

Banks Fire District 13 Breaks Ground for New Facility on Highway 26

\$4 million bond paves way for Hornshuh Creek Station and training ground

By Scott Laird

Banks Fire District 13 is building a new station on Highway 26, utilizing funding from a \$4 million bond Washington County voters passed in 2017, along with funds from a FEMA grant.

The new station will be named Hornshuh Creek Station in honor of the Hornshuh family, which donated four acres of land for the project. The facility will replace a much smaller station in Buxton, and will include crew quarters for volunteer staff, a training classroom and training tower, with space to accommodate personnel and equipment in the event of a large natural disaster.

"We expect to utilize this new facility to its fullest," says Banks Fire Public Information Officer Scott Adams.

Banks Fire covers 136 square miles of response area in western Washington County, with Banks personnel responding to almost 800 calls each year, sometimes responding outside their District limits to provide mutual aid to neighboring districts in Columbia, Tillamook, and Clatsop counties, including calls within the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District.

"We have a very good working relationship with the Vernonia Fire District," says Adams. "We often work hand in hand, so yes, Washington County voters have gratefully given us the resources for this project, but Vernonia will also benefit from it. And we benefit from the assistance Vernonia crews provide to us up at Stub Stewart State Park and along Highway 47. It's an area that we're proud to share."

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Adams says Banks Fire conducted a study about five years ago to



evaluate their call volume and where those emergencies were located. "What we found was that a very high percentage of our calls ran out Highway 26 and up into the Coast Range and up Highway 47 towards Vernonia," says Adams. He notes that calls in those areas are responded to by volunteers utilizing apparatus from the small Buxton Station, and that personnel will simultaneously be deployed from the main station in downtown Banks, which is six miles away. Adams says the current unmanned station in Buxton was built in the mid 1960s and has no quarters or restrooms for staff. "Getting apparatus out to the west side and providing the best and fastest service that we can is something that our chief, Rodney Linz, has been strongly advocating for. These studies backed up our need to build a station out there that could be manned, so that we can cut our response times to the western end of our District, and provide better service to the community."

In addition to crew quarters and

office space, the new facility will have four bays for firefighting and emergency response apparatus. The new facility will be designed to serve as a training facility with classroom space,

a constructed pond on site for water rescue training activities, and a four-story training tower, which can accommodate rope rescue and ladder training drills, as well as live burn drills inside the tower. The training tower is being funded by a \$390,000 FEMA grant for firefighter safety. A Life Flight landing zone will be located on the property providing a safe and conveniently located spot to transport seriously injured patients without blocking the highway. There will

be space for the facility to serve as a regional emergency operations center in the event of a major natural disaster, with room for Oregon Department of Forestry to stage firefighting equipment. "Basically we're designing it to serve as a multi-agency response command center, so we'll be able to run a large situation operation from there," explains Adams.

Voters overwhelmingly passed the \$4 million bond in November of 2017, with over 60% support. In addition Banks Fire voters approved an increase to an operations levy in May of 2019, with over 58% of voters approving the addition of \$0.35 to the \$0.62 per \$1,000 of assessed value tax that was already in place.

"We always work really hard at Banks Fire to be open with the community about where their dollars are going and what services we're providing for them, and to try and do it at the best value," says Adams. "And our community has been extremely grateful in recognizing

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The Spirit of Christmas in Vernonia



*Saturday, December 14th
See schedule of events on page 9*

Columbia Pacific CCO Awards Community Wellness Grants

Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) awards projects within Clatsop, Columbia, and Tillamook counties that improve the health of the community, drawing upon best practices and other innovations. The Community Wellness Investment Fund (CWIF) supports innovative, local, and sustainable solutions that address health equity and social determinants of health, in one or more of the eight improvement priorities identified in the Regional Health Improvement Plan (RHIP).

"We have awarded some great projects that support efforts focused on improving health and well-being, which are sustainable and aligned with the

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VHS Winter Sports Preview

Wrestlers look to defend District title, girls basketball hopes to return to State Tournament, while boys are in a rebuilding year

By Scott Laird

Girls Basketball – The Vernonia Lady Loggers should have high expectations for the upcoming season, with a roster loaded with talent, experience, and depth, but head coach Jim Krahn isn't acting overconfident. "Right now we're just looking to win our first game," says Krahn.

Even with a low key attitude, Krahn, the rest of the Lady Loggers program, and Vernonia fans should be excited this year. Last year Vernonia earned a trip to the State Playoffs as the #15 seed in the state and knocked off #2 Monroe and #3 Oakland on their way

to a 6th place finish at the State Tournament in Pendleton. This season the Lady Loggers return a number of senior starters from last year, along with some very talented underclass athletes, and should fight for the Northwest League title and another trip to Pendleton.

"This is an extremely talented group of players and we have more depth than we've had in many years," says Krahn. "Not only will our varsity be good, but the JV will be really good. We have an outstanding group of freshman girls. The competition for playing



Seniors Lauren Ely and Jordan Walters will lead the Lady Loggers, coached by Jim Krahn and Teresa Williams.

time is going to be intense. This is the kind of group that as a coach you really look forward to having."

Krahn says he is pleased to have a strong coaching staff for the program

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