which can be toxic to cattle, is crossing the highway from a neighboring property owned by Mission Ridge LLC,

based in Idaho.

The property owners, who plan to develop the parcel, asked that it be annexed into the city limits during a commission meeting on Feb. 3, 2025. Despite neighbors’ opposition to development on the farmland and questions about why the annexation occurred so quickly, the commission passed a resolution to annex the property.

Before annexation, this was county jurisdiction, leased out to a crop farmer. With crops on the field years prior, the weeds were under control, but last season, no one farmed the land, according to Speckerts.

Normally, this type of issue would have been addressed by



Rancher Steve Speckert discusses the weed infestation on his property to the Polson City Commission on Monday, April 6. The weeds are rolling across Highway 35 from a neighboring property the city annexed last year. (Emily Messer/Leader)

See **TUMBLE**, A10

Fill restriction imposed at Mission Dam Reservoir

By **KRISTI NIEMEYER**
Editor

The water level at Mission Dam Reservoir will be restricted this season due to deficiencies in the dam’s spillway, according to a recent press release.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Safety of Dams Program, in collaboration with the Bureau of Indian Affairs Branch of Safety of Dams and the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP), have implemented a precautionary management measure at the reservoir to ensure continued public safety and responsible water operations.

“There is no immediate danger to the public,” said Trevor Bras, CSKT Safety of Dams Program Manager. “This is a proactive step to ensure the long-term safety and reliability of the facility while continuing to meet water needs for the community and surrounding resources.”

Following a thorough engineering review, dam safety professionals recommended a temporary fill restriction due to deficiencies they identified in the dam’s spillway. The restriction is designed to maintain reservoir levels below the point where the spillway would be activated, while still allowing for effective water storage and use throughout the year.

Under the updated guidance:

- During the spring runoff period (April 1 through June 20), reservoir levels will be maintained at around 3.2 feet below the crest of the spillway, with an additional restriction of around 6.2 feet in wetter years.
- During the remainder of the year, reservoir levels will be allowed to rise closer to full, while still maintaining a safety buffer.

Bras said the changes may impact irrigation operations from May-June since FIIP personnel won’t be able to store as much water as they typically would. They also disperse water from the reservoir during those months for irrigation deliveries, to meet in-stream flows, and help fill other reservoirs in the irrigation system.

Mission Reservoir typically discharges around 37,000 acre-feet of water annually, feeding Mission Creek, Post Creek, Crow Creek and Pablo Reservoir, among other outputs.

Prior to the fill restriction, Mission Reservoir could contain 7,072 acre-feet at full pool. Now, the level would be 6,188 acre-feet during dry-to-normal years and 5,390 acre-feet in wet years.

Still, Bras said, “the expectation is that this fill restriction will not impact irrigation releases in a significant way,” since the fill restriction will be significantly reduced to 1.2 feet when inflows from snowmelt begin to decrease, typically by June 21.

Bras said the restriction

See **FILL**, A3



Kris Schock and his sister, Emily, bookend their parents, Paula and Greg Schock, who were honored as Producers of the Year at the Ag Appreciation dinner on April 10. (Berl Tiskus/Leader)

Greg and Paula Schock honored at Ag Appreciation dinner

By **BERL TISKUS**
Reporter

Greg and Paula Schock were honored as Producers of the Year at the 46th annual Ag Appreciation Dinner held at the Ronan Community Center April 10.

Before a crowd of around 200 ag producers and supporters, Kris Schock spoke about his parents.

“Everybody in this room knows my dad,” he said. “... He convinced the St. Ignatius home-ec class to serve beef for Thanksgiving. He has a farming Leatherman (all-purpose tool), a going-

to-church Leatherman, a puttering-around-the-house Leatherman, and he’s probably wearing one tonight.”

“He’s also the guy who had grizzlies in his corn field, a lot of grizzlies, even Monte was there,” Kris joked. “So many grizzlies that 60 Minutes interviewed him.” (Google 60 Minutes, Greg Schock, to see the clip).

“But he’s also the guy who’ll drop everything at a minute’s notice to help to help those in need, whether it’s loaning a piece of equipment in case of a breakdown, helping someone harvest their crops, putting cows away that

aren’t his, pulling someone out of the ditch more than once, or plowing snow with his tractor,” Kris said.

“He’s the one who has volunteered countless hours advocating for agriculture and for a way of life that all of us in this room cherish.”

Kris didn’t forget his mom either.

“Ask anyone in St. Ignatius under a certain age who their favorite elementary school teacher was, and you’ll most likely hear Mrs. Schock. Paula taught school full-time for 28 years ... touching so many lives with her patience and her dedication to give

every student the essential skills to be a lifelong reader and learner.”

“After long days in the classroom, she came home to a dairy farm. She drove the hay truck and the silage truck, with or without brakes; she chased cows at 2 a.m. after the milker left the gate open ...,” he said.

Her son also lauded her “amazing sack lunches during harvest time,” washing countless loads of clothes “that smelled like manure or diesel or both,” and innumerable trips to town to retrieve equipment parts.

See **SCHOCK**, A3

QUOTE WORTHY

Ask anyone in St. Ignatius under a certain age who their favorite elementary school teacher was, and you’ll most likely hear Mrs. Schock.

— Kris Schock

COMMUNITY

Cherry growers hope for luck in 2026

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