

Business & Ag

SWCD holds annual banquet

By Todd Arriola

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About 90 people attended Baker County Soil and Water Conservation District's (BCSWCD) 2014/2015 Annual Dinner and Awards event, held at Best Western Sunridge Inn, last Friday. This year's theme was "Conservation: Pass it on Down."

Social hour began at 5:30 p.m., and guests visited while placing bids on the silent auction items.

The proceeds help sponsor students to attend the High Desert Youth Range Camp, in its fifth year, held near Burns, Oregon, June 17-20. The auction items included beef certificates donated by Boone Sullivan, a large wooden star donated by Nora Adamo, a flute donated by Dave Clemens, a 500-round box of .22 ammunition donated by York's General Store, a one year subscription to *The Baker County Press* donated by Kerry McQuisten, a rustic star donated by Keating SWCD, bull semen donated by Myron Miles, home décor and a mason jar donated by Andrea Wilson, an Avon gift basket donated by Janet Wirth, a handmade quilt donated by Eagle Valley SWCD, and a book titled "You Can't Borrow Yourself Rich: Warnock Ranching History," by Dan Warnock, donated by Deryl Leggett.

Dinner included prime rib, roasted red potatoes, broccoli and cauliflower salads, with apple crisp for dessert, and refreshments, including bar service.

Appetizers included an artichoke and spinach dip with baguette slices.

Whitney Collins, BCSWCD District Manager, welcomed the crowd to the event, and led the group

with the Pledge of Allegiance.

A video created by Tara Wilson, BCSWCD Administration/Education Outreach, highlighting the different SWCD accomplishments during 2014, was shown, complete with music and narration.

Parker Ussery, District Conservationist for the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Baker City, thanked the attendees for their efforts, and then gave the floor to Collins for presentation of awards.

She said, "Each year, the SWCD Directors select a land owner within our district boundaries, who is an exceptional example as a good steward of the land."

This year, the Defrees Family Ranch received the Conservationist of the Year award, accepted by Dean Defrees. "The Defrees Ranch has implemented countless conservation measures, as well as being on the cutting edge of conservation," Collins said.

Collins then called to the podium Arnie Grammon of the Baker County Weed Department, who explained that about four years ago, Bruce and Carol Hummel moved to the local area, and their focus, from a conservation standpoint was medusahead. Grammon said, "They were very serious about their land ethic and how they approached the land, and we could not have better representatives for the Weed Warrior award for 2014/2015." The couple was presented the award by Grammon.

Ussery called Tim Kerns, Jr., Baker Valley SWCD Chair, Zone 3, up to present the next awards. He was accompanied by Dick D'Ewart, Burnt River SWCD Director, Zone 1.



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An Outgoing Director Award was given to Ross Shumway in recognition of his years of service.

D'Ewart called up Ross Shumway, and said, "Ross has been a Director for 39 years, and every time we had someone to send to a meeting, it generally was Ross, and he has done a great job for us. Ross, we sure thank you." The Outgoing Director award was given to Shumway in recognition of his years of service with the Burnt River SWCD.

Shumway said, "Well, I certainly appreciate this. It's been a long, long haul, but it came time to quit. I certainly enjoyed being on the Board." Kent Nelson, who was unable to attend the event, also received an Outgoing Director award for his 39 years of service with the Burnt River SWCD.

Ussery said, "We'd now like to turn the time over to (Baker County) Commissioner (Tim) Kerns, for an Oath of Office." The elected Directors for the Burnt River, Baker Valley, and Keating SWCD districts were called up to take the Oath. These were Boone Sullivan, Jared Smull and Will Vaughan (Vaughan was not present) for Burnt River, Myron Miles and Time Kerns, Jr.

for Baker Valley, and Walt Jury for Keating.

After the Oath was given, While Kerns was at the podium, he asked Collins about the total of the conservation grants received through Baker County SWCDs in 2014, and she replied that it was \$3.6 million, to the astonishment of the crowd, followed by applause.

