

Update on the Applegate Dam Hydroelectric Project

BY MARGARET DELLA SANTINA

On September 13, Symbiotics LLC held an open house at the Ruch Library to explain plans for construction of the Applegate Dam Hydroelectric project. The library meeting room was packed with residents hoping to learn about the impact of this upcoming project. In case you were not able to attend that informational meeting, this article is intended to bring you up-to-date.

First, a little background: In December 2009, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved Symbiotics' proposal for a 10-megawatt hydroelectric retrofit project. (This license was granted nearly five years after Symbiotics submitted their proposal in 2004.) Both before and after the FERC approval, numerous residents voiced concern about the aesthetic, environmental, and safety issues posed by the addition of taller, high-voltage transmission lines. In September 2010, a "contested case hearing" was held by the Oregon Department of Justice at the Ruch Library. This hearing was attended by an overflow crowd of community members, many of whom raised their concerns and questions to the Oregon Water Resources Department, Symbiotics LLC and their lawyers, and the presiding Oregon Administrative Law Judge. Clearly surprised by the outpouring of community concern, Judge Han eventually closed the formal hearing, and continued in a town hall meeting format.

Judge Han eventually issued a preliminary approval of the hydroelectric

project that did not require burying the lines. Nonetheless, in part as a result of that hearing, in December 2010 Symbiotics announced their intention to bury the entire 15 miles of transmission lines, from the dam to the substation on Highway 238 near Cantrall-Buckley Park. (Existing power-delivery lines will not be affected.) Symbiotics requested from FERC a license amendment granting approval to "bury all 15 miles of the transmission lines from the powerhouse to their terminus." Eric Steimle of Symbiotics explained this decision—which adds about 14% to the approximately \$18-million project—as a reflection of Symbiotics' desire to be "a good neighbor to residents of the Applegate Valley."

Those of us who support the use of the existing dam to generate non-fossil-fuel energy were delighted with Symbiotics' decision, and began to talk with Symbiotics representatives about other ways the project might be mutually beneficial. For instance, one possible benefit is the prospect of extending high-speed Internet all the way out Upper Applegate Road. Currently, residents who live beyond the nine-mile marker must rely on slow dial-up or expensive satellite connections. Symbiotics has offered the use of their open trenches to any Internet provider that would like to extend service along the transmission route, and discussions are currently

under way between Symbiotics, Charter Communications and CenturyLink. At the September 13 meeting, residents were asked to complete a survey gauging interest in obtaining (or switching to) high-speed Internet; this data is critical to supporting our case. If you are interested in the possibility of high-speed Internet, and did not complete a survey at the September 13 meeting, please contact Jack Berger at CenturyLink (Jack.Berger@CenturyLink.com) and/or Greg Templer at Charter Communications (Greg.Templer@chartercom.com).

The open house on September 13 was hosted by Larry Hobbs, project superintendent at Symbiotics. He was joined by three representatives from Mowat, the engineering firm contracted to do the construction. Mike Kuntz from Jackson County Roads Department was also on hand to answer questions. Tim Callahan, the project engineer from Mowat, provided the following information about the schedule and logistics of the project:

- Construction of the transmission line route is scheduled to begin in mid-January 2012, and estimated to take about eight months, concluding toward the end of summer 2012.
- Trench-digging will begin at the Ruch substation, and move from there along Hamilton Road, then Upper Applegate Road to the dam.

• Crews will work from 7 am to 5 pm most workdays, and generally not on weekends or holidays.

• The trench will be approximately two feet wide and four feet deep. Open trenches will be clearly marked with signs, fencing, and/or lighted barrels.

• When digging is scheduled to cross a driveway, residents will be given one to two weeks advance notice of the date/time. Crews will attempt to complete work on driveways within a few hours.

• In several spots, the trench must cross the road. When the road must be closed, Mowat will provide several weeks' advance notice, and will perform the work during off-peak hours.

• A signboard will be posted outside the Ruch Library once construction has begun, showing the progress of the project and the area that is currently under construction. This board will be updated regularly. In addition, maps showing the transmission-line burial route are on display at the Ruch Library.

Although this project is bound to be disruptive to many residents, Symbiotics and Mowat both are hoping to maintain good community relