

Treasurer now open to keeping forest public

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STATESMAN JOURNAL

In yet another plot twist to the seemingly endless battle over Oregon's Elliott State Forest, Treasurer Tobias Read said Tuesday he now supports working toward a plan that would keep the 83,000-acre forest in public hands.

In a statement posted on Read's website, the Democrat said he saw "a path forward" to a solution that would remove the state forest from its obligation to the Common School Fund and likely keep it in state ownership.

The statement comes more than a month after Read surprised many by voting to proceed with the sale of the Coos Bay-area forest to a Roseburg timber company. He later defended his vote



Read

in an interview with the Statesman Journal.

"If there is a viable solution that provides for public ownership of the Elliott State Forest, we should strongly consider it," Read said, adding that he would work with Gov. Kate Brown and the state legislature to accomplish that goal.

Toby Luther, CEO of Lone Rock Timber Management Company, which proposed to purchase the land for \$220 million and manage it in partnership with the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, issued a statement expressing frustration.

"If state leaders who advanced this process never had the intent to allow for

private ownership they had a duty to be clear and forthright with their expectations," Luther said. "Good will between our state and its many rural communities is further eroded by this futile exercise."

The plan moving forward appears to be centered on Brown's initial plan of issuing \$100 million in state bonds to protect high-value habitat, including old-growth stands. Under her plan, a portion of the forest would be decoupled from the Common School Fund trust lands that fund Oregon schools. The harvesting of timber would be allowed while protecting endangered and threatened species, she said previously.

"I have made it clear to all sides that if Governor Brown brought forward a viable alternative I would consider it," Read

said. "The Governor and her team have continued to refine her framework, and most importantly she has worked to build support for key bonding components among Legislators, including the Senate President."

Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, said he is "encouraged by Treasurer Tobias James Read's statement today and remain open to considering bonding as part of a solution."

Elliott State Forest was created in 1930 to provide funding for the Common School Fund, but recently has lost money as timber harvests have declined.

In August 2015, Oregon's State Land Board voted to sell the property as one piece to a single party. It set a sale price of \$220 million; Lone Rock submitted the only bid.

Camping

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Comment Input?project=51339.

Officials hope to make a decision by Memorial Day — May 29 — so rules could be implemented this coming summer.

The goal, said officials, is to find a balance between encouraging the public to use national forests while also protecting it from long-term harm.

Here's a breakdown of what the Forest Service is proposing:

Booze-free Three Pools

The Forest Service is proposing two new regulations at what's probably the most troubled and crowded spot in Willamette National Forest.

The first proposal is a ban on alcohol at Three Pools.

"Alcohol seems to be a contributing factor to a lot of the problems at the site — litter, vandalism, fights and damage to resource," Weathers said. "Every year, we've had calls for emergency response when people have fallen, slipped and even drowned. Many have been alcohol-related."

Fines for breaking an alcohol prohibition is \$200, plus a \$35 processing fee. Alcohol is also banned at nearby Salmon Falls and North Fork county parks.

The second proposal at Three Pools is limiting entry to those who can find a parking space. That means once the 94 spots at Three Pools are filled, no one else is allowed in.

"This would be a way to limit the huge volumes of people on the really popular days — and provide a better experience for everyone," said Suzanne Cable, recreation staff officer for Willamette National Forest. "We'd have an active presence on the most crowded days."

"Ninety-four parking spots still allows a lot of people to enjoy the experience."

Fines for parking illegally start at \$50.

No campfires, limited parking on Opal Creek Trail

One of the most iconic hikes in Oregon begins at the Opal Creek Gate Trailhead and runs three miles to Jawbone Flats.

But crowding on the trail and at the small parking lot has caused numerous problems, Weathers and Cable said.

The first proposal is to outlaw campfires from the Opal Creek Gate Trailhead to Jawbone Flats, Opal Pool and up the Kopetski Trail, for 200 feet on both sides of the trail. That means at numerous small campsites along the trail, campfires would no longer be allowed.

