PIONEER

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of Ford's Suburban during the incidents, was also charged with two counts of criminal mischief and interfering with a peace officer.

"Pioneer Park is a gemstone for our community," Bell said. "This was very thoughtless and needless damage."

Ladd Roberts, parks lead person of the La Grande Parks and Recreation department, said the damage "runs from one end of the park to the other" as tire ruts were found at the following fields: Kory Vaughn, Stevens, Community, Lions, Fischer and Marcum. The worst damage, however, is on the "big field" between the JV baseball field and the girls' varsity softball field.

Roberts said it will take about $500 and at least 40 hours of labor to repair the playing surfaces.

"It's annoying and disappointing because we try so hard to make the fields as nice as we possibly can," he said. "You can never really get the soil back to the condition it was before once it gets compacted."

Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

Two people have been charged with criminal mischief for damage caused on several of the playing fields at Pioneer Park on Dec. 25 and Dec. 30.

La Grande Parks and Recreation Director Stu Spence said another frustrating aspect of the situation is that "it took maybe 10-20 minutes to do the damage, but it's going to take a week to repair and a ton of money."

Another set of tire ruts were found in Riverside Park a few days after the first incident at Pioneer Park, but Bell said the police department has not found any evidence that the damage at Riverside was caused by Ford and Webb-Davies. Roberts said this is the third year in a row that people have damaged Riverside's turf by spinning donuts.

Spence said the ruts are less of a maintenance issue at Riverside Park than Pioneer Park because the damage isn't on a playing field.

"If you could imagine a ground ball hit at 50 mph across the ground, and if it hits a divot or a rut and the player can't predict where it's going to bounce, it's a hazard," he said. "It's pretty unsafe for youth to be participating in baseball and softball (on damaged ball fields) because the balls are going so fast across the ground."

Roberts said he, his crew and a large group of volunteers will repair the fields as soon as the turf dries up, as he doesn't want to create even more ruts with his tractor.

"It adds more work when we could be doing other improvements, but one good thing here at Pioneer Park is we have a heck of a lot of volunteer help," he said. "It takes everybody together to make these fields the way they usually are. There's no possible way that just me and the crew could do it."

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MLK

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Texas titled "The Road to the Promised Land: MLK Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement" at 4 p.m. today in the Inlow Hall Welcome Center.

The exhibit includes photographs and facsimiles of documents and quotations from Dr. King and others engaged in the civil rights movement. It includes a timeline starting with the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955 through the 1990s. Moses-Mesubed said the display contains an abundance of information that may spur individuals to do additional research.

The exhibit will be open to the public from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Jan. 23.

At 7 p.m. Jan. 15, a multimedia performance will take place in Groth Recital Hall in Loso Hall entitled "The Langston Hughes Project: Jazz, Spoken Word and Imagery Concert." The event was created by USC Music Professor Ron McCurdy. A poet, Hughes was a prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance and wrote famous poems including "I, Too" and "Dream Deferred."

The two-week celebration will conclude with a presentation and discussion facilitated by EOU's General Counsel Chris Burford at 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 22 at the La Grande Methodist Church on 1612 Fourth Street. Burford will use recordings and quotations from Dr. King's speeches to spark discussion among attendees.

"Martin Luther King Jr.'s message and his work was never about only desegregating or fighting formal, legal segregation in the south," Burford said. "From the very start of his ministry, even before he was a public figure, he was interested in issues of justice and equity across the board."

Overall, organizers hope to celebrate Dr. King's life in a way that demonstrates his impact is felt well beyond his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

"We're at the point where it's more than 'I Have a Dream,' — when we look at African-American or Black history, it's our history," Michael Williams, director of student support services, said. "It's the history of America, and we have to look at as that."

DISTRICT

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is currently considered a toss-up by national experts and the seat has been held by both parties, a Democrat has represented the district since 1997.

According to an analysis by Bradlee's program, Moore's redistricting would give Oregon two districts labeled as "even": — the 1st and the 5th districts. The 2nd District would remain labeled as "Good Republican" with a partisan split of 56 percent Republican and 42 percent Democrat. And the 3rd, 4th and newly drawn 6th districts would be considered "Great Democrat" districts, with 77, 60 and 60 percent Democratic representation in the districts, respectively.

Knopp referred to a six-district map designed by Jacob Boenzi, an Arizona high school student, he thinks is the most plausible. Boenzi's map creates a sixth district that consists of all of Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook, Yamhill, Polk, Lincoln, Benton and Linn counties along with less populated parts of Marion and Washington counties.

