

BURN BAN IN
EFFECT, NO
GROUND FIRES

by order of Presidio County

Commissioners
talk Lajitas,
tax lawyers,
autopsy costs

By Mary Cantrell
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BREWSTER COUNTY — Brewster County Commissioners met this week to discuss a new subdivision taking shape in Lajitas, issues with the county's tax collection law firm and the rising cost of autopsies and cremations.

County Judge Greg Henington and commissioners Jim Westermann, Sara Colando and Ruben Ortega were present. Commissioner Mo Morrow was absent.

The court first heard from Scott Beasley, managing director of the Lajitas Golf Resort, regarding a new subdivision — dubbed the Ranches at Well Creek — the company is developing in the area. The 739-acre tract is located off of State Highway 170 east of the Lajitas airport and across from the Chili Appreciation Society International (CASI) chili cook-off site.

The expanse is being subdivided into 69 smaller tracts, ranging in size from 5 to 38 acres and in price from \$50,000 to \$218,800. The resort, which has five existing subdivisions in Lajitas, is required to seek plat approval from the county court.

Beasley explained that the small frontage off of the highway may be used for commercial purposes while the rest will be residential. He said the plan is to put in a road, which will be built to county specifications so that it may take over maintenance at some point, connecting all of the properties.

He said that the resort is in conversations with Rio Grande Electric Cooperative about getting power to each lot in the subdivision, but that a reliable water supply is not being included. Beasley said the resort assessed whether water could be brought from its private water and wastewater facility elsewhere in town, but discovered it is not a feasible option.

"We've studied that on numerous occasions, tried to figure out how we could get it from our water plant there and [how to make it] cost effective. We can't make it work," Beasley said. "It's just going to be like everybody else in Terlingua Ranch."

Henington asked whether the resort would consider making water deliveries — a procurement option many Terlingua Ranch residents rely on — from its water plant to the new subdivision, to which Beasley said yes.

Texas model subdivision rules — which are regulated by counties — prevent the "establishment of residential developments with lots of five acres or less without adequate water supply and sewer services." Model subdivision rules also state that the conveyance of potable water by transport truck is "not an acceptable method, except on an emergency basis."

Beasley said individual landowners may also be able to drill their own wells, but if water is found it will likely need to be treated — a costly process at-scale that may be more accessible for smaller systems.

"We thought about doing it our-

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Photo courtesy of Justin Garnett/CBBS / Fotografía cortesía de Justin Garnett/CBBS

Center For Big Bend Studies team members Erika Blecha, Haley Bjorklund, Justin Garnett and Bryon Schroeder wrap the tusk with strips of plaster-covered burlap that will harden into a cast to protect it during transport. Read more on page 2.
Los miembros del equipo Erika Blecha, Haley Bjorklund, Justin Garnett y Bryon Schroeder envuelven el colmillo con tiras de arpillera cubiertas de yeso que se endurecerán y formarán un molde para protegerlo durante el transporte. Leer más en la página 4.

¡Celebremos la frontera!:
Presidio and Ojinaga
hope to grow spring
break traffic

By Sam Karas
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PRESIDIO — Spring break in the Big Bend is officially underway, bringing big crowds and long lines to popular destinations across the region. But while people wait hours for tables in towns like Marfa and Terlingua, the gusty March winds don't seem to blow many folks over to Presidio and Ojinaga.

This year, a binational tourism development group is working together to promote the sister cities on the river as a spring break destination. "¡Celebremos la frontera!" — Let's celebrate the border! — is the motto this week, which they hope will grow local businesses and smash stereotypes about the vibrant communities where the Río Conchos and Río Grande meet.

Presidio Mayor John Ferguson has kept an eye on local tourism trends for decades but felt called to act after learning that the Chisos Basin — one of the most popular parts of Big Bend National Park — would be closed off for construction for the next two years, starting in June. He's framing it as an opportunity for visitors to shake up their routine rather than avoiding the

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Park hunts down files after
Ponton pursued only
6 misdemeanor cases
last year

By Rob D'Amico
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PRESIDIO COUNTY — A recent review of misdemeanor cases — for charges like driving while intoxicated (DWI), invalid driver's license, pot possession and family violence — by *The Big Bend Sentinel* showed only six cases filed for prosecution by former County Attorney Rod Ponton in 2024, while he filed 110 the previous year. Of those six cases, county records show most were dismissed or never had any court settings. One resulted in a guilty plea.