Fines for illegal campfires start at \$250.

"This addresses the concern about campfires getting out of control in a narrow corridor with just one exit," Cable said. "It would also help us to encourage a greater focus on day-use and responsible camping."

The second proposal would limit the number of cars allowed to park near the Opal Creek Gate Trailhead.

Currently, busy weekends often see upward of 220 cars parked for a mile down Forest Service Road 2209. Under a new rule, cars could only park a quarter mile down the road from the trailhead, reducing the number of people allowed in on the busiest weekends.

Breitenbush River camping

There are numerous dispersed, or unofficial, campsites along the Breitenbush River off Road 46 northeast of Detroit.

Weathers and Cable said rangers often find trash, degradation and even human feces at these campsites. They also limit the ability for day-use visitors to explore swimming holes along the river.

A new proposal would outlaw dispersed camping for five miles up Road 46 (from Detroit), and for 500 feet from the roadway. That would make it illegal to camp at roughly 30 dispersed sites currently available. Cable said there are numerous campgrounds in the area, and that's where they hope people decide to



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A proposed rule would make it illegal to camp anywhere except the campground at Elk Lake.

spend the night.

"These are sites on a skinny little strip of land between the road and river," Cable said. "They do a lot of damage and discourage day-use at some of the best swimming holes."

Camping where prohibited carries a fine of \$100.

Elk Lake camping

The small mountain lake north of Detroit has become increasingly popular in recent years, Weathers and Cable said.

While Elk Lake is home to a small campground, multiple dispersed campsites have popped up around the lake-shore, doing resource damage, Weathers said. Cars of people using those campsites often block traffic on narrow and rough Forest Service Road 4697.

A proposed rule would make it illegal to camp anywhere except the official campground at Elk Lake.

French Creek camping

Proposed rules would also target dispersed camping along French Creek Road 2223 northwest of Detroit.

Dispersed camping would be prohibited for the first two miles up the road and for 500 feet on either side of the roadway. That would eliminate about six current dispersed sites, Weathers said, but leave many miles open to camping beyond.

Blowout Road camping

Blowout Creek Road 10, which swings around the south side of Detroit Lake, is currently closed to dispersed camping on either side of the roadway for five miles. New rules would extend the ban to eight miles up the road.

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Buses

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lem. Frequency will increase to five daily trips.

"One of the things we hadn't really done as much as we could in the past was public awareness of the CARTS system," Feeny said. "With work from the planning committee, we realized that with these changes we could provide better integration with regular Cherriots services, better reliability, and faster travel times. It's just more efficient and effective. There's also a safety component. In rural areas, you really don't want buses making unexpected stops or people flagging buses down from the side of the road."

For people without a computer or anyone who has questions about their new route or riding the bus in general, Cherriots offers the Travel Training Program. Run by Outreach Specialist Lisa Carignan, it offers information and training that covers both Cherriots and Cherriots Regional services and can range from one question to a full walk-

through.

"The program is very individualized," Carignan said. "Generally, I speak with a customer about what their specific needs are and what they would like to accomplish. We determine if they are able to access their nearest designated Cherriots Regional bus stop. If they are, we can schedule an appointment to actually ride the bus together to their destination, if they're interested in that."

"In general, we cover reading schedules, paying your fare, route planning, identifying your bus stop, transferring buses and using accessibility features such as lifts and ramps. We can also help them determine the safest walking route between a stop and the final destination. The goal is for the individual to feel confident they can travel independently and we'll take as much time as needed to get them to that point."

For more information or to speak with a travel trainer, call 503-588-2424.

Routes, schedules and the "Trip Planner" function on the Cherriots web site will be updated once the changes take effect. Until that time, the new service information can be viewed at www.cherriots.org under "News & Events," "Projects," "CARTS Changes May 8."



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