



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

A deer makes its way down upper Igo Lane on Friday, Jan. 28, 2022, north of La Grande. A forest improvement project is underway on the Mount Emily Recreation Area, causing logging trucks to travel up and down the road.

## FOREST

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contractors using Igo Lane and Archer Lane.

According to Chambers, Union County worked alongside ReedCo, who felt that the equipment would damage the Owsley Canyon Trailhead area if work was done there. ReedCo opted to utilize the rock roads near Igo Lane rather than the natural soil near Owsley.

Residents in the Igo Lane area have been made aware that log trucks will be coming in and out, while efforts have been made to promote safe traffic.

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Chambers further explained that the truck drivers have been made

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— Sean Chambers, Union County Parks coordinator

aware that residents live in the area and have taken safety precautions.

“Everybody’s been real sensitive to what’s going on up there,” he said.

Archer Lane was closed during the past week, but opened again this weekend. Chambers said there is a possibility it could be closed early next week as well.

Those opposed to the plan expressed concern over the logging of large trees and the mastication of shrubs. Many opposed voiced that mastication of shrubs would encourage invasive species at MERA. Chambers explained at the Feb. 1 Mount Emily Recreation Area Advisory Committee meeting that

the project is not a “corner-to-corner” mastication undertaking. Chambers and Sarrett stated that mastication may be heavier along rock roads in MERA to create a firebreak.

“If there’s a fire in there, we’ll be using those roadways and that will make that scenario more doable,” Chambers said at the advisory meeting.

Adversaries of the project also voiced concern over the well-being of trails and wildlife habitats at the recreation area. Concerns were expressed at a field review in November as well as during a county commissioners’ meeting in December.

## BROWN

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\$400 million more for housing initiatives and \$100 million more for child care.

Although governors usually deliver state of the state addresses to a joint session of the Legislature or another live audience, the pandemic has forced Brown to do so virtually the past two years.

### One more year

Brown was secretary of state when, seven years ago this month, she succeeded John Kitzhaber, who resigned under pressure amid an ethics scandal just 38 days into his fourth term. (There was a 12-year gap between his second and third terms.) Brown is barred by term limits from running again this year; she will leave office Jan. 9, 2023.

“In my last year as governor, I view every day, every moment, as one more opportunity to focus on the big and bold work we still have to do for Oregon’s working families,” she said.

“I am dedicated to building a strong workforce for Oregon. I will bolster that workforce by providing access to child care so that parents can go to work knowing their kids are cared for. And I will marshal my colleagues to once again make a significant investment in affordable housing. These three investments work together to ensure every working family can thrive.”

She has called for the spending of an unanticipated \$1.5 billion in tax collections generated by a strong economy. But she and legislative leaders have agreed to set aside \$500 million, mostly from federal pandemic recovery funds, to balance the 2023-25 budget. That budget will be put together mostly while Brown is still governor, although her successor will have until Feb. 1 to propose changes.

### MORE INFORMATION

Gov. Kate Brown’s delivered her final state of the state address on Thursday, Feb. 3. Brown pointed out some high points of her tenure as governor:

- Graduation rates have increased for kids by 8% since she took office, and there has been a record investment in schools
- The number of children in foster care has decreased by 11% to about 5,000 kids, the lowest number in 16 years
- The state’s largest transportation package was passed
- The state passed a comprehensive reproductive health package

Brown also touched on the private accords, which she and her staff mediated between the timber industry and environmental advocates to resolve disputes going back four decades over the fate of 10 million acres of Oregon’s forests. Both sides agreed to protect sensitive species and create a habitat conservation plan. Brown has asked for \$35 million to start work on streamside habitat, plus \$121 million to sever the link between the Elliott State Forest and the Common School Fund, earnings from which are distributed to schools. The State Land Board seeks to transfer the south coast acreage to Oregon State University for a publicly owned research forest.

### Pandemic affects popularity

Brown has the lowest popularity ratings of any of the nation’s governors, although other recent Oregon governors such as Republican Vic Atiyeh and Democrats John Kitzhaber and Ted Kulongoski also saw sharp declines late in their second terms. One factor has been state coronavirus restrictions, which have drawn sharp public criticism and even Capitol protests. State police troopers turned away all but a handful of unmasked people who sought to enter Oregon’s Capitol as the Legislature opened its 2022 session on Tuesday.

Brown lifted most of her executive orders on COVID back on June 30. But her emergency authority remains in place, as does a requirement for wearing

masks indoors.

More than 6,000 Oregonians have died of COVID-19. But Brown said it could have been far worse.

“Oregon has fared better than most,” she said. “We remain third in the nation for lowest cumulative case counts. If our response to COVID matched that of the average state, more than 4,000 Oregonians wouldn’t be with us today. We continue to be among the top states for getting shots in arms and administering boosters.

“And all three branches of government came together to get money to renters in need. In less than a year, we have helped more than 90,000 Oregonians stay safely in their homes.

“That’s not to say it hasn’t been hard. It has been utterly heartbreaking at times.”

But Brown — who said last week she does not plan to endorse a candidate in the May 17 Democratic primary — had a closing message.

“To all the future governors of our state. To the elected leaders who will come next. To our future business and community leaders, and youth who will follow our footsteps. Let me leave you with this: Find the opportunity, even in times of crisis. Especially in times of crisis.

“That’s how we continue on this journey of transformational change for Oregon. That’s how we pursue justice. That’s how we heal divides and collaborate in ways that serve our state. That’s how we honor this beautiful place we call home.”

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