

Forest Service finds rotting timbers on Wildcat Camp Bridge

■ Forest Service imposes 5-ton limit on vehicles using bridge

By Stephen Hamway
WesCom News Service

The only route into one of the most popular campgrounds in the Ochoco National Forest is closed to large vehicles, prompting questions about fire suppression, trash collection and more.

A routine bridge inspection in August revealed rotting timbers at the base of Wildcat Camp Bridge, a 28-foot-long, one-lane bridge that happens to be the only road into the popular Wildcat campground. The discovery prompted the U.S. Forest Service to impose a 5-ton limit on vehicles using the

bridge last week.

Jill Welborn, acting public affairs officer for the Ochoco National Forest and Crooked River National Grassland, said the restriction wouldn't affect most vehicles, but could limit access for large RVs, garbage trucks, certain fire trucks and vault toilet pumps.

The weakened bridge points to a looming issue in Oregon's national forests, where many bridges are approaching 50 years old and need expensive repairs.

"In the last few years, as our bridges get older, we're seeing more (problems)," said Peggy Fisher, forest engineer for the Deschutes and Ochoco national forests.

Because of its proximity to Prineville and the Mill Creek Wilderness, Wildcat

campground is one of the more popular spots in the forest, Welborn said. The campground has room for RVs and 17 traditional campsites.

Chad Houchin, bridge inspection program manager for the Forest Service, said the agency inspects older bridges every 24 months in compliance with Federal Highway Administration standards. A late-August inspection turned up issues with the wooden support columns under the bridge. Fisher added that the bridge likely wouldn't completely collapse, but could buckle under continued pressure.

The bridge was built during the 1950s, and Fisher said it frequently sees very wet and very dry conditions, exacerbating the impact on the wood.

"It's not surprising that,

at that age, we're starting to see decay," Fisher said.

Unfortunately, a number of other Forest Service bridges across Oregon are approaching the same age. Fisher, who also conducts bridge inspections on the Deschutes and Siuslaw national forests, inspects between 50 and 65 federally managed bridges per year. She said the majority of the bridges were constructed prior to the 1970s, and many are in need of maintenance.

Across Oregon, 107 of 1,232 federally owned bridges were rated poor or structurally deficient by the Federal Highway Administration in 2017.

Bridge repair competes with other routine maintenance projects in the national forest, and there's not always enough money to go around, Fisher said.

For Wildcat Camp Bridge, Fisher said the Forest Service determined there's no imminent danger to vehicles weighing less than 5 tons. She added that wood deteriorates at an exponential rate, and the bridge will ultimately have to be replaced or closed.

"We're hoping lighter loads will not impact it as much," Fisher said. "But the wood will continue to decay."

The Forest Service has to find workarounds for garbage trucks, toilet pump trucks and certain fire-trucks.

Large garbage cans may be rolled to the other side of the bridge to keep garbage trucks from using it, but servicing the campground's four vault toilets may be more of a challenge. Fisher said the Forest Service is working

with contractors to come up with a solution.

For fire suppression, the Forest Service has alternatives to large fire trucks, including using aircraft and smaller engines, Welborn said. For a truly large wildfire in the area, there would likely be other points of access, she said.

"The instances where we would need to get a very large truck in there would be very rare," Welborn said.

Welborn said the Forest Service put up signs by the bridge to let drivers know about the weight restrictions. Going forward, Fisher said she hopes the agency can get additional federal funding to fix the bridge, which would allow construction to begin as soon as next spring. Otherwise, she said the bridge could be out of commission for much longer.

LOCAL BRIEFING

From staff reports

Union City Council plans work session

UNION — The Union City Council will meet Sept. 10 for a work session and its regular monthly meeting. The work session will begin at 6 p.m. followed by the meeting at 7 p.m. The work session and council meeting will both be at city hall.

Union School Board to meet Sept. 12

UNION — The Union School Board will meet Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the high school athletic complex. School district policies will be one of the subjects discussed.

LG School District seeks input from community, parents

LA GRANDE — The La Grande School District has embarked on a strategic planning journey to identify and meet its future district goals and is seeking feed-

back through focus groups. A focus group session for community members begins at 5 p.m. Sept. 10 at Central Elementary School, Second Street and H Avenue. Parents are invited to a focus group at 4:30 p.m. Sept. 11 at the La Grande Middle School, Fourth Street and K Avenue.

