

Big trees under the ax



EO Media Group, File

The Strawberry Mountains in the Malheur National Forest in Grant County. The forest is one of the six national forests across Eastern Oregon and Southeast Washington where the Trump administration is overturning a decades-old ban on logging large trees.

Forest Service ends 21-inch logging ban in Eastern Oregon

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

PORTLAND — The Trump administration is removing a decades-old ban on logging large trees in six national forests across Eastern Oregon and Southeast Washington.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Undersecretary James Hubbard signed off on the decision on Friday, Jan. 15, amending the rule that prohibits cutting down any trees larger than 21 inches in diameter.

The 21-inch harvest rule is part of a broader suite of management standards, known as the East-side Screens, adopted in 1995 to protect wildlife habitat and water quality on roughly 10 million acres of federal land in the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman, Malheur, Ochoco, Deschutes and Fremont-Winema national forests.

Rather than a blanket restriction on logging large trees, the U.S. Forest Service will replace the 21-inch rule with a more flexible guideline that generally calls for protecting old-growth forests, but allows land managers to make exceptions if they meet the agency's long-term restoration goals.

Under the decision, "old trees" are defined

What they said

"This will help us to better manage forests for wildfires and other disturbances, and to protect old trees that are hard to replace once lost."

— Glenn Casamassa, Pacific Northwest Regional Forester

"This amendment would result in controversial, destructive, and widespread logging of large and old trees across the region."

— From a letter signed by Oregon Wild and 32 other organizations

as at least 150 years, and "large trees" are defined as 30 inches in diameter for grand fir and white fir, and 21 inches for any other species.

"This will help us to better manage forests for wildfires and other disturbances, and to protect old trees that are hard to replace once lost," said Pacific Northwest Regional Forester Glenn Casamassa.

Emily Platt, project coordinator for the Forest Service, said while it may seem counterintuitive, logging certain types of large trees can actually improve forest health and boost the number of old, large trees on the landscape.

Past management activities and increased fire suppression have combined to leave the forests more densely stocked than ever,

Platt explained, which in turn has made them increasingly vulnerable to damage from insects, disease and catastrophic wildfires.

Since 2001, old-growth trees have decreased in the six forests by about 8%, according to a Forest Service analysis.

Platt said the issue is exacerbated by larger, younger and more shade-tolerant species, such as grand fir and white fir, that are competing for water and nutrients with older, fire-resilient species, such as ponderosa pine and western larch.

If land managers can remove problematic species where appropriate, Platt said it would help protect more desirable old-growth trees in the future.

"It just gives the manager more options when

they're considering what the right thing to do is out there," she said.

Shane Jeffries, forest supervisor on the Ochoco National Forest, said the agency has already approved 24 project-level exceptions to the 21-inch rule since the Eastside Screens were adopted. By establishing a guideline, he said it removes the need for that site-specific process in the future.

"This is how we think we'll be able to maintain larger and older trees over time, by doing this important work," Jeffries said.

Jeffries and Platt said the Forest Service plans to set up a regional adaptive management work group, with community members that will help oversee how

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Union County Chamber updates its image

The Observer

UNION COUNTY — The Union County Chamber of Commerce pulled the curtain back on its revamped image with a press release earlier this week, featuring a new logo and an updated website.

"We wanted to develop a style truly capturing the essence of La Grande and Union County — something timeless and modern, but something meaningful and characterizing a rich historic past," Suzannah Moore-Hemann, the chamber's executive director, said in a press release.

The new logo, which resembles a postmark, represents Union County's "worthiness" as a destination while representing the chamber's role in supporting local businesses, the release stated.

Over the past two years, Moore-Hemann and office coordinator Sandra

Patterson have overseen the chamber's transformation into a "modernized, sleek, professional image and as a living organization," according to the press release. The new style and branding project was a concerted effort between the Union County Tourism Promotion Advisory Committee, the chamber's board of directors and staff, chamber members throughout Union County and two companies — Portland-based Worthy Marketing and Distill Creative Studio out of Palo Alto, California.

