

CYCLISTS: Courtesy and respect are in order from all

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in Sisters, hates to see that.

“Unfortunately, that gives the rest of cyclists a bad name,” he said. “Most of the people who are out there riding bicycles are thoughtful people who are not trying to disrupt traffic or create unsafe situations for people.”

By the same token, motorists should slow down and be alert for cyclists on the road — and they should avoid crowding them.

“Nine out of 10 cars that pass you are respectful of your space,” Meudt said.

That’s the way it is supposed to be.

The potential for conflict is particularly high on Highway 242 west of Sisters. The ride up to and beyond the snowgate onto McKenzie Pass is an enormously popular one, and when the weather is nice, especially on weekends, “there are going to be packs of people riding the McKenzie,” Meudt said.

There may be a misperception about the nature of the road, because the Pass has a reputation in cycling circles as an early season car-free ride.

“I think at this time of year, people have the impression that the McKenzie Highway is car free — and it’s not until you get to the gate,” Meudt said.

There’s long been some confusion over the highway’s unofficial “car-free” status.

The historic route across the Cascades is closed each winter due to snow.

The winding, climbing road attracts numerous cyclists seeking to ride it before it’s open to motor-vehicle traffic. However, Oregon Department of Transportation spokesman Peter Murphy clarified last spring that the route is not actually “opened to cyclists” before it’s open to cars.

ODOT plows a single lane through the snow on the road during the spring, and



PHOTO BY RICHARD SANDNESS

Cyclists are enjoying a spectacular year riding to McKenzie Pass summit.

then lets snowmelt do the rest. Once the snow is melted off, work crews sweep the roadway to clear debris, dirt and gravel, and patch potholes created over the winter. Opening of the highway used to be arbitrary — the gate was opened whenever the work was done. For the past four years, the agency has determined upon a consistent third-Monday-in-June opening.

During the plowing and maintenance period, the roadway is closed to traffic. However, cyclists and walkers go around the gate to use the roadway. Murphy recognizes that the public perception has grown that the road is open for cyclists — car-free.

ODOT no longer promotes that perception — but it persists nonetheless, and riders have enjoyed a spectacular ride between towering walls of packed snow.

“It’s been one of the best years riding, with the big snowpack we’ve had,” Meudt said.

Meudt notes that Indian Ford Road is also a popular riding area, and the same

concerns apply — riders should move over for cars, and cars should respect cyclists’ space.

“It’s been one of the best years riding, with the big snowpack we’ve had.”
— Casey Meudt

A little bit of awareness and neighborly consideration can keep tensions down as more and more people hit the road in Sisters Country.

Oregon climber’s family settles case

PORTLAND (AP) — The family of a 32-year-old climber who died after tumbling 600 feet (183 meters) down Mount Hood has settled a lawsuit with county officials.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports John Thornton Jenkins’ family settled the case for \$25,000 after suing for \$10 million, claiming the Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office and 911 center were responsible for a series of missteps that contributed to a more than four-hour delay.

Jenkins, of Mukilteo, Washington, fell down the Oregon mountain in May 2017 and stopped breathing while being rescued.

The family said it sued to prompt changes to search and rescue operations. The settlement secures more training and refined communication procedures.

Clackamas County Sheriff Craig Roberts said there’s an “inherent” death risk when climbing and the settlement is a “troubling precedent” for officials tasked with rescues.

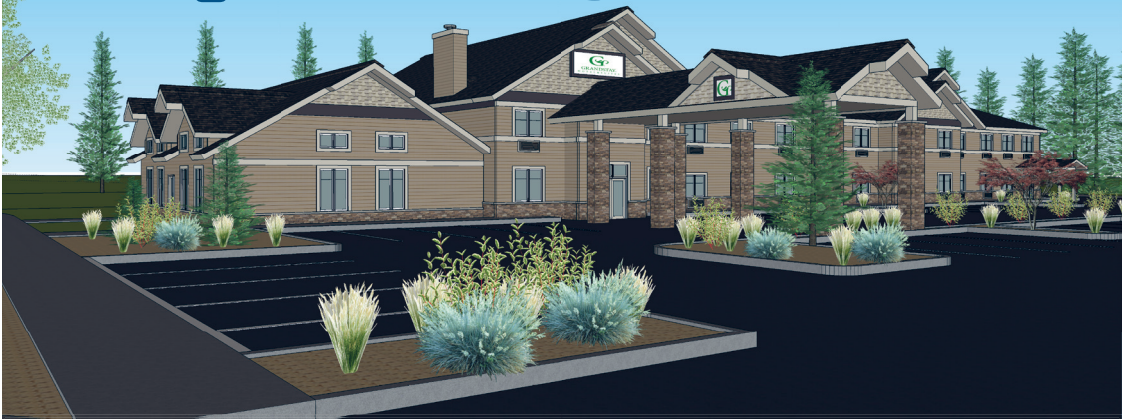
Sisters prescribed fire...



PHOTO BY JEFF OMODT

Fire crews burned near Tollgate last week (see related story, page 1).

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