

Local

County Commissioners toss support behind Douglas County's opposition to new wilderness

• UPDATES ON JUSTICE COURT IGA HEARD

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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held its second, and last, regular session of the month on Wednesday, which included, among other topics, a Justice Court update, a resolution opposing the Crater Lake Wilderness designation, and the County's half mineral interest in property along Snake River Road.

Present from the Board were Commission Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioner Tim Kerns, and Karlynn Dolby from the County Administrative Services Department, filling in for Executive Assistant Heidi Martin. Commissioner Mark Bennett was absent, due to family commitments.

Attendance also included Baker County Justice Court Trial Court Administrator Michael Finney, Ed Hardt, Ken Anderson, John and Ramona Creighton, Tork and Wanda Ballard, and Dave Noble.

Harvey called the meeting to order, and, he recited the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance shortly after that. The agenda was adopted, with a motion from Kerns, and, a second from Harvey.

Citizen Participation included comments from both Ballards, Ramona Creighton, Hardt, and, Dave Noble, which included concerns about grazing rights and the lack of grazing, wildfire devastation, and, the lack of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) management, including inexperience and lack of relevant backgrounds with younger staff members.

The minutes from the regular session on December 2, 2015 session were approved, with a motion from Kerns, and, a second from Harvey.

Finney provided the Board with a Justice Court update. This included a discussion about the successful implementation of a more efficient process for making fine payments to the Justice Court. He said that Contempt Of Court cases and Probation Violations are heard in Justice Court, and, that Fail To Appear cases are heard in Circuit Court.

Finney said that it's

fairly difficult to collect payments on citations from out-of-state drivers, because, they mistakenly believe that their license, while suspended in Oregon, isn't suspended otherwise.

Finney said that, while all Circuit Courts have implemented e-filing, unfortunately, there are no plans to implement this system in Justice and Municipal Courts. He mentioned that, while the Justice Court's Polycom (video conferencing) unit is new, the County Jail needs a new unit, but, they're very expensive.

An Intergovernmental (IGA) Collection Agreement, between the Baker County Road Department and Intermountain Mobile Services (IMS), was approved, with a motion from Kerns, and a second from Harvey. The agreement is for the service of random alcohol and drug tests for those Road Department employees holding a Commercial Driver License (CDL). Terms include a fee increase of \$5 for Urine Drug Collection in Baker City, for a total charge of \$30, and, a Mobile Service Fee increase, from \$15, to \$20.

An IGA, between Baker City and Baker County, for Justice Court services, was approved, with a motion from Kerns, and, a second from Harvey. This agreement grants to the Justice Court all judicial jurisdiction, authority, powers, functions, and duties of the Municipal Court of the City, in lieu of a City Municipal Court.

Order No. 2015-150, Adopting A Baker County Fee Schedule, was approved, with a motion from Kerns, and, a second from Harvey. Prior to approval, no testimony or public comment was given, and, this was the second public hearing on the matter, the first held on Wednesday, December 2, 2015. The schedule will go into effect January 1, 2016.

Harvey, Kerns, Hardt and Anderson discussed their concerns and confusion over the County's 1/2 mineral interest in property located along Snake River Road, which runs from Huntington, and continues along the Snake River. The property is described as Township 12S., Range 45E., Willamette Meridian Section 32, NE 1/4 of NE 1/4. The County holds one-half interest of the mineral rights on the prop-



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Baker County Justice Court Trial Court Administrator Michael Finney speaks to the Baker County Commissioners.

erty, which it foreclosed on in 1996, with back taxes owed in the amount of \$54.95. Gary and Janet Vinsonhaler are in the process of purchasing the property, which would be the back taxes plus the recording costs of the deed, and, there is no assessed value of the County's mineral interest, according to the document. Hardt asked how the County could have acquired the 1/2 interest, and, Harvey responded that he doesn't know. Both Hardt and Anderson discussed the mineral interest with the Board, Kerns expressed the desire to research the matter more thoroughly, and, more discussion was postponed until the next regular session, with a motion from Kerns, and, a second from Harvey. Hardt informed the Board that he would assist with research into the matter.

Order No. 2015-151, Appointing Members To The Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care (EOCC) Local Community Advisory Council (LCAC), was approved, with a motion from Kerns, and, a second from Harvey. Corina Zarkowski and Candace Barbishe were appointed, their terms set to expire on February 1, 2018, and, February 1, 2017, respectively.

Resolution No. 2015-1018, A Resolution Supporting Douglas County's Opposition To The Crater Lake Wilderness Designation, was approved, with a motion from Kerns, and, a second from Harvey. Prior to approval, Harvey read the resolution in its entirety:

"WHEREAS, the

Douglas County Board of Commissioners have issued a resolution opposing a wilderness designation of 500,000 acres encompassing Crater Lake National Park and surround Forest Service managed lands in the Umpqua Rogue River and Deschutes National Forest; and

"WHEREAS, much of the forest within the proposed area is categorized as high risk for catastrophic fire; and

"WHEREAS, much of the area is a high use recreational area centered around Diamond Lake and Crater Lake for summer and winter activities, almost all centered around motorized uses; and

"WHEREAS, much of the surrounding Forest Service land is roaded and provides recreational and hunting opportunities for citizens who may be physically challenged; and

