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ENVIRONMENT

Crews conduct prescribed burn

ALEX DRIEHAUS / Valley News photographs

Jeff Tilley, forest silviculturist with the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests, ignites grasses during a prescribed burn in Woodstock on Thursday. The Forest Service burned 28 acres on the AT Upper Lewis Parcel, adjacent to the Pomfret town line, to maintain early successional habitat in the opening and limit fuel for wildfires.

Burns aim to clear space for wildlife, eliminate fodder for wildfire

By ALEX DRIEHAUS
Valley News Multimedia Reporter

WOODSTOCK — Smoke rose from a hillside one afternoon last week as more than a dozen members of the Forest Service conducted a prescribed burn on a 28-acre parcel near where the Appalachian Trail crosses Route 12.

The burn last Thursday was part of an annual effort in the Green Mountain National Forest to maintain wildlife habitat and reduce the potency of wildfires.

Each year, the Forest Service identifies about 1,000 acres in Vermont that would benefit from controlled burns, though the actual acreage burned is usually less due to constraints such as weather conditions, said Ryan Hughes, forest fire management officer with the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes national forests.

One of the main goals of prescribed burns in Vermont is to maintain and create early successional habitat, or areas of grasses and shrubs that don't have a canopy of trees.

About 78% of the land in the state is forested, according to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, and many species such as upland birds, turkeys and deer rely on these gaps in the trees, which are prioritized in the GMNF's management plan.

"What we're really trying to do is knock back some of that woody encroachment as the forest kind of moves out into the wildlife opening," Hughes said.

Another benefit of prescribed burns is limiting fuel available for wildfires. In the spring when grasses and shrubs are dry and dormant,

SEE **BURN** A5

Corry Boyle, left, senior firefighter with the Green Mountain National Forest, and Jeremy Goers, west zone fire management officer for the Mt. Hood National Forest, keep an eye on the edge of a fire as it spreads across a field during the burn. Forest Service members created a blackline around the parcel to prevent fire from spreading beyond the planned boundary before moving the flames across the landscape.

TOWN MEETING 2026

Vershire voters reject budgets

Selectboard to discuss next steps next week

By CLARE SHANAHAN
Valley News Staff Writer

VERSHIRE — Voters rejected the general fund and highway budgets in ballot voting at a rescheduled Town Meeting Saturday.

Vershire voters rejected the $481,000 general fund budget, 97-73, and the $764,000 highway budget, 100-71.

Both proposed budgets represented substantial increases over last year, with the general fund budget up almost 10% and the highway budget up 32%.

Voters also did not pass three other spending articles in voting on Saturday. They rejected a $54,000 new law enforcement contract, 137-33, in ballot voting.

During the floor meeting, voters also rejected a $20,000 appropriation to build a

SEE **VERSHIRE** A4

Weathersfield voters OK school budget

Municipal budget revote set for next month

By PATRICK O'GRADY
Valley News Correspondent

WEATHERSFIELD — Voters on Tuesday approved a revised school budget of $9.8 million, 363-221.

The School Board presented the new budget with $146,000 in cuts after voters rejected the $9.95 million budget on Town Meeting Day last month, 440-268.

The 1.5% budget cut included one teaching position and $15,000 from athletics. The board also eliminated some nursing services and updates to the school's mandated AED equipment (Automated External Defibrillator used to treat sudden cardiac arrest) from the budget because the district received grants to cover those expenses.

SEE **WEATHERSFIELD** A4

CLAREMONT

Board approves plan for new facility

By PATRICK O'GRADY
Valley News Correspondent

CLAREMONT — After a nearly two-hour discussion, the Planning Board unanimously approved the site plan for a new 32,500-square-foot facility for West Central Behavioral Services on the site of the former Moose Lodge on Broad Street.

The new facility will house all facets of West Central's services, including those for both adults and children, as

SEE **CLAREMONT** A5

JAMES M. PATTERSON / Valley News

CLOSE-UP, B1

'RIDING A YEAR-LONG WAVE'

Baker Teagan Michaud shapes bagels at The Woodland Fairy in Quechee. The bagels are available at 40 stores in Vermont and New Hampshire, and at the bakery store in Quechee which also has a menu of bagel sandwiches.

INSIDE

LOCAL & REGIONAL

FROM SPECTACLE TO WONDER

Crowds gathered at Mount Holyoke College's greenhouse to witness the rare bloom of "Pangy," a corpse flower known for its powerful odor resembling decaying flesh. **Page A4**

SPORTS

A SOGGY DEBUT

Unfortunately for the Hanover High girls lacrosse team, just as the home team seized some momentum in Tuesday's season opener with Merrimack, Mother Nature had other plans in an eventual 11-8 Division II loss. **Page B3**

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