Ussery announced the winners of the silent auction items after that, followed by a presentation of a gift certificate made to Whitney Collins from Time Kerns, Jr. and Holly McKim, Keating SWCD Director, in recognition of her efforts with the dinner event and in general throughout the year.

In conclusion, Ussery said, "We appreciate everybody coming out tonight. We appreciate the efforts of everybody, and we welcome those new Board members, and we congratulate those who, throughout the year, have done a phenomenal job, and we look forward to seeing you all again next year. Thank you for being here, and more importantly, thank you for your efforts in conservation."

nicutt, Executive Director of Oregonians in Action and Rich Angstrom, Executive Director of Oregon Concrete and Aggregate Producers Association are working to reverse the problems with the mining permitting process and perception in Oregon. Both work as lobbyists in Salem on behalf of the mining and aggregate industries.

"I spend a lot of time lurking the marble nut-house in Salem," Hunnicutt said jokingly referring to his work with Oregon state legislators. "The best way to make change is through the legislative process."

Hunnicutt explained the lack of growth in Oregon's rural, natural resource rich counties and placed blame for that on Oregon's land planning laws. He provided numbers using a comparison between Oregon's Harney County and Humboldt County in California. Both counties have similarities in land, distance from major metropolitan areas, and in natural resources yet one county struggles economic while the other prospers.

Hunnicutt cited a 12-percent unemployment rate in Harney County and a four-percent unemployment rate in Humboldt County. The median income in Harney County runs \$35,000 a year while the median in Humboldt County runs \$55,000 per year. Hunnicutt said 20-percent of residents in Harney County live below poverty level while only 10-percent live at that level

in Humboldt County.

Hunnicutt believes the difference in economic prosperity lies in the land use laws in Oregon that have been in place since 1973 through Oregon's Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC), a seven-member commission appointed by the governor.

Local land planning and use in Oregon goes through a comprehensive planning process dictated by the LCDC.

"In Humboldt County there is mining and a different land use system in that state while Harney County has been locked into the same land use planning system since 1973," he said.

Despite the huge differences in demographics between rural and urban Oregon the entire state has operated, for more than four decades, under the same statewide land use planning regulations.

"In the other 49 states it's done at the local level," said Hunnicutt.

Hunnicutt explained land use planning and application in Oregon has created problems for the rural communities leading to economic stagnation and loss of population in many eastern and northern Oregon counties.

"We have processed ourselves to death in this state," he said.

Hunnicutt pointed to Washington state and the recent legislative decision to allow rural counties to opt out of the land use

regulations that work to control growth and sprawl in urban land use areas.

There is a similar bill proposed in Oregon, Senate Bill 25, that would allow eight small, non-growing rural counties, including Baker, Wallowa, Harney, and Malheur Counties, to opt out of land use planning restrictions. The bill could lead to more utilization of natural resources in rural counties, according to Hunnicutt.

He explained that the eight rural counties covered under the proposed SB 25 have a combined population of about 72,000 residents over a land mass of about 32,000 square miles. He compared that with the population of Medford with 72,000 residents sharing an area of 25 square miles. He also pointed out that growth in these eight rural counties has been about 3,000 residents during the past 60 years. "Which is equal to what Portland grows in one month," Hunnicutt said.

Joining the industry lobbyists and eastern Oregon political representatives are a handful of vocal, local small-scale miners speaking out to reverse the negative perceptions hanging over the mining industries. Local mining engineer Ken Anderson leads the charge and addressed the audience and State Rep. Cliff Bentz (during the mining summit with what has become his mantra, "No industry exists without extracting minerals from the earth.")

— WEEKLY HAY REPORT —

Friday, January 23, 2015 — Eastern Oregon
Prices trended mixed compared to the same quality last week. Trade activity was moderate and demand was good after the holidays compared to last week. Several producers have sold all that they plan to sell for this season.