Ponton said the decision not to pursue additional misdemeanor cases was deliberate. "My office reviewed all of the cases that were prosecutable for 2024 but deliberately didn't file all of them because a decision on whether to prosecute or not to prosecute is up to the prosecutor's discretion," Ponton said. "And every prosecutor has a different philosophy on what they should or shouldn't do regarding charging. So, I left what I consider to be the good cases or the prosecutable cases, in order for them to be reviewed by the incoming county attorney, for her to make the decision." Ponton said the cases he left were in good order and ready

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¡Celebremos la frontera!:
Presidio y Ojinaga
esperan aumentar el
número de visitantes
durante las vacaciones
de Spring Break

Por Sam Karas
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PRESIDIO — Las vacaciones de Spring Break en Big Bend ya comenzaron, atrayendo grandes multitudes y largas filas a destinos populares de la región. Pero mientras la gente espera horas por una mesa en pueblos como Marfa y Terlingua, los fuertes vientos de marzo no parecen atraer a mucha gente a Presidio y Ojinaga.

Este año, un grupo binacional de desarrollo turístico está trabajando en conjunto para promover las ciudades hermanas a orillas del río como destino para las vacaciones de primavera. "¡Celebremos la frontera!" es el lema de esta semana, con el que esperan impulsar el crecimiento de los negocios locales y romper con los estereotipos sobre las vibrantes comunidades donde se unen el Río Conchos y el Río Grande.

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Park busca expedientes
después de que Ponton solo
presentara 6 casos de
delitos menores
el año pasado

Por Rob D'Amico
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CONDADO DE PRESIDIO — Una revisión reciente de casos de delitos menores —por cargos como conducir en estado de ebriedad (DWI), licencia de conducir inválida, posesión de marihuana y violencia familiar— realizada por *The Big Bend Sentinel* mostró que solo seis casos fueron presentados para su procesamiento por el exfiscal del condado Rod Ponton en 2024, mientras que el año anterior presentó 110. De esos seis casos, los registros del condado muestran que la mayoría fueron desestimados o nunca se presentaron a juicio. Uno resultó en una declaración de culpabilidad.

Ponton afirmó que la decisión de no presentar más casos de delitos menores fue deliberada. "Mi oficina revisó todos los casos que eran procesables para 2024, pero deliberadamente no los presentó todos porque la decisión de procesar o no procesar queda a discreción del fiscal", declaró Ponton.

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Comisionados
hablan sobre
Lajitas,
abogados
fiscales y
costos de
autopsias

Por Mary Cantrell
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CONDADO DE BREWSTER — Los comisionados del Condado de Brewster se reunieron esta semana para hablar sobre una nueva subdivisión que se está construyendo en Lajitas, problemas con el bufete de abogados especializado en recaudación de impuestos del condado y el aumento en el costo de las autopsias y cremaciones.

El juez del condado, Greg Henington, y los comisionados, Jim Westermann, Sara Colando y Rubén Ortega, estuvieron presentes. El comisionado Mo Morrow estuvo ausente.

El tribunal escuchó primero a Scott Beasley, director gerente del Lajitas Golf Resort, sobre una nueva subdivisión, denominada Ranches at Well Creek, que la compañía está desarrollando en la zona. El terreno de 739 acres se encuentra junto a la Carretera Estatal 170, al este del aeropuerto de Lajitas, y frente al sitio de concurso de chili de la Sociedad Internacional de Apreciación del Chili (CASI).

La extensión se está subdividiendo en 69 parcelas más pequeñas, con tamaños que varían de 5 a 38 acres y precios que oscilan entre \$50,000 y \$218,800. El complejo, que cuenta con cinco subdivisiones en Lajitas, debe solicitar la aprobación del plano catastral al tribunal del condado.

Beasley explicó que el pequeño frente a la carretera podría utilizarse con fines comerciales, mientras que el resto será residencial. Comentó que el plan es construir una carretera, que se construirá según las especificaciones del condado para que pueda encargarse del mantenimiento en algún momento, conectando todas las propiedades.

Añadió que el complejo está en conversaciones con la Cooperativa Eléctrica de Río Grande para suministrar electricidad a cada lote de la subdivisión, pero que no se incluye un suministro de agua confiable. Beasley explicó que el complejo evaluó la posibilidad de traer agua de su instalación privada de agua y aguas residuales en otra parte de la ciudad, pero descubrió que no es una opción viable. "Lo hemos estudiado en numerosas ocasiones, intentando averiguar cómo obtenerla de nuestra planta de agua y cómo hacerlo rentable. No podemos hacerlo funcionar", dijo Beasley. "Va a ser como todo el resto de Terlingua Ranch".