The update and revamp to the style and representation is only a small piece of the larger picture.

"We're updating how we do business," Moore-Hemann continued. "How we can best serve the business environment, our member businesses; how

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Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics board has new chair, members

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Teri Champlin of La Grande is the new chair of the Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics Board of Trustees.



Champlin

recently in a press release. She joined the board in January 2014 and served as vice-chair for two years and as secretary for two years before assuming the chair position in January.

During her tenure on the board, Champlin also served on numerous hospital committees, including committees for contract and compensation committee, finance and governance. In addition,

she served as the board representative on the Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics Foundation Board of Directors since 2017.

Champlin is an alumnus of Eastern Oregon University, where she earned a bachelor of science degree in business before beginning her career at the engineering firm of Anderson Perry & Associates Inc. She also worked as the director of business development for two start-up telephone companies in Eastern Oregon. Champlin has been in the mortgage industry for more than 20 years and is the branch manager at Fairway Mortgage in La Grande.

Champlin is a life-long resident of Union County

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Wallowa County's only lumberyard under new owners

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — After operating 1917 Lumber for 44 of its nearly 104 years in business, Jim and Terri Russell sold Wallowa County's only lumberyard to Kevin and Nancy Jo Coddington as of Jan. 1.

In a recent interview, Jim Russell explained why he decided to sell after so long.

"Because I'm old and he wanted it," he said, pointing to Jim Coddington. "I'm 72 years old. I've been here for 44 years, and I think it's probably time."

Coddington said finding the lumberyard for sale helped him and his family achieve a life's goal.

"I told people a couple of years ago, we'd been vacationing out here for several years and we loved it so much, if we could find a way to make a living, we'd move out here," he said.

The Coddingtons had been living and working in Eugene until about three months ago. Both of them had grown up



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

"Don't put your finger in there," Jim Russell warns Kevin Coddington at 1917 Lumber in Joseph. Russell, who has owned the county's only lumber yard since 1976, recently sold the business to Coddington.

in small towns and had not found what they wanted for their family in the city. The Coddingtons have four children, ages 2-12.

"We wanted to get out of Eugene and raise our kids in a small town,"

Coddington said. "After a lot of prayer and discernment, we ended up out here. Like I said, I've told people if I could make a living here, I'd do it and someone said we ought to look at the lumberyard; it's for sale, the guy's been

doing it for a lot of years and he might want to sell. So I gave Jim a phone call and after a bit of work and figuring on both parts, we made it work."

Coddington said his wife's relatives, Brad and Missy Farmer, were

IF YOU GO

1917 Lumber is at 301 N. Main St. in Joseph. The business is open Monday through Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. to noon. For more information, call 541-432-1917 or visit its website.

a major component in making it happen.

"Really, the force behind it was my wife's aunt and uncle — they had bought a house here and might retire here next year — and he wanted to get involved in a business locally," Coddington said. "He's got sawdust in his blood and been working in lumberyards for 43 years. ... His idea of retirement was to buy a lumberyard."

The Farmers are partnering with the Coddingtons financially in the Joseph venture and once they move here, they'll help operate it, Coddington said.

But for now, he's still learning the business.

"Jim was very accommodating and helped me through the process," Coddington said. "Now he's holding my hand for another three months. I'm going to the Jim Russell

College of Lumber for the next three months."

"We'll see what kind of a teacher I am," Russell said. "He's a pretty good student so far."

"I'm doing my best," Coddington said.

He spoke highly both of the lumberyard and the community in which it operates.

"I've had a very warm reception. Everyone's been very welcoming," he said. "Before the deal was done with Jim, I had a hard time explaining exactly why I was here. Of course, everyone's curious when you're new in town. I left a wonderful job and sold a wonderful house and people were wondering what you're doing."

He plans to keep things much as they've been, with the same staff and same business practices.

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