



The Ranger's Corner
Ian Reid
Sisters District Ranger

Big boots to fill in Sisters

It's hard to believe it is February 2020 already! Where does the time go? Here are some recent happenings and some "new year's resolutions" for the Sisters Ranger District.

First, we are still accepting comments on a project proposal to clear 13 miles of existing powerline corridors in the Indian Ford and Camp Sherman vicinity to improve access and powerline safety, including wildfire risk reduction. Speaking of wildfire, the 2019 revision of the Greater Sisters Country Community Wildfire Protection Plan was recently approved by our local elected officials. The plan is available on the Project Wildfire website and represents a tremendous effort to keep us all fire-safe and resilient in Sisters Country.

We are getting close to requesting stewardship contract proposals to manage about 250 acres near Suttle Lake for forest health and public safety. We expect that tree removal work will begin this year along road systems, in Suttle Lake campgrounds, Camp Tamarack, and the United Methodist Camp. We will provide more information to the public as we get closer to project kickoff.

In the vein of providing public information, we will be hosting another Sisters Ranger District open house this year. Please mark your calendars for the evening of April 15 at the Sisters-Camp Sherman fire hall. Aside from tax day and the spring turkey hunting opener, this open house is another reason to look forward to April 15. We will follow a similar format as last year: describe recent projects, have open dialogue and answer questions with the public, and have smaller breakout sessions with staff. Our new forest supervisor, Holly Jewkes, is expected to attend so it will be a great opportunity to learn about what is going on in your Deschutes National Forest and how you can get involved.

Other projects we are working on this year include the sale of the northern portion of the ranger station administrative site. We are in contract with a local buyer and expect to close this summer. The proceeds from this land sale combined with pending federal grant applications could pave the way for new ranger station construction commencing as early as 2021 or 2022. We are also planning on relocating the Peterson Ridge trailhead this summer and adding several small connector trails to the PRT to provide some additional non-motorized trail opportunities. And speaking of recreation, I would be remiss if I didn't mention winter recreation. We understand there have been some challenging days this winter season accessing the Three Creek sno-parks and are working on proactive solutions with our contractor and other community partners including ODOT and the City of Sisters. Also, if you are a winter rec aficionado consider attending the 15th annual winter backcountry film festival at Sisters Movie House on the evening of February 9, hosted by our local partner Discover Your Forest.

We have recently lost some awesome employees and are working hard to refill those positions. District wildlife biologist

Kris Hennings and recreation staff Amy Racki both left for promotions. And law-enforcement officer Fred Perl has retired after an incredible career of federal service including 16 years spent on the Sisters Ranger District. These are all big boots to fill. And sadly, we lost a dear friend and recently retired coworker Robin Gyorgyfalvy last month to chronic illness. Robin was a landscape architect instrumental in the McKenzie Pass-Santiam Pass Scenic Byway, Sisters roundabout art, and the design of Whychus Overlook. She was an amazing human being who received a 2015 Federal Asian Pacific American Council Civilian Award in recognition of her accomplishments in promoting diversity and inclusiveness. A hui hou, Robin.

Looping back to the rhetorical question I posed at the beginning of this column, the Forest Service celebrated its 115th birthday on February 1. Our country has seen massive change over this time and we expect much more in the next century. Regardless of how national demands evolve, our agency core values of service, conservation, interdependence, diversity, and safety will help us meet our mission to provide excellent public service to you, the American people. Here's to a productive 2020!

Governor seeks affordable housing tax

SALEM. (AP) — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has filed a resolution for the legislative session that starts next week asking voters to amend the state constitution to allow for real estate transfer taxes, which are assessed when property changes ownership.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reports that the money raised would go to fund affordable housing.

House Joint Resolution 203 would exempt the first \$500,000 of a property's value from taxation. The governor has not proposed a tax rate nor set a goal for how much revenue she'd like to raise, her office says.

"Outside of how we build, construct and develop housing, we don't have an ongoing dedicated source of funding to provide the services," said Shannon Singleton, Brown's housing policy adviser. "Local jurisdictions don't necessarily have the ability to meet service level needs without some sort of new revenue."

If it gets traction, Brown's resolution would become the latest high-profile housing proposal slated for the 35-day session that begins Feb. 3.

Eight years ago realtors and business groups poured millions of dollars into Measure 79, which created a prohibition on real estate transfer taxes in the state constitution.

Oregon statutes already prohibited localities from creating such taxes, but Measure 79 proponents wanted more certainty. They made hard-to-prove claims that cities around the state had been plotting to institute transfer taxes, and that such a move would create another burden for homeowners and prospective buyers.

"We are very concerned about anything that would make a terrible housing situation even worse," the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce wrote in a voters' pamphlet statement.

Opponents countered that the measure was unnecessary and would add unneeded complexity to the state's constitution. Measure 79 passed with nearly 59 percent of the vote.

The Oregon Constitution now prohibits any "tax, fee or other assessment upon the transfer of any interest in real property..."

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Wed., Feb. 12 • 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
 at Sisters Movie House, 720 Desperado Ct.

Jim Cornelius will facilitate discussion after the movie.



Complimentary tickets are available at Gypsy Wind, 351 W. Hood Ave. – Wednesday-Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Presented by Sisters Community Church in partnership with Sisters Movie House
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