Henington preguntó si el complejo consideraría el suministro de agua —una opción de adquisición de la que dependen muchos residentes de Terlingua Ranch— desde su planta de agua hasta la nueva subdivisión, a lo que Beasley respondió afirmativamente.

Las normas modelo de subdivisión de Texas —reguladas por los condados— impiden el "establecimiento de desarrollos residenciales con lotes de cinco acres o menos sin un suministro de agua y servicios de alcantarillado adecuados". Las normas modelo de subdivisión también establecen que el transporte de agua potable por camión no es un método aceptable, excepto en casos de emergencia".

Beasley explicó que los propietarios de terrenos también podrían perforar sus propios pozos, pero si se

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Presidio & Ojinaga spring break

(Continued from page 1)

area altogether. “Instead of people saying ‘Well, I guess we’re not going to Big Bend anytime soon,’ hopefully we can get the word out that there are other places you might want to try for the first time, including Presidio,” he said.

Ferguson met up with Ojinaga’s mayor, Presidenta Municipal Lucy Mar-rufo Acosta, and a small crew of likeminded officials and business owners, to draft a full week of events. The official program kicked off on Monday night with a friendly basketball game between the two cities at the Presidio Activities Center. Parks and Recreation Director Elvis Medina helped pick the home team lineup, which emerged victorious over Ojinaga 82 to 74.

On Tuesday morning, he took a small crew of visitors from Marfa and Terlingua on a bike ride to Ojinaga, watched a local cobbler make a pair of boots and grabbed sweet treats at a bakery. Ferguson says he occasionally gets criticism for encouraging tourism to a different city, but insists that the two communities are so tied that what benefits one inevitably boosts the other. “There’s a lot to see and do over there,” he said. “As you’re promot-ing Ojinaga, you’re bringing people to Presidio.”

On Wednesday, the programming shifted to focus on arts and culture, with musical performances at restaurants across town. Ferguson recruited Yosdy Valdivia, owner of Galería Raices, to help put together an evening celebration that also features the new Dreamers Gallery and Presidio Pour Over Coffee Company.

With the help of her neighbors, Valdivia put together a lineup of events on O’Reilly Street Wednesday evening celebrating the food and art that make the two cities special. “It’s about teamwork — it’s about working

with other businesses rather than seeing them as competition,” she said.

On Friday, Ferguson will host a special ride through Ojinaga aboard the “trenecito,” which is a special trailer designed to look like an open-air train car. Over the years, he’s watched cross-border tourism between Terlingua and Boquillas grow, but hasn’t seen the same growth in guided tours of Oji-naga, which boasts its own natural wonders. “[Terlingua] really maximizes what happens with tourism,” he said. “It’s not a competition thing — it’s about taking better advantage of the resources that are here.”

With the border being the subject of a lot of fear and controversy on a national scale, the organizers of “¡Celebremos la frontera!” would like to make visitors’ first experiences with border communities friendly and approachable. “There’s still inhibition,” Ferguson said. “I think if we can break through the ice on that, I think the economic impact is going to be felt on both sides of the river.”

For now, the binational working group is not an official governmental entity — it’s just a place for people to brainstorm strategies to grow the tourism economy of both Presidio and Ojinaga. “I think that we’re on to something here,” Ferguson said.

WEDNESDAY

11:30 a.m - 1:00 p.m. Enjoy lunch at participating downtown restaurants (and the Oasis at Three Palms) set to live music.

5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Galería Raices (800 W O’Reilly) will be showing Expresion Feminina to live music by Los Bananaz while the Dreamers Gal- lery (702 W O’Reilly) will feature It was the desert who caught me with

music by Marc Utter and Doug Scharnberg. Starting at 6 p.m., Presidio Pour Over Coffee Co (600 W O’Reilly) will have beats by DJ Denisse Ayay. Treats will be available from Pink Pineapple Bakery and Mayahuel Ojinaga.

THURSDAY

3 p.m. Tour of Fort Leaton and dutch oven cooking demonstration. (16953 FM 170, Presidio).

7 p.m. Cultural music and dance performance at Auditorio Municipal (Lomas CTM, Ojinaga).

FRIDAY

9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Trenecito ride through OJ led by Mayor Fergu- son. Meet at the parking lot of Poncho’s Pizza (114 Puerto Rico Street) for either tour, which will last about two hours.

9 p.m. Bluebonnet Music Series at Casa Agave (101 W O’Reilly) featur- ing Marijuana Sweet Tooth Family Band.

