

UMATILLA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

"Conservators of the Peace"

Sheriff Terry L. Rowan



Undersheriff Jim Littlefield

PRESS RELEASE

May 1, 2023

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Umatilla River

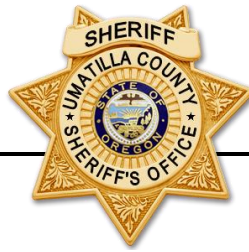
Water Rescue of Stranded Kayakers on the Umatilla River



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On April 30, 2023, at about 16:48 p.m., Umatilla County Sheriff's Office dispatch received a report that two adult males attempting to kayak the Umatilla River had lost their kayaks and were stranded on separate small islands midstream near river mile 2. Both were wearing life jackets but had been stranded for over two hours.

Deputy Todd Siex with the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office responded as well as Senior Marine Deputy Rowen Hayes. Umatilla City Fire Department responded with their 4-meter rigid inflatable boat. Umatilla County Fire Department and Irrigon Fire Department responded with their swift water rescue personnel.

Deputy Hayes and Siex together with two personnel from Umatilla County Fire Department were able to quickly rescue Elliott G Lowery, a 33-year-old from Hermiston, using a rope and pivot recovery.

The second rescue required a bank rescue and was more difficult because of thick impassable vegetation along the east bank and the width of the river on the west bank. Umatilla County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue member Daniel Gardner also joined the rescue. Eventually, team members of the Umatilla County Fire Department were able to locate and reach the second male, 32-year-old William R Rhoades from Hermiston, by crawling through a deer trailer that led to a bank near him. The other teams were able to come in from an upstream location to help with the rescue. Both kayakers were medically assessed, warmed, and hydrated by Umatilla City Fire Department personnel at the scene before being released.