At each session, the district will ask a set of five questions in order to gather information, perspectives and insights that will be analyzed and used to help establish values, beliefs and goals for the district. Contact Gaye Young or George Mendoza at 541-663-3200 for more information.

Translator District Board meets Tuesday

LA GRANDE — The Blue Mountain Translator District Board of Directors will hold a regular meeting at noon Sept. 11 in the Misener Conference Room

of the Daniel Chapin Building, 1001 Fourth St., La Grande. The agenda and board packet will be posted at www.bmtd.org/public-notice prior to the meeting.

School Board meeting includes executive session

LA GRANDE — The Board of Directors of the La Grande School District will meet for a regular board meeting at 7 p.m. Sept. 12 in the District Office Conference Room, 1305 N. Willow. The board will also be meeting in an executive session to hear public complaints.

Register for 'Smart Driver' course, save money on car insurance

LA GRANDE — A "Smart Driver" course will be offered from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 15 at Grande Ronde Hospital. Cost is \$15 for AARP members and \$20

for nonmembers. Those who complete the course, which is open to all, may qualify for an auto insurance discount. To register or for more information call instructor Fred Moore at 541-910-9797.

Meals on Wheels drivers needed

LA GRANDE — Community Connection is seeking volunteers to be Meals on Wheels drivers. For more information, call Sydney Gleeson at 541-963-7532, ext. 1104, or stop by the Union County Senior Center, 1504 N. Albany St., La Grande.

Protect Young Eyes presentation livestreamed to county schools

UNION COUNTY — Protect Young Eyes is returning to Union County for a community presentation on "The Digital Culture

of Kids Today." This free presentation will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Sept. 10 at the La Grande Middle School Commons and will be livestreamed to schools throughout the county.

Protect Young Eyes is an organization that helps parents understand how vital it is to protect our children from the dangers of the digital age. It empowers teachers and parents to use technology in productive, creative ways while maintaining personal dignity. This presentation is recommended for adults only and child care is not provided. For the La Grande live presentation. Pre-registration is encouraged at eventbrite.com/e/protect-young-eyes-la-grande-tickets-47182257402.

The Protect Young Eyes presentation is sponsored by the Union County District Attorney's office, Center for Human Development, and

Union County Safe Communities Coalition. For more information call UCSCC at 541-963-1068 or email at ucasafecommunities@gmail.com.

PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT

LA GRANDE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Arrested: Richard Jay McConnell Jr., 29, unknown address, was arrested by the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office on a Union County warrant on a charge of failure to appear on original charge of unlawful entry into a motor vehicle, harassment and second-degree disorderly conduct.

LA GRANDE FIRE DEPARTMENT

The La Grande Fire Department responded to seven calls for medical on Wednesday and 10 calls for medical on Thursday.

OBITUARIES

Vernon D. Powell

La Grande

Vernon D. Powell, 58, of La Grande, died Sept. 5 at Grande Ronde Hospital. An obituary is forthcoming. Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory will be handling the arrangements.

Betty J. (Shirley) Daggett

La Grande

1928-2018

Betty Jean Daggett, 89, of La Grande, died Aug. 31 at a local care facility. A graveside service will be held at 10 a.m.

Sept. 20 at the Prairie Creek Cemetery in Joseph (in the event of inclement weather,

the service will be held at Bollman Funeral Chapel in Enterprise).

Betty was born Sept. 14, 1928, in Enterprise, to Chester and Lady Clair (Mavor) Shirley. She graduated from Joseph High School and married William Ray Daggett.

According to her family, Betty was a dedicated mother and wife and loved working on the ranch. She enjoyed collecting rocks and attending church. Her children were her main focus. Betty was a member of several woman's Bible study groups. She survived cancer three times.

Survivors include her children and their spouses, Daniel and May Daggett of Imbler and William and Rebecca Daggett of Pasco, Washington; four grandchildren; and 12 nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death

by her husband, William; brothers, Dee Shirley and Mavor Shirley; and brother-in-law, James Daggett.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com.

Edwin W. Lampkins

La Grande

Edwin Wayne Lampkins, 94, of La Grande, died July 10 at a local care facility. A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. Sept. 15 at the Cloverleaf Hall in Enterprise. Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory is handling the arrangements.

