

PAJUTEE: Ecologist has had big impact on Sisters Ranger District

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of Two Rivers - The Sequel - Keeping the 'Wild' in Wild and Scenic.

"I really appreciate that STA gave me this opportunity to share some of what the Forest Service is thinking about, as we look at the next chapter of the story of Whychus and the Metolius," Pajutee said. "I think we will be having many interesting conversations in the future about recreation and the role of public lands."

She explained further, "Bend and Sisters face rapid population growth over the next several decades, with many people moving here for our wonderful outdoor lifestyle. Yet land managers struggle with development pressure on public lands and with their capacity to protect wild places and people's experiences."

Pajutee has worked in watershed restoration and recreation planning for the Sisters Ranger District long enough that she has often been at the center of the action when competing interests come into play. As a result, she is in an excellent

position to answer the question that she will pose for the audience: "Where do recreation developments and ecosystem conservation collide and what can we do to keep wild places in our future?"

For more than two years now, the STA has sponsored a quarterly lecture series that brings interesting speakers to Sisters to enhance public education as it relates to the outdoor world in our area. This STA program is coordinated by STA board member Bjarne Holm, who explained that this month's program is occurring sooner than a "quarterly" schedule might normally dictate.

"The next speaker was to have been in the fall," Holm said. "However, Maret will be retiring shortly, and she wanted to give her presentation before hanging up her uniform with the U.S. Forest Service. So, we scheduled it for this month to take place immediately before she retires from the Forest Service."

A native Oregonian, Pajutee was first introduced to Sisters Country when her family was among the first residents to take advantage of the development of Indian Ford Ranch in the 1960s. A graduate of Oregon State University, Pajutee started with the Forest Service as

a seasonal fire lookout on Black Butte; and that's when her career began to evolve into what it is today.

She says that she was just in the right place at the right time when the District needed a biologist. With her undergraduate degree in zoology and a masters in entomology, everything fell into place for her to assume the role of District Ecologist; and, as they say, the rest is history. And another interesting piece of that history was meeting her husband on the job with the Sisters Ranger District!

"Looking back on my career I just feel very lucky," she said. "I still can't quite believe that I was here to see the restoration of Whychus Creek. When we looked at the watershed in 1998 it was a sad story. The creek had no water in the summer as it ran through town, and its steelhead runs were extirpated. There was illegal trail building, dumping and other damaging behaviors going on.

"Few people knew much about the creek, and it didn't always feel safe to go there. Through trust-building and years of collaborative work with an amazing group of nonprofit partners, agencies, and caring people we are rediscovering a river we had lost."

Looking back on her



PHOTO PROVIDED


Retiring Sisters Ranger District Ecologist Maret Pajutee will speak next week at the Sisters Trails Alliance speakers' forum.

career, Pajutee said, "I feel it was such a privilege to have worked here with this wonderful district and these wonderful people."

Her retirement doesn't mean that she will stop doing what she loves. In fact, she likes to refer to what comes next as her "second career as a volunteer." She plans to stay active in matters of ecological interest to the Sisters area, and she plans to continue – and even expand – her work with the Deschutes Land Trust (DLT). For example, in June and July, she will be teaching "Tree Yoga" sessions at DLT's Indian Ford

Meadow Preserve. For further information on Tree Yoga and other DLT programs visit deschuteslandtrust.org or call 541-330-0017.


For those who would like to be present for Pajutee's final official public address, the program will take place next week, Thursday, April 21, in the Sisters Camp Sherman Fire Station Community Hall in downtown Sisters at 355 S. Elm St. Doors will open at 6 p.m., and the formal program will begin at 7 p.m. The program is free and open to the public. Snacks and refreshments will be provided.




The front porch is back

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