

# Unger champions paved trail

By Jim Cornelius  
News Editor

Deschutes County Commissioner Alan Unger has doubled down on his support of a paved trail from Sisters to Black Butte Ranch.

Unger had recruited Oregon Solutions to mediate a community dialogue on the divisive issue, but the organization bowed out late last month, citing an inability to bring trail opponents to the table.

Last week, Unger sent out a letter telling constituents, "My ultimate goal is to engage Sisters Country in a robust discussion and organize a process to reconsider a paved path from Black Butte Ranch to Sisters. I have received many emails and calls, and spoken with many people who support the trail concept. I believe that I should act on their request for trail reintroduction."

He told *The Nugget*, "This project kind of needed to have a champion."

He recognizes that the proposed paved path remains controversial. Opponents object to it on environmental grounds; its inability to comply with Americans With Disabilities Act requirements; and privacy issues for residents of Black Butte Ranch.

Unger says that his "goal is by late August to provide the Sisters District Ranger with a report on the community outreach efforts and to

submit a letter requesting that the Black Butte paved trail be reconsidered."

It appears clear that Unger envisions a new proposal that is very similar if not identical to the previous proposal.

The Forest Service pulled the original proposal for a paved trail because of community discord and disagreement that could not be resolved. Sisters District Ranger Kristie Miller has taken a hands-off approach to the issue until a new proposal is presented, telling opponents that this is the Commissioner's process, not ours, so it's not our place to step in and direct things. It becomes our process when/if someone brings a proposal to us, and not until then."

Opponents were taken aback.

"Now I know that we were playing from two different rule books," said Susie Werts, who was a lead objector to the original trail proposal. "I am speechless."

Unger believes that opponents' concerns will be thoroughly engaged during the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process that must be

undertaken with any project submitted to the Forest Service.

"It creates that place for all these issues to be dealt with," Unger said.

The Commissioner acknowledged the concerns raised by some Black Butte Ranch homeowners, but he believes the project should be looked at in a broader context.

"How is it part of a larger system?" he said. "I think it would be natural to extend this trail to the turnoff that goes to Camp Sherman."

It's all part of an effort to connect all the communities of Deschutes County, Unger said.

And, he believes it is possible that a trail option between the Ranch and Sisters would actually take some pressure off heavily used recreational paths inside the Ranch.

Unger's letter indicated that he will be active through the summer soliciting support for the trail.

"I feel that I am getting more and more engaged," he said. "Maybe more than I anticipated, but I think I need to."

# Sisters watering holes will rock Rodeo weekend

Not all the action on Rodeo weekend will be confined to the arena.

Sisters' saloons and concert halls will create an inviting opportunity for cowboys and cowgirls to kick up their boot-heels and have a good time.

Things kick off on Wednesday night: after Xtreme Bulls, Hardtails Bar & Grill will host a rodeo dance with The Central Oregon Country Band, and Takoda's will feature live music with Thomas and the Blue Chips and the Crown Royal Girls.

Thursday night is locals' night at Bronco Billy's Ranch Grill and Saloon and Hardtails Bar & Grill, which will set up a party tent for the occasion.

Bronco Billy's, in the historic Hotel Sisters, will feature The Rowdy Band out of Las Vegas Thursday through Saturday nights. Music starts at 7 p.m. on Thursday and at 9 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Hardtails will feature owner Steve Macy's favorite band, The Manic Mechanics,

June 12-13 from 9:30 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Hobbs the Band is making a three-night stand at The Belfry in serving up a heavy dose of rock and blues in Rock For Rodeo Thursday-Saturday, starting at 8 p.m. each night.

Takoda's is adding on an after-party on Sunday at 4 p.m., featuring music by Mark Conklin.

Those who plan to put the "wild" in Wild West would be well-advised to select a designated driver. The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office announced they will be stepping up DUII patrols.

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