SATURDAY

4 p.m. Car parade leaving the Poliforo Ojinaga (Avenida Camargo). 7 p.m. Market and music beneath the Presidio International Bridge (Mexican side.)

For more details, visit the official Gobierno Municipal de Ojinaga and City of Presidio Facebook pages.

Ponton leaves cases behind

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for review.

Current County Attorney Blair Park, who beat Ponton in the Democratic Primary in March of 2024, disputes Ponton’s assessment and reasoning about the misdemeanors. “Most of the 2024 cases were dis- missed or Ponton ‘declined to prosecute,’” Park said. *The Sentinel* previously reported on Ponton releasing 309 cases under those categories before he left office in December.

Park said the files that did remain were not in good order for her to make any prosecutorial decisions. “Most were missing investigative reports from the referring law enforcement agencies,” she said. She questioned why Ponton didn’t consider “other op- tions.” “We could have had a transition period where I came in and assisted pro bono,” Park said. “We also had \$100,000 in SB 22 grant money that could have paid me to be an assistant.” SB 22 grants are state funded and intended to support law enforcement and courts, primarily with additional staff.

The six misdemeanor cases filed by Ponton — all on February 9, 2024 — were all from 2022 arrests and included: terroristic threat, failure to identify, obstructing a highway, assault with bodily injury and

a second DWI.

Ponton repeated a previous assertion that many misdemeanor cases hinge on lab results that take months to get back from the Department of Public Safety, which creates a delay in the system as well.

Park countered that you should still be able to move cases through the system. For defendants who plead guilty to charges like DWI and drug posses- sion, prosecutors and defense attorneys can often get them into a substance abuse program. Having a dis- position to the cases also allows defendants to move on without outstanding charges hanging over them.

Park has not yet scheduled a county criminal court setting, but she said she will be working with Por- tillo on a date soon. Ponton said Park should have had plenty of time since her start on January 1 to get cases moving. “I left them all there, ready for her to go,” he said. “She’s had enough time now to go through every one of those cases and file them if she wanted to. Is 75 days not enough time to organize some files?”

Ponton also claimed County Judge Joe Portillo did not schedule county criminal court settings on a reg- ular basis and told him in August that he wasn’t go-

ing to have any more settings. Park said Portillo told her the opposite occurred, that Ponton told Portillo there would be no more settings because he wasn’t filing any cases. Portillo did not respond to a request for comment by press time.

With regard to missing investigative reports, Park said she has had to contact the arresting law enforce- ment agency to get the offense, investigative reports, bond and evidence, sometimes including video.

For cases brought by the Marfa Police Depart- ment, Park said the department tried to supply Pon- ton’s office with records for each case but phone calls went unanswered and no one was physically present to accept and sign off on receiving the documents. The department is now putting together a “packet” of case documents to deliver to her, she said.

Marfa Police Chief Gilberto Carrillo confirmed Park’s account and said he is working with her to supply missing documents and that getting a re- sponse from Ponton’s office was difficult. “Usually, we would go there and the office door was [locked], so we had to call someone and say, ‘Hey, we got cases to turn in,’ and then give them a second call, ‘Hey, we still got some cases’ ... We didn’t want to slide them

under the door, of course, because we still needed to get some type of confirmation they received the files,” Carrillo said.

Carrillo said his department has a system for tracking everyone arrested on a misdemeanor. “We do what we call a checklist. The first thing you’ll see is the intake from the jail, you’ll see the arrest report, the [probable cause] affidavit, the offense report, and then evidence, including pictures and video,” Carril- lo said. “We give them everything on paper, and then we’ll give them a thumb drive with the same paper- work they got, plus our photos and videos for them to review.”

Carrillo said he often encounters repeat offend- ers whose cases have never made it to a disposition. “They know their case is not going to go anywhere because of X, Y, and Z reasons,” he said. “So, we get them, and they think, ‘Meh, nothing’s going to happen to me.’ And that’s what makes us look bad be- cause we’re doing all these things behind the scenes, and they then get a slap on the hand and an, ‘Okay, don’t do it again.’ And then next week they’re going back in jail for the same thing.”

Brewster Commissioners Court

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selves for all of them,” Beasley said. “But it’s the Santa Elena Aquifer, which, quite frankly, the water is no good. By the time you put something in to clean it — an EDR (electrodialysis reversal) like we have in the Lajitas, or some sort of RO (reverse osmosis) plant — you’re in the \$10 million range.”

