

# Opinion / Local

— EDITORIAL —

## Pass the Natural Resources Plan already!

We fail to understand the level of trepidation Commissioner Tim Kerns displayed this week in voting against accepting the County's Natural Resources Plan. The Plan is a living document, not set in stone. It can be altered, edited and adjusted along the way as needed. But what can't happen—and what needs to happen—is the process of County coordination with federal agencies. Without an official Plan in place, coordination goes nowhere.

All three commissioners know this. We understand, based on Kerns' wife's

public comments as part of her role on the Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC), that Kerns probably shares her desire to move the process of Plan adoption along at a much slower pace. We also believe, based on his statement, "I only do what she tells me to do," that his vote in any direction raises the appearance of a conflict of interest. Frankly, we'd feel more comfortable if he recused himself on all future NRAC-related votes.

Commissioner Mark Bennett's absence in order to handle a medical emergency—which we're thankful turned out as well as could be hoped for him and his family—may have opened up the door for a temporary delay in accepting the Plan, but it's not a catastrophe.

Bennett has stated he will indeed vote with Commissioner Harvey to pass the Natural Resources Plan. What we have here is a delay, not a disaster.

Many are growing weary of stall tactics. We sure are. Let's move forward with the Plan. Move forward with coordination. Commissioners, use the most available power we can at a County-level and make us proud.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

### USFS management doesn't factor in reality

To the Editor:

This year has been a traumatic year for rural communities in the Pacific Northwest. As has been the case in prior years, this year a common comment from Forest Service management has been, "We need more money to fight fires!" It is almost a mantra every year.

With such a financial bind the Forest Service is in, why is closing and decommissioning roads such an important factor for their management of our public lands? Roads are vital to so many of the uses the public has for public lands. A forest supervisor even admitted earlier this year the current (non-travel management plan) road system is a large factor in quick and successful initial attacks on fires in his forest. Several firefighters have stated how appreciative they were of roads and how much easier their job was. Roads even used as fire lines

Sept. 11, 2015, photos were taken of a dozer re-opening a closed road in order to gain access to a wildfire. In one photo, three Forest Service pickups and one Forest Service fire engine were parked with several Forest Service employees standing and watching the dozer. This dozer operator was hired to travel up and open the road. When they are done fighting the fire it will most likely be re-closed. Is closing, opening and then again closing roads a good use of tax dollars? Are the new bills in Congress going to be paying for these sorts of things? The issue isn't a lack of funding, it's a lack of efficient use of the funds given them.

The ideology behind protecting public lands is a dream that doesn't factor in reality. The reality of financial situations, public safety, the reality that these lands were intended to support local economies. The reality that without logging, without restoration and without active management, we will continue to choke on more

and more smoke and burn up more and more tax dollars on idiotic actions like I explained above. Eventually there won't be communities to protect from fires and the Forest Service won't have any reason to exist anymore.

Donald George  
Boise, ID

### B2H project still going

To the Editor:

Do you think that the Boardman to Hemingway power line has gone away? Not a chance. I expect that the BLM will issue its decision just before the holidays. Since we will have only 30 days to respond, great timing, likely on purpose. We get to study lots of pages, they get to eat turkey.

You can be sure that the BLM and Idaho Power are working hard to come up with all the benefits for Baker County. Even after almost 400 people sent letters that objected to all parts of the project.

The Plan of Development, submitted by Idaho Power describes in detail a construction project far larger than what was done for Interstate 84. Can you believe it? The 250-foot-wide path is wider, cleared of vegetation and has a two-track road the entire 300 miles.

Hard to imagine more miles of access roads will be built than the entire 300 miles of the power line. Think of the amount of gravel over the newly bladed roads. It is hard to grasp the monstrous size of the construction and what will remain.

Mr. Deschner points out the 100-foot cell towers. These pale compared to the 195-foot transmission towers.

All this effort and cost when it is not needed in the first place. Be read, we need to stop this project cold, or at the very least move it into Idaho.

Gail Carbiener  
Bend

## Sinkhole repairs coming

Baker City, OR - The sinkhole on Anthony Lakes Highway (Forest Service Road 73) near the lower crossing of Antone Creek will receive final repairs on Tuesday, September 29 through Thursday, October 1.

Forest Service Road 73 will be closed to through traffic at the construction site September 29 through October 1. The sinkhole is located on a narrow section of road and the undercutting from Antone

Creek will prevent crews from piloting traffic around the construction site.

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will update the website [www.fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman](http://www.fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman) and facebook page [www.facebook.com/WallowaWhitmanNF](http://www.facebook.com/WallowaWhitmanNF) beginning Monday September 28 with information about the construction and lane closures.

During construction, Anthony Lakes and the surrounding areas will remain

accessible from Sumpter on Forest Service Road 73, from Ukiah on Forest Service Road 52, and from La Grande on Forest Service Road 51. The estimated completion date is Thursday October 1.