No new eastern Oregon sales reported.
USDA Market News Service—AMS.USDA.gov

— SHEEP REPORT —

Friday, January 23, 2015 — Western U.S.
Compared to last week: Feeder Lambs and Slaughter Ewes had no recent comparison. Imperial Valley old crop lambs will begin moving back to the feedlots in early February. Colorado lamb feeders are struggling to keep pens dry with the recent warmer weather. Lambs are carrying increased amounts of mud as they head to slaughter. Most feeders are spreading corn stalks or straw to try and combat the issue. Harvest weights are steadily increasing in Colorado and the Mid-west. Consumer demand is struggling and packers are continuing to decrease bids.

USDA Market News Service—AMS.USDA.gov

— CATTLE MARKET REPORT —

Wednesday, January 21, 2015

Vale, Oregon

Cattle sold through the auction: 969

Steer Calves

300-400# Bulk 332.00 - 378.00 Top 390.00
400-500# Bulk 275.00 - 348.00 Top 350.00
500-600# Bulk 234.00 - 291.00 Top 300.00

Heifer Calves

300-400# Bulk 238.00 - 282.00 Top 302.50
400-500# Bulk 233.00 - 289.00 Top 292.50
500-600# Bulk 218.00 - 251.00 Top 255.00

Yearling Steers

600-700# Bulk 207.00 - 231.00 Top 235.50
700-800# Bulk 192.00 - 212.00 Top 213.00
800-900# Bulk 191.00 - 198.00 Top 199.00
900-1,000# Bulk N/A Top N/A

Yearling Heifers

600-700# Bulk 194.00 - 231.00 Top 231.75
700-800# Bulk 172.00 - 195.00 Top 196.00
800-900# Bulk 168.00 - 188.00 Top 194.00
900-1,000# Bulk N/A Top N/A

Thin Shelly Cows 86.00 - 96.00
Butcher Cows 94.00 - 109.00
Butcher Bulls 94.00 - 109.00
Stock Cows 1575.00 - 2100.00

ProducersLivestock.com

— LOG PRICE REPORT —

Price per 1,000 board feet: Northeast Oregon

Delivered to Elgin

Doug Fir / Larch 6"+ \$370/m
White Fir/Sp 6"+ \$380/m
LPP 6"+ \$350/m

Delivered to La Grande

P. Pine 6-11" \$290/m
12-17" \$340/m
18-23" \$390/m
24"+ \$420/m

Delivered to Pilot Rock

12-17" \$390/m
18-23" \$440/m
24"+ \$480/m

Delivered pulp

\$28/ton to Elgin
\$28/ton to La Grande
Courtesy of Arvid Andersen,
Andersen Forestry Consulting

— PRECIOUS METALS REPORT —

Price per ounce, USD

Gold: \$1,293.20
Silver: \$18.09
Platinum: \$1,265.88
Palladium: \$782.75

Bloomberg.com

— AG COMMODITIES —

Corn: \$381.25/bu/USD
Wheat: \$522.00/bu/USD
Soybeans: \$978.00/bu/USD
Oats: \$290.00/bu/USD
Rough Rice: \$10.95/cwt/USD
Canola: \$461.90 CAD/mwt
Live Cattle: \$150.75/lb./USD
Feeder Cattle: \$202.28/lb./USD
Lean Hogs: \$72.65/lb./USD

Bloomberg.com

Mining Summit

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"Where are we in Oregon?" asked Andy Bentz, owner of Bentz Solutions, rhetorically, addressing the status of natural resource industries in this state.

"Oregon doesn't have a rural or a law problem. It's a problem of process and perception. Mining left Oregon in the early 1990s. As a state we send the wrong message about mining. The perception outside the state is that Oregon isn't welcome to mining."

Because of difficulties in the mine permitting process, often fraught with delay and appeals, Bentz explained difficulties raising the needed capital for investors to consider mining in Oregon. The problems with process and perception led to very little mineral exploration occurring in the state, according to Bentz and other panelists.

Adding to the problem is what Bentz referred to as a "hypersensitive" view prevalent among some state legislators and environmental preservation organizations. "This hypersensitivity and litigation against federal agency land managers has driven the process to a crawl," Bentz said. "This has led to a clearing in Oregon of natural resource jobs."

People like Dave Hun-