The model subdivision rules state that the “subdivider” is required to provide a copy of a groundwater availability study that “certifies the long term (30 years) quantity and quality of available groundwater supplies relative to the ultimate needs of the subdivision” in cases when individ- ual wells or other non-public water systems are proposed as the water supply.

In a follow up with *The Sentinel*, Henington said the county does not require developers to provide water unless a lot is less than five acres. “In this case, we will require them to post in large letters on all of the plats a disclaimer showing that water is not available, might not ever be available and the chance of finding water might be zero,” Henington said.

At the meeting Henington said the project met the standards for pre- liminary plat approval from the commissioners court and a final hearing and approval will likely take place later this month.

In a 2023 election the resort won approval from a single voter to es- tablish its own utilities district, a quasi-governmental entity that has the power to levy taxes, issue bonds and conduct road, utility and public infrastructure projects.

In a follow up with *The Big Bend Sentinel*, Beasley said that the resort is still working with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to finalize the Laji- tas Utility District, but that the entity will be used for water and waste- water services in the five existing subdivisions.

Tax collection law firm

The judge and county commissioners also heard from county employ- ees and a citizen regarding ongoing failures of its tax attorneys, Line- barger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP, who are in charge of pursuing the county’s delinquent property tax cases.

Henington said he has been “unhappy” with the firm’s performance in terms of “getting aggressive with the [delinquent] tax sales and the past dues and the payments.”

“We have a lot of land in South County that has been purchased and then just abandoned in terms of its tax payments,” Henington said. “We really need to be aggressive about getting those. It helps us, helps the school. It’s a source of revenue for us.”

He said that the goal should be to take advantage of the current “land boom” and get abandoned property back on the market, sold, and con- tributing to the tax rolls.

Sheriff Ronny Dodson — whose office administers delinquent prop- erty auctions — said he has more experience working with tax attorneys Perdue Brandon Fielder Collins & Mott, LLP, which five out of the seven taxing entities in the county use.

Dodson said in the past Linebarger has failed to perform on the ground reconnaissance needed to ensure properties are truly vacant and to com- municate with Terlingua Ranch, who also holds liens on properties.

“We’ve had people come back in and say, ‘Well, you know, you sold my property the other day, and I live there, and here’s my receipt that I paid it,’ and stuff like that,” Dodson said.

District Clerk Sarah Martinez also advocated for switching to Purdue for the sake of the county’s citizens, she said. Because two different law firms represent the seven taxing entities in the county, two civil suits have to be filed against individuals with delinquent taxes, causing confusion and two sets of court fees.

“If we went with Purdue, because they are with all the other taxing entities, it would just do away with all that,” Martinez said. “It would make it simple. It would be easy. You’re just talking to one tax attorney.”

Martinez said two incidents — one of missing documents and another of missing money after a delinquent tax sale — had caused her to lose trust in Linebarger. “We are talking about selling somebody’s home, somebody’s property, and dealing with money,” Martinez said. “That’s like two of the biggest things you could deal with. And they’ve already made two huge mistakes.”

Tom Jacobs, a Terlingua Ranch property owner interested in investing further in the area, addressed the court to state that it was his cashier’s check that was lost, which led to frustration and delays.

Jacobs said that while there has been a “land boom,” appraisals have also skyrocketed in recent years, and the prices in the area have “softened

dramatically,” with more properties lingering on the market, meaning “the clock is ticking on the county’s ability to collect these because the buyers will be reduced.”

Henington said the item was primarily meant for discussion, and that he would pull a copy of Linebarger’s contact and other information for the court to review at the next meeting.

Autopsies and cremations

Another issue Henington said he wanted to make the county court aware of is the “ever escalating” cost of autopsies, cremations and body transportation — services the county pays the Alpine Memorial Funeral Home for when needed.

He said if someone dies in Brewster County and the justice of the peace (JP) orders an autopsy, often in the case of an “unattended” death, it costs a “smooth” \$3,400. Autopsies have to be performed by a med- ical examiner in Lubbock, Hengington explained, which in addition to cremation and transportation costs can run the county around \$5,600 per body. He said there have already been 13 autopsies this calendar year.

“I don’t have an answer on how to slow this down, but it’s expensive,” Henington said. “The autopsies are really going up in price.”

In the case of the death of an unidentified person, who are often mi- grants, “the remains belong to us until somebody claims them,” Hening- ton said. “We have a number of remains that no one’s ever claimed.”

Autopsies are not always ordered, however. It is largely up to the dis- cretion of the JP. A recent case of an unidentified migrant found dead in an old camping trailer near the Terrell/Brewster county line did not result in an autopsy, Henington said, because the individual was “badly decom- posed,” apparently succumbing to exposure.