An alternate route around the construction area is available on Forest Service Road 4330 from Pilcher Creek Reservoir to Forest Service Road 7312. These are one lane gravel roads recommended for high clearance vehicles.

## Two wolves killed

Two wolves were found dead in the Sled Springs area of Wallowa County the week of August 24, 2015.

One of the wolves found dead was collared (OR21, female). After the collar emitted a mortality signal, an Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Trooper from the Enterprise office, along with ODF

Personnel responded to the location and found two deceased wolves within 50 yards of each other. Cause of death is still under investigation.

The collared wolf and a male she had been observed with were known as the Sled Springs pair and were newly established in the area. ODFW created the Sled Springs Pair Area

of Known Wolf Activity in January of 2015.

The Oregon State Police is seeking the public's help and requesting anyone who may have information regarding this incident to contact Senior Trooper Greg Coggins at 541-426-3049 or call the TIP Hotline at 1-800-452-788 or TIP E-Mail [TIP@state.or.us](mailto:TIP@state.or.us).

## Merrill resigns from Council

Effective immediately Councilor Ben Merrill has announced his resignation from the Baker City Council.

Councilor Merrill explained, "As the father of two busy children, my schedule does not allow me to continue my commitment to this elected position."

Councilor Merrill was elected to the Council in

November of 2014, took Office in January of 2015 and his scheduled term will run through December of 2018. The citizen that fills Councilor Merrill's seat will also end in December of 2018.

The process to fill the vacant position is a decision that will be made by the City Council. They will discuss the issue at the regularly scheduled

meeting on September 22, 2015.

In order to be eligible for the City Council a person must be a qualified elector as defined by the State Constitution and have resided within the City for the twelve months immediately preceding the election, or as in this case the appointment.

## Police nab storage burglars

On September 9, 2015, at about 11:30 p.m., members of the Baker County Sheriff's Office and Baker City Police Department (BCPD) executed a search warrant at 14360 Ben Dier Lane. BCPD secured a warrant for that property, subsequent to a Burglary investigation within Baker City.

During the search numerous items were seized, which were taken from a storage unit burglary at Highway 7 and David Eccles Road, on or about September 6th, 2015. The storage unit was rented by Eagle Cap Plumbing.

On September 10, 2015 at about 2:10 p.m. BCPD

officers executed a second search warrant on a 2001 Chevy Pickup, owned by 22 year-old Jesse Pierre LeBlanc, which had been impounded the previous day. Additional items were seized during that search, believed to be related to the storage shed Burglary.

On September 10, 2015 at about 6:40 p.m. a third search warrant was executed by BCPD officers at 14480 Ben Dier Lane. During the execution of the search warrant a 1998 Dodge Ram pickup loaded with numerous stolen items was seized and impounded. A fourth search warrant is pending on the vehicle.

On September 10, 2015 at about 7:05 p.m., 32 year-old Bobby Alan Sickler was arrested in connection with this investigation and charged with Burglary II and Theft I. Sickler was lodged at the Baker County Jail for these charges and additional, unrelated warrants.

Also arrested in connection with this investigation was 25 year-old Kyle Bothwell-Shaver for the charges of Burglary II and Theft I. Bothwell-Shaver was lodged at the Baker County Jail on these charges and an out-of-county warrant.

This investigation is ongoing.

## Soroptimists offer scholarship

The Soroptimist Live your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women is a cash award given to assist women who provide the primary source of financial support for their families by giving them the resources they need to improve their education, skills and employment prospects. The award amount is \$1,000. The application deadline is November 15, 2015. Qualified applicants may send request for Soroptimist Live your Dream application to [jmacy@otecc.com](mailto:jmacy@otecc.com).

The Violet Richardson Award is for young women between the ages of 14 to 17 who exhibit

leadership qualities as a volunteer in their community or school. The cash award is in recognition of young women leaders who make the community and world a better place through volunteer efforts. The program offers a \$150 award to the recipient and to \$250 the organization for which they volunteer. The application deadline is December 1, 2015. Qualified applicants may send request for Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award application to [jmacy@otecc.com](mailto:jmacy@otecc.com).

The Soroptimist Ruby Award honors women who are working to improve the lives of women and girls through their personal

or volunteer efforts, or through professional avenues. The award recipient receives a \$200 donation to the charitable organization of her choice. The application deadline is December 1, 2015. Qualified applicants may send request for Soroptimist Ruby Award application to [jmacy@otecc.com](mailto:jmacy@otecc.com).

The Live your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women, the Violet Richardson Award, and the Soroptimist Ruby Award are projects of Soroptimist International of the Americas. Soroptimist International of Baker County is one of nearly 1,400 clubs that make up Soroptimists.

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