



Cherise Kaechele / The Observer

Glenn Casamassa, who sits to the left of Congressman Greg Walden, held a meeting on Thursday to listen to the concerns with newest Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision.

FOREST

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came out, the process came to a halt.

“People didn’t feel like they were listened to,” Walden said of the revision.

Union County Commissioner Steve McClure, who said he was commissioner when the project began, said he was frustrated that the plan didn’t fix the basic problem — which is the fire dangers.

“It doesn’t need to be the communities against the Forest Service, but we need to recognize there is a problem,” McClure said. “We need to address the

issues so we don’t spend all our money on forest fires.”

McClure said 48 percent of Union County is owned by the Forest Service. Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts, who was also in attendance, said the USFS owns 68 percent of Wallowa County.

The group was largely concerned with not being able to thin trees due to regulations, which increases the risk and magnitude of forest fires.

Casamassa told the group that when he stepped into the position, he wanted to meet personally with the counties who would be affected by this plan.

“The record of decision went

out and then the objections started to come in — and come in, and come in,” he said.

He said he ultimately will make the final decision on what’s going in the plan, so the meetings he’s having with the communities are not falling on deaf ears.

The next step in this process is forest service employees coming out to the individual communities to conduct resolution meetings.

“I hear what you’re saying,” he said. “A big part of the Forest Service is the ‘service.’ Public service is what we bring to the table. That’s what we want to provide.”

The group at Thursday’s gathering had compiled a list of their personal concerns, which they gave to Casamassa and officially submitted as an objection to go into the record.

Among them were: no additional wilderness or other special designation areas.

“No net loss in general forest acreage and to maintain access to national forest lands and retain open forest designation,” the document submitted to the record listed.

There was also a request that the wildlife guidelines and standards for elk and wolves be removed from the plan. Another request was removing the

21-inch diameter restriction for cutting down trees, which “has no scientific backing and will require the Forest Service do an extensive stand-scale analysis” and prolong the planning phase, according to the list of concerns.

The group also submitted suggestions on how to fix the concerns they brought, which stated, “Access to national forest land is a right of every American citizen and is highly valued by our constituents.... Maintaining access to the land for a variety of purposes ... is a primary concern.”

They also suggested to “aggressively attack all wildfires and salvage the commercial volume remaining after the fire in less than a year.”

Barreto said the cost of fighting wildfires far outweighs the cost it takes to thin the forest. Allowing companies like Boise Cascade to cut more timber will help both those problems.

Walden agreed, saying that it costs four to five times the amount to fight forest fires than it does to thin the trees.

“Let those companies (like Boise Cascade) survive,” Barreto said.

Casamassa said he knows it’s not an easy process to go through.

“I hope we can find something mutually beneficial,” he said.

CAMPAIGN

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and I want her out of there,” she said.

When asked why she did not support Brown, Smith pointed to Brown’s desire to keep Oregon a sanctuary state for undocumented immigrants. Signed by then-Gov. Neil Goldschmidt in 1987, Oregon law prohibits state and local resources from enforcing federal immigration law if no other crime has been committed. Brown strengthened the law

in February 2017, when she barred all state agencies and employees from assisting federal immigration officers.

“When she went for making this a sanctuary state, which is ridiculous, that did it,” Smith said.

Brown has received approximately 20 contributions from individuals in Union County. None of these contributors could be reached for comment.

Congressional race

While McLeod-Skinner has raised nearly \$1 million, and a majority of those donations have

come from within the district, her donations from Union County are numbered.

Matthew Cooper, a professor of music at Eastern Oregon University, donated \$250 to the Democratic nominee. He said he wants to see a new representative for the district.

“I think it’s time for change in Congressional District 2,” Cooper said. “I don’t think Greg Walden represents a wide swath of the voters in this district. I think he represents a very small minority of people.”

As further reasons for his contribution to McLeod-Skinner’s campaign, Cooper pointed to Walden’s support of President Donald Trump and noted the current congressman hasn’t held a town hall in La Grande in more than a year.

Walden has raised nearly \$5 million, though he has received criticism for more than half of his donations coming from political action committees.

Marie Rampton, a retired substitute teacher, donated \$350 to the 20-year incumbent congress-

man. She has personal experience with Walden, as her brother Ray Baum was the congressman’s former chief of staff.

Recently, Walden helped pass the Ray Baum Act, which reauthorized the FCC and appropriated funds to expand rural broadband service.

Rampton said Baum, who died in February 2018, told her Walden was a very hard worker.

“Ray said he was like a greyhound,” she said. “He said he’d never seen a man more physically able to handle the workload of this office.”

PETAL

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and another bouquet to give away,” Fuller excitedly tells her.

Smith’s face lights up.

Turner chimes in with the last piece of information.

“And if it made your day, you can post a picture and hashtag Petal It Forward and tag Cherry’s Florist,” she said.

As Turner and Fuller turn to find the next person to give a pair of bouquets to, Smith literally skips away with glee.

National Petal It Forward day began in 2015 as a Society of American Florists promotional event in New York City and grew into a nationwide event, with more than 400 cities in all 50 states participating. Online, thousands of people posted photos on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with the hashtag #petalitforward.

Fuller said she heard about Petal It Forward at a florist convention, and this was Cherry Florist’s first year participating.

“We want to spread kindness and show the effect flowers have on people in a positive way,” she said.

Turner said giving someone flowers can have a positive impact.

“It is scientifically proven that flowers increase happiness and uplift someone’s mood,” she said.

They spent a little more than an hour handing out bouquets. The business had not promoted the event beforehand, so all of the people they gave flowers to were surprised.

Fuller said she was happy with the response she was getting from recipients of the flowers.

“Everybody’s very appreciative,” she said.

The main purpose of the event is to have those who received flowers pass on the random act of kindness to either someone in their life or a random person.

“A lot of people (said they knew) exactly who they were going to give it to,” Turner said.

HUD

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Assistance is also available for people looking for affordable rental housing or struggling to repair credit problems that restrict housing options. Overall, the agency helps clients navigate what can be a confusing and difficult home-buying or rental process.

“It’s mostly education and helping people stay self-sufficient,” MacBaker said of the counseling programs Community Connection offers. “Every program has its own eligibility (and) I analyze all of the (criteria) and try to figure out where we can get the most help and where we can (utilize) multiple programs.”

Community Connection administers these counseling services at no cost, and the recent HUD grant will help the continuation of these programs and services to the public. According to HUD’s website, counseling improves housing outcomes for home buyers, homeowners and renters, and recent research from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia and the Urban Institute found housing counseling provides substantial benefits for first-time home buyers and homeowners struggling to prevent foreclosure.

“It’s important because a lot of people don’t know the resources that are available,” MacBaker said. “When they get into trouble they’re scrambling and in crisis mode. It’s good to have a place to go to know options.”



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Left: The historic clock is back on Adams Avenue in front of City Hal in La Grande. On Thursday morning, Betty Hughes, whose family owned the clock, Matt Orthmann, who restored the clock, and City of La Grande Economic Development Director Christine Jarski, who led the restoration project, cut the ribbon at the ceremony.

LGSD

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upgrade work at LHS will be \$1.75 million. The \$250,000 from the district will come from the capital projects fund.

All of the seismic work at LHS will involve the roof of its gym. Connections between the roof and gym walls and beams will be strengthened. In addition, plywood sheathing will be added, strengthening the diaphragm of the roof, which will be a big plus in the event of earthquake, Waite said.

The roof of LHS’s gym will have to be removed

during the upgrade work. Waite said the gym’s current roof is in poor condition and will be replaced as part of the \$1.75 million project.

At Greenwood Elementary, similar roof work will be done over the school’s classroom wings. This area of the school’s roof, which is many decades old and in need of repair, will also be replaced as part of the project, Waite said.

Upgrades at Greenwood will also include the installation of movement-resistance frames. These are rectangular steel columns and beams engineered to withstand seismic loads.

The grants the school

district received were from the state’s Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program in 2017.

“We are very excited to have received these grants,” Mendoza said.

The Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program provides funding for the seismic rehabilitation of public buildings, with an emphasis on public schools and emergency services facilities. The program requires school facilities be retrofitted to Life Safety standards as defined by the American Society of Civil Engineers, according to the website of Business Oregon, a state organization.

Senior Judges Russ West and Eric Valentine have viewed both judicial candidates in court. We support retaining Mona Kay Williams as Circuit Judge.

- She appeared in front of us many times, both as a private attorney and as a district attorney.
- She was well prepared, well versed in the law, and honest. She brought a fair, evenhanded application of the law to each individual case.
- She listened deeply. She was dedicated to victims’ rights and community safety, as well as appropriate charging and sentencing of defendants, including rehabilitative programs for drug and alcohol addictions.
- She was a team player who worked well with community partners to improve the justice system.
- Now, as a sitting judge, she brings these attributes and a unique perspective that helps people listen and understand their rights, obligations, and responsibilities to lead productive lives.



We urge you to join us in voting to retain
Mona Kay Williams as Circuit Court Judge

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