“Best we can tell he found an old camping trailer, ran out of water, probably froze to death and died in the camper trailer,” Henington said.

Now the body remains in cold storage in Fort Stockton, he said, with county officials awaiting a response from the Mexican consulate who may help with interment costs. In some lucky cases, bodies are able to be sent at no cost to Texas State’s Operation Identification lab, where DNA samples are taken and remains are stored with the goal of reuniting a deceased with their loved ones and repatriating their remains.

Rare mammoth tusk discovered at O2 Ranch

New find will be only second Trans-Pecos mammoth artifact to be carbon-dated

From the Center for Big Bend Studies at Sul Ross State University

ALPINE — Although he was searching for deer, a hunter at the O2 Ranch (a privately owned ranch in Brewster and Presidio counties) found something very different and a little puzzling.

Could it be a mammoth tusk? In West Texas? “I was skeptical when a deer hunter showed me a pic- ture of what he thought was a fossil,” says O2 Ranch Manager Will Juett. “I figured it was likely just an old stump, but imagined how great it would be if he was right.”

Juett says his great working relationship with the Center for Big Bend Studies (CBBS) at Sul Ross State Uni- versity in Alpine spurred him to immediately reach out to CBBS Director Bryon Schroeder and CBBS archae- ologist Erika Blecha. The researchers contacted graduate student Haley Bjorklund from the University of Kansas, a CBBS collaborator specializing in environmental ar-

chaeology who is interested in studying ancient animals like the mammoth. All three, plus anthropology profes- sors Justin Garnett and Devin Pettigrew, met up at the ranch as soon as possible to explore the discovery further.

“It paid off big time,” Juett says of their visit. “When they confirmed what they had uncovered, I couldn’t be- lieve it.”

Schroeder says the researchers quickly verified that it was indeed a mammoth tusk, a very rare find in West Texas. “The tusk was located in the drainage area of a creek bed,” Schroeder says. “We realized pretty quickly there was not more to the skeleton, it was just an iso- lated tusk that had been separated from the rest of the remains.”

The researchers then spent two days plaster-jacketing the tusk — covering it in strips of plaster-covered burlap for protection — and building a frame to transfer it to Sul Ross State University for further study.

“A local [who subsequently wrote his Ph.D. dissert- ation on it] found one in Fort Stockton in the 1960s,”

Schroeder says, noting that it’s the only mammoth tusk in the Trans-Pecos that was carbon dated, as that process began in the 1950s. “There was a big range of error back then. Now we can get it down to a narrower range within 500 years.”

Carbon dating results will be available in the next few months. While researchers study the new find with newer technologies, the discovery sparks our imaginations.

“Seeing that mammoth tusk just brings the ancient world to life,” Juett says of the find that created a buzz of excitement for everyone involved. “Now, I can’t help but imagine that huge animal wandering around the hills on the O2 Ranch. My next thought is always about the people that faced those huge tusks with only a stone tool in their hand!”

To learn more about the Center for Big Bend Studies, visit <https://cbbs.sulross.edu> or email cbbs@sulross.edu.

About the Center for Big Bend Studies:

Established by Sul Ross State University in 1987, the

Center for Big Bend Studies promotes archaeological and historical research in the Greater Big Bend region of Texas and northern Mexico. For more than 35 years, CBBS has conducted studies and provided education- al opportunities for university students, the public, and outside researchers. CBBS is committed to the recovery, protection, and sharing of this region’s rich cultural leg- acy through dynamic programs of research, education, public outreach, and publication.

About the O2 Ranch:

The O2 is one of the largest private ranches in Texas at roughly 272,000 acres, and is named for the O2 brand, which was first registered in 1888. Lykes Bros. Inc. pur- chased the property in 1942. The ranch is in Brewster and Presidio counties and offers unique hunting opportunities as well as cattle grazing. Situated in the high Chihuahuan Desert with elevations between 3,400 and 5,500 feet above sea level, the ranch is very diverse both geologi- cally and archaeologically.

Dr. Seuss time



Ricardo Hernandez reads to Dr. Suess' popular "Green Eggs and Ham" to kids at the Presidio Public Library. El joven Ricardo Hernández leyendo a los pequeños el popular cuento "Huevos Verdes con Jamón" de Dr. Seuss en la Biblioteca Pública de Presidio.