"WHEREAS, the Umpqua National Forest has identified 500,000 acres of dead and dying Lodgepole Pine in the middle of the proposed wilderness area and has only been successful at treating less than 20% of that area because of legal challenges by the same environmental activists who are proposing the designation; and

"WHEREAS, both the Umpqua and Rogue-Siskiyou National Forests have recently developed restorative vegetation management projects within much of the proposed wilderness areas that would be otherwise prohibited under the wilderness designation; and

"WHEREAS, the Crater Lake National Park has a

'let burn' policy and this summer, a lightning strike ignited a catastrophic fire that burned 20,000 acres in the northwest corner of the park, most of it during an uncontrolled run in mid-August; and

"WHEREAS, USFS (U.S. Forest Service) campgrounds were closed for public safety and owners of summer cabins along Diamond Lake were under an evacuation watch for several days and would have been forced to leave with very short notice if the fire would have crossed the Medford Crater Lake Highway; and

"WHEREAS, the Forest Service would not have attempted to stop the fire on the ground if it crossed Highway 230 because there were no safe evacuation routes for fire fighters or the public as the fire approached the Diamond Lake recreation areas; and

"WHEREAS, no fire protection exists for structure fires in the area and all of the recreational structures including campground facilities, cabins and lodges would be at risk of destruction by fire; and

"WHEREAS, the Medford/Grants Pass air shed which has been impacted by smoke from recent wildfires and the smoke from a wildfire in the Diamond Lake basin will flow into the Medford/Grants Pass air shed; and

"NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Baker County Board of Commissioners support the Douglas County Board of Commissioners in their opposition of the creation of a wilderness area encompassing Crater Lake Na-

tional Park and surrounding Forest Service lands in the Umpqua, Rogue River and Deschutes National Forest; and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be provided to the Oregon Congressional Delegation. Done and Dated this 16th day of December, 2015."

The Board discussed the issue of funding for operation of the Blue Mountain Translator District (BMTD), which provides over-the-air television broadcasts for Union and Baker counties, via towers located on Mt. Fanny, Mt. Harris, and Beaver Mountain. The annual fee for receiving and using the signal is \$100 per property, however, as noted at this and previous meetings, determining how many users are actually utilizing the signal, receiving funds for that usage, and, whether to assess a low, flat, yearly fee, in order for BMTD to continue in operation, are all issues to be resolved. Assistance to BMTD from the County, of up to \$3,000, for legal services in solving certain issues, was discussed, however, since Kerns is on the Board of BMTD, further discussion was postponed.

No items were noted during Commissioner Update, however, Harvey mentioned, during Comparison of Calendar, that there will be a government-to-government coordination meeting, between the Board and the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), on Wednesday, December 30, 2015, at 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers.

Travel Management

PRESS RELEASE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"The release of these travel analysis reports is a critical step to ensure our future road system investments promote the greatest good for the great number in the long run," said Peña. "Given the long-term funding expectations, these reports will help the Forest Service strike the right balance between meeting a diversity of access needs while ensuring the health of your forests and streams."

The reports will inform

future decisions on where and how to invest limited resources on building new roads, managing current roads, or decommissioning old roads. Travel analysis reports identify roads "likely needed" and "likely not needed" in the future, as well as opportunities to change road operation and maintenance strategies, decommission, convert to other use, or add to the system.

As part of a national travel management process, the Forest Service is working to achieve a financially and ecologically sustainable road system that meets access needs, minimizes adverse environmental impacts, and reflects long-term funding

expectations.

Through a variety of processes, national forests have worked closely with the public and stakeholder groups to collect information and feedback about social, economic, and ecological concerns and impacts around forest road systems. For many national forests, this is the first time they have looked at their entire road system in a comprehensive way.

The Forest Service manages approximately 90,000 miles of roads in Oregon and Washington that must be maintained to provide safe public and administrative access for a variety of uses, including recreation, fire suppression, commercial activities, forest

restoration, and other management purposes. It is a challenge to maintain all roads to proper safety and environmental standards due to increased use, aging infrastructure, and decreasing budgets. Many roads, built between 1950 and 1990, have exceeded their designed lifespan and require costly repairs. Unmaintained roads and infrastructure can impact water quality and wildlife habitat, especially fish-bearing streams. Backlog maintenance projects top \$1.2 billion, and funds available for road maintenance each year are only about 15% of what is needed to fully maintain the current road system.

Of the 90,000 miles of

Forest Service roads in Oregon and Washington, about 2/3 of those are currently open and maintained for both public and administrative purposes. The other 1/3 of the current road system is managed for specific project uses. These roads are opened during project activities, and closed and put in storage between uses. The travel analysis reports indicate that about 12% of the overall road system is "likely not needed" for resource management purposes in the future. However, the majority of roads in this category are part of the closed and stored road system. Only about 20% (approximately 2,000 miles) of the roads shown

as "likely not needed" in the travel analysis reports come from the group of roads that are currently open to the public.

Travel analysis reports for individual national forests in Oregon and Washington can be found online.

The Pacific Northwest Region consists of 16 National Forests, 59 District Offices, a National Scenic Area, and a National Grassland comprising 24.7 million acres in Oregon and Washington and employing approximately 3,550 people.

To learn more about the U.S. Forest Service in the Pacific Northwest, please visit www.fs.usda.gov/r6