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ONE FINAL BOW



PROVIDED PHOTO

Musicians and festival organizers Mike and Tari Conroy with their dog Polly.

Hardtimes Bluegrass Fest's 18th year is last

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 After 18 years of pickin' and grin-nin', the Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival south of Hamilton is coming to a close.
 Musicians and festival organizers Mike and Tari Conroy have been

married almost 52 years and have played together for most of that time. Tari says when she met and married Mike he thought she should be able to play and put a guitar in her hand and taught her. They joke she learned to play against her will. The couple have decided it's time

to move on to the next chapter in their lives, and it's not as emotional for them as people would think. "We're both just so ready, we're kind of wore out," said Tari. "It's a huge amount of effort."

Please see **HARDTIMES**, Page A2

USFS details, defends reshuffle

Agency chief says he will wait until fire season ends before state offices open

MIKE KOSHMRL
 WyoFile

PARK CITY, UTAH — The U.S. Forest Service received roughly 300 applications for the 15 new state director jobs created during a major agency reorganization that's dissolving regional offices the agency's first chief, Gifford Pinchot, created nearly 120 years ago.

That's 20 applications per job, on average, for well-paying "senior executive service" positions at a federal agency that employs roughly 30,000 staff.

It's a figure that, to many, suggests stunningly little interest in the jobs and a reminder that it remains a tough time to be a Forest Service employee tasked with managing 193 million acres of the United States.

But agency chief Tom Schultz on Tuesday sounded upbeat about the 300 applications, a datapoint he offered without prompting. Applicants are a mix of Forest Service veterans and outside candidates, and there are more than he needs to fill the state director jobs and restructure. Schultz's team has already narrowed the pool of candidates and is starting to arrange for interviews, he told WyoFile from a boardroom at Park City's Deer Valley Resort.

Please see **FOREST**, Page A4

US SENATE RACE

Dem leaders split over attacks on Bodnar

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The executive director of the Montana Democratic Party penned a newspaper column last month attacking Seth Bodnar, former university president and independent candidate for U.S. Senate, as "another man who looked away" in the face of sexual discrimination allegations. It was only 476 words, but the column set off an internal firestorm that had some influential Democrats quietly questioning her leadership approach.

Emily Marburger's op-ed featured

accusations from a 2021 lawsuit, ultimately settled three years later, in which 18 current and former University of Montana employees accused the Bodnar administration of creating a retaliatory culture against women.

Marburger, who took the reins at the state's minority party in February, wrote that the settlement's "legal fine print" shouldn't obfuscate that Bodnar, if elected to public office, would "treat women's experiences as a public relations problem."

Please see **DEMOCRATS**, Page A3



Independent U.S. Senate candidate Seth Bodnar speaks with an attendee in Bozeman of the 70th annual Montana American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations convention on June 26.

SONNY TAPIA,
 INDEPENDENT RECORD

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