Colmillo de mamut raro descubierto en el Rancho O2

El nuevo hallazgo será el segundo artefacto de mamut Trans-Pecos en ser datado por carbono

Del Centro de Estudios de Big Bend de la Universidad Estatal Sul Ross

ALPINE — Aunque buscaba ciervos, un cazador del Rancho O2 (un rancho privado en los condados de Brewster y Presidio) encontró algo muy diferente y un poco desconcertante.

¿Podría ser un colmillo de mamut? ¿En el oeste de Texas?

"Tenía mis dudas cuando un cazador de ciervos me mostró una foto de lo que creía que era un fósil", dice Will Juett, gerente del Rancho O2. "Pensé que probablemente era solo un viejo tocón, pero imaginé lo maravilloso que sería si estaba en lo cierto".

Juett afirma que su excelente relación de trabajo con el Centro de Estudios de Big Bend (CBBS) de la Universidad Estatal Sul Ross en Alpine lo impulsó a contactar de inmediato al director del CBBS, Bryon Schroeder, y a la arqueóloga del CBBS, Erika Blecha. Los investigadores contactaron a la estudiante de postgrado Haley Bjorklund, de la Universidad de Kansas, colaboradora del CBBS especializada en arqueología ambiental e interesada en estudiar animales antiguos como el mamut. Los tres, junto con los profesores de antropología Justin Garnett y Devin Pettigrew, se reunieron en el rancho lo antes posible para explorar el descubrimiento a fondo.

"Fue una experiencia muy fructífera", comenta Juett sobre su visita. "Cuando confirmaron lo que habían descubierto, no lo podía creer".

Schroeder afirma que los investigadores verificaron rápidamente que se trataba de un colmillo de mamut, un hallazgo muy raro en el oeste de Texas. "El colmillo se encontraba en la zona de drenaje del lecho de un arroyo", añade Schroeder. "Nos dimos cuenta rápidamente de que el esqueleto no contenía nada más; era solo un colmillo aislado que se había separado del resto de los restos". Los investigadores pasaron dos días enyesando el colmillo —cubriéndolo con tiras de arpillera recubiertas de yeso para protegerlo— y construyendo un marco para trasladarlo a la Universidad Estatal Sul Ross para su posterior estudio.

"Un lugareño [que posteriormente escribió su tesis doctoral sobre él] encontró uno en Fort Stockton en la década de 1960", dice Schroeder, señalando que es el único colmillo de mamut en Trans-Pecos que se ha datado por carbono, ya que ese proceso comenzó en la década de 1950. "En aquel entonces, el margen de error era amplio. Ahora podemos reducirlo a un rango más estrecho dentro de 500 años".

Los resultados de la datación por carbono estarán disponibles en los próximos meses. Mientras los investigadores estudian el nuevo hallazgo con tecnologías más modernas, el descubrimiento despierta nuestra imaginación.

"Ver ese colmillo de mamut simplemente revive el mundo antiguo", dice Juett sobre el hallazgo que generó gran entusiasmo entre todos los involucrados. Ahora, no pueden evitar imaginarse a ese enorme animal deambulando por las colinas del Rancho O2. ¡Mi siguiente

pensamiento siempre es sobre la gente que se enfrentó a esos enormes colmillos con solo una herramienta de piedra en la mano!

Para obtener más información sobre el Centro de Estudios de Big Bend, visite <https://cbbs.sulross.edu> o escriba a cbbs@sulross.edu. Acerca del Centro de Estudios de Big Bend:

Establecido por la Universidad Estatal Sul Ross en 1987, el Centro de Estudios de Big Bend promueve la investigación arqueológica e histórica en la región del Gran Big Bend de Texas y el norte de México. Durante más de 35 años, el CBBS ha realizado estudios y brindado oportunidades educativas a estudiantes universitarios, público general e investigadores externos. El CBBS está comprometido con la recuperación, la protección y la difusión del rico legado cultural de esta región a través de programas dinámicos de investigación, educación, divulgación pública y publicaciones. Acerca del Rancho O2:

El Rancho O2 es uno de los ranchos privados más grandes de Texas, con aproximadamente 272,000 acres, y recibe su nombre de la marca O2, registrada por primera vez en 1888. Lykes Bros. Inc. adquirió la propiedad en 1942. El rancho se encuentra en los condados de Brewster y Presidio y ofrece oportunidades únicas de caza, así como pastoreo de ganado. Ubicado en el alto desierto de Chihuahua, a una altitud de entre 3,400 y 5,500 pies sobre el nivel del mar, el rancho es muy diverso tanto geológicamente como arqueológicamente.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

February 15, 1996

High winds force Marine choppers down in Marfa

MARFA — A sudden winter windstorm forced down two U.S. Marine Corps helicopters in a Marfa residential area Saturday night. A third chopper landed at the Marfa airport. All aircraft touched down without incident, and there were no injuries to the three pilots and five crew members.

Many Marfa residents said they heard the roar of the aircrafts' engines and the "whop whop" of the rotor-blades cutting the air as the two helicopters — a Huey command-control ship and a Cobra gunship attack craft made two approaches over town to find a place to land: a pasture at Dr. Steve Seegers home, near the MAC building. Another Cobra landed at the airport, which is located three miles north of town.

The expedition force apparently was heading back to their base on a Davis Mountains ranch from a night sortie along the border when they got caught in high winds and diminishing visibility at about midnight Saturday. The National Weather Service at Midland said Marfa's automated weather station registered a peak wind gust of 46 mph at 12:15 a.m. Sunday, with constant winds of 30 mph to 38 mph.

Reports indicated that visibility was down to one-quarter mile at times due to blowing dust. "It was pretty interesting," Seegers said of Saturday night. "My wife looked out the window and said something to the effect, 'Do you know what just landed in our yard?'" He said he called his neighbor, Border Patrolman Ernest Carrillo, to ask him what was going on and Carrillo said the patrol's chopper doesn't fly at night. He said he called the Presidio County Sheriff's Office dispatcher, who told him it was a private helicopter and that it was taking off immediately.

"It was very noisy when they flew right over our house," Seegers said. "It seemed strange for them to be flying at night. At first I thought it was foul play."

About 50 Marines and several aircraft from Camp Pendleton, Calif., are on training maneuvers in Far West Texas, said Maureen Bossch, public affairs officer for Joint Task Force 6 (JTF-6) in El Paso.

The mission began Friday and runs through the end of February. "It's night-flying training using night-vision devices," Bossch said. "This is unfamiliar terrain for them. They usually train on a military installation but the challenge is not there. This gives them a real challenge." JTF-6 is a military organization that coordinates and interfaces operations with civilian law enforcement agencies for drug interdiction efforts as well as coordinating training exercises for the four U.S. military branches. Bossch said. She said a "command element" of the training force has set up headquarters at Fort Bliss and Biggs Army Airfield in El Paso. A remote staging area is located on a ranch in the Davis Mountains.

"High winds and dust made it hard to navigate," Bossch said of the choppers forced down Saturday night. Asked why the two choppers touched down inside the city limit instead of a field outside of town, Bossch said the pilots were looking for the "closest place to land. This is just a training mission. It's not worth risking lives for."

"They got caught in high winds, put on their lights and planted them," said a Marine guarding the Seegers' pasture Sunday morning.

He said the pilots used night-vision goggles to assist in the landings. "They put them right where they wanted them," the Marine said, noting that the Cobra is an \$18 million aircraft. Seegers said he chatted with the guards Sunday and they told him there was some sensitive equipment on board the helicopters.



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Por Diana Aguirre Armedariz

PRESIDO - Por segunda ocasión el Big Bend Alliance junto con la Biblioteca Pública de Presidio se unieron para ofrecer a los pequeños actividades recreativas durante la semana de Spring Break.

El programa consiste en el tema ecológico por lo que se les leyó cuentos sobre la importancia de la misma, para posteriormente realizar manualidades. "Pensé en la biblioteca porque considero que es muy bonito combinar la lectura con lo ecológico, y hemos tenido mucho éxito con la respuesta de los niños porque les gusta y aprenden sobre jardinería" comentó Elvira Hermosillo, Directora de Programas del Big Bend Alliance.

Por su parte, Carmen Elguezabal, Directora de la Biblioteca Pública, considera que este tipo de programas es una gran oportunidad para fomentar la lectura en los niños. "Me encanta la idea de aportar algo para este tipo de proyectos, además pueden aprovechar el jardín de la biblioteca para ex-



Elvira Hermosillo, directora de programas de Big Bend Alliance, les lee a los niños en el campamento de vacaciones de primavera de la Alianza.

plorar la diversidad de plantas con las cuales contamos y tener un momento de esparcimiento" mencionó Elguezabal. El último día, los niños tuvieron la oportunidad

de sembrar unas semillas en el jardín provisional situado frente a las instalaciones del PAC. "Agradezco enormemente que me consideren para este tipo de programas,

porque Presidio merece tener actividades recreativas y productivas como las que hemos tenido estos días" destacó Elguezabal.

The International

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