Norma J. Carrel

Formerly of La Grande

1932-2018

Norma Jean Carrel, 86, formerly of La Grande, died Aug. 29 in Walla Walla, Washington, of heart failure. A celebration of life gathering will be held from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Sept. 14 at the Island City City Hall.

Norma was born in 1932 in Fairbury, Nebraska. She moved to La Grande with her husband, Charles, and children in the late 1960s. She and Charles owned and operated the Texaco station at the corner of Adams and Greenwood in La Grande. Norma also worked at the ESD for many years before retirement.

Norma loved camping and playing cards with her friends and family. Her last few years, she cherished time spent with her companion, David Baxter.

Survivors include her son, Lance Carrel of La Grande; daughter, Pam Counsell of

Lexington; three grandsons and two great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 57 years, Charles Carrel.

Beverly A. Haynes

La Grande

Beverly A. Haynes, 79, of La Grande, died Sept. 6 at her residence. An obituary is forthcoming. Loveland Funeral Chapel & Crematory will be handling the arrangements.

Patrick 'Pat' C. Morrison

La Grande

1951-2018

Patrick "Pat" Charles Morrison, 67, of La Grande, died Aug. 23 at his residence. A celebration of life and potluck dinner will be held at 11 a.m. Sept. 15 at Valley Fellowship Church. Flowers and cards for the celebration of life can be sent to Sandra Morrison c/o Sheral Curtiss, 61516 De-long Road, La Grande 97850.

Known as Pat, he was born Feb. 12, 1951, in La Grande, to Claude and Barbara (Deboie) Morrison. He was raised in La Grande and graduated from La Grande High School. Pat was married three times, to Nancy Dumond, Chris Keller and, for the last 12 years, to Sandra Best.

Pat was employed for almost 30 years with the Union Pacific Railroad and achieved recognition awards including a gold desk clock for 15 years with the company.

An avid outdoorsman, Pat enjoyed hunting deer, elk and whatever flying bird got in his way, and his favorite summer activity was going camping. He loved fishing for trout, steelhead and sturgeon and enjoyed fly tying his special flies and making his own sinkers for his next fishing trip.

NFL football was Pat's favorite sport to watch, especially with his family and friends. He enjoyed the game so much, one time his neigh-

bors called the police because Pat and his nephew were so loud they thought they were fighting.

Survivors include his wife, Sandra; children and their spouses, Samra Morrison and Timothy McKay of Rainier, Justin and Jenifer McCraw Becker of La Grande, Gary and Doris Morrison of La Grande, and Megan and Jerald Weyant of Irrigon; brother and sister-in-law, Michael and Chris Morrison of Irrigon; sister, Sheral Curtiss of La Grande; 22 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Claude and Barbara.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com.

Local funerals and visitations

Obituaries must be under 450 words and are edited for newspaper style. Paid advertising space is also available for those who want additional information included. For more information, call The Observer at 541-963-3161.

Cleo "Elaine" Case

July 24, 1954 - September 1, 2018

Cleo "Elaine" Case, 64, of La Grande, passed away on Saturday, September 1, 2018, at Grande Ronde Hospital. A viewing will be held at Loveland Funeral Chapel on Thursday, September 6, from 5 to 7 p.m. A funeral service will be held at her horse arena at 64066 Booth Lane, La Grande, on Friday, September 7 at 6 p.m. A private graveside service will be held at Summer-ville Cemetery on Saturday, September 8, at 10 a.m. Casual dress is preferred by the family.

Elaine was born on July 24, 1954, in La Grande, Oregon, to Cleo and Mildred (Emmons) Santoes. She graduated from Powder Valley High School. She married Allen Case on June 19, 1982. Elaine enjoyed riding horses and mules, stained glass, snowmobiling and skiing. She was a life member of the North American Mule Association and Mavericks, and was a member of the Cowboy Dressage, O.S.S.A.

Elaine is survived by her husband, Allen; son, Christopher and Mandi Case of La Grande; brother, Denver Carl Hensley of Springer, MT; sister, Tari Knop of La Grande, OR; brother in law, Tim & Nancy Case of Boise ID; grandson, Cleo Spencer Case; and eight nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Cleo and Mildred; brother, Butch Hensley; and sister-in-law, Jackie Hensley.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to a charity of your choice.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com.



Thank you to all for your prayers, thoughts, and acts of kindness for Willora (Willie) George over the last few years.

- The family of Willie George

