

RUNOUT: Homeowners association paid for removal

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Leaving the property paved would have put the HOA out of compliance with its condition of approval to have 65 percent of the subdivision's land be in undeveloped open space.

The HOA members decided to pay for the project to bring a resolution to the matter, Newman said.

"Ultimately it's just a shorter path to get it done so people can get on with their lives in the HOA and in the neighborhood," he said.

The area in question was mapped as part of a wetland, but the Department of State Lands inspection of the property last spring determined that it's not actual wetland. Newman noted that the department cleared the HOA to undertake the removal project.

Airport co-owner Julie Benson told *The Nugget* that Eagle Air Estates had originally approached the airport in 2014 "about constructing a drainage feature at the end of the runway on HOA property to allow surface water to flow unobstructed."

Benson said that "removal of the drain will cause surface water to back up against the unpermitted taxiway (from EAE) and flood the runway, like it did before. EAE will again be liable for damage to the runway, which is why EAE initiated the project."



PHOTO BY CODY RHEAULT

An excavation crew from Robinson & Owen Heavy Construction removed a 300-foot section of paved runway runout at Sisters Eagle Airport last week.

The question of what type of project was desired and initiated for the spot and how it came about is not clear. Newman said, "there's never been a clean reason as to how and why it went in there."

Flooding has continued to be an issue. The area flooded last year, with the runout in place.

Newman emphasized that the purpose of the pavement removal and return to natural grade is first to alleviate flooding and second to resolve the open space issue and move on from the contentious matter.

Benson contends that "removal of the overlay will reduce the safety factor of the runway. Although it was not designed or constructed to support the weight of a landing aircraft, it has been used

for emergency situations."

Benson told *The Nugget* that "since (the runout's) construction, there have been four known instances of emergency use."

Newman told *The Nugget* that the area will now be left alone.

"We're just going to let the natural ecosystem take it back over."

The demolition of the runout resolves one of several recent issues involving the airport. No resolution has yet been made regarding a demand from the Oregon Department of Transportation that Sisters Eagle Airport return some \$377,152 in ConnectOregon V grant funds, which ODOT claims were misused. When *The Nugget* inquired into the status of the matter in October,

ODOT spokesman Dave Thompson said the issue was under discussion by attorneys of the parties involved and that he could not comment. Airport co-owner Julie Benson also declined comment.

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