Boenzi's map — which is not what Knopp would like to happen, but instead what he thinks the Democratic Legislature will pass — has less partisan balance than Moore's. The map has the 1st District as 66 percent Democrat, the 2nd District as 54 percent Republican, the 3rd District as 77 percent Democrat, the 4th and 5th districts both as 53 percent Democrat, and the new 6th District as 52 percent Democrat.

"Nationally, you will see Democrats pushing fairer redistricting in 2020," Knopp told The Observer. "You won't see that message from Democrats in Oregon."

Using Bradlee's program, Knopp created his own map of another possibility. This map's new district contains the entirety of Lincoln, Polk, Benton, Marion and Linn counties as well as small portions of Yamhill and Clackamas counties. The map also cuts portions of District 2, placing Hood River County in District 3 and approximately half of Wasco County in District 5. To get to the necessary population, the map puts the eastern parts of Lane and Douglas counties in District 2.

Knopp's map solidifies the 2nd District as red but gives the upper hand to Democrats in the other five districts.

"While this is a less likely result, I would be surprised if Democrats don't at least toy with the idea of using eastern Multnomah and Hood River (counties) to shore up the margins and lock in another seat," Knopp said. "It also means the only current Republican in the Oregon delegation, Greg Walden of Hood River, would no longer reside in the 2nd Congressional District."

Oregon law does not require members of Congress to live in their districts.

ORS 188.010, which gives the state's criteria for drawing congressional districts, states that a district must "be contiguous; be of equal population; utilize existing geographic or political boundaries; not divide communities of common interest; and be connected by transportation links."

Moore's sixth district would unite the coastal region — a community of common interest — which is currently in three different districts.

The law also states "no district shall be drawn for the purpose of favoring any political party." This part of the law may be the most important. Justin Levitt, an associate dean for research at the Loyola Law School in Los Angeles and scholar of constitutional law and the law of democracy, told The Observer, despite this law, political parties often use redistricting to gain or secure power. As of this month, the Democratic Party has super majorities in both branches of the Oregon Legislature and also holds the governor's office. Levitt said this could lead to the drawing of congressional districts that support the Democratic Party.

"Essentially, politicians in power who have a partisan path to keep or (to) extend their power generally use it," Levitt said.

Oregon's redistricting is currently drawn by the state legislature, must be passed by both the state House and Senate and then subsequently signed by the governor. If the Legislature and governor can't agree, the onus falls on the Secretary of State to reconfigure the districts. No matter who draws the lines, the redistricting can be challenged in court. Of the last six redistricting efforts in Oregon, four have been subject to a court challenge.

State Rep. Greg Barreto, who represents the La Grande area, said he also believes the Democrats will gerrymander the congressional districts.

"(They will) draw the lines however it benefits them," Baretto said. "Everything we pass in the Legislature is geared (to benefit the majority party)."

Barreto said he would like to see Oregon go in the direction of California and nine other states and let a commission draw the party lines.

Levitt agreed this plan would improve how redistricting works.

"An independent process is not a guarantee that everyone is going to love all the districts all of the time," Levitt said. "But an independent process gives more confidence to more people that the process was cleaner and doesn't have benefitting incumbents or benefiting party top of mind."

Jamie McLeod-Skinner, the Democratic candidate for Congress in the 2nd District in 2018 who lost to Walden, said she trusts the legislators in her party, but she would like to see them give more representation to rural Oregonians.

"I would like to see some more populous areas drawn into District 2," she said, suggesting the district be cut in two, giving the Southern rural areas a separate district from the Eastern part of the state.

She also noted the 2nd District is a diverse area with a number of concerns, so giving it more representation is important.

Moore said he could understand why McLeod-Skinner would want this, especially since it may give her a better shot at winning a seat in Congress, but he explained the more rural parts of Oregon lack the population centers to have two congressional districts.

Oregon is projected to outpace the needed population by 150,000, but McLeod-Skinner said she was worried the Census may ask respondents if they are citizens, which could deter a large number of residents from responding. In 2014, the American Immigration Council estimated 130,000 undocumented immigrants lived in Oregon.

"It's not a slam dunk," McLeod-Skinner said of Oregon being projected to receive an additional congressional district.

Walden declined to comment on potential redistricting and the possibility of breaking up the 2nd District. Instead, Justin Discigil, spokesperson for Walden, provided the following statement: "Representative Walden is honored to serve the people of Oregon's Second Congressional District and is squarely focused on that work in the U.S. House."

No matter where the district lines might be drawn in 2021, an additional seat in the U.S. House of Representatives will give Oregon a larger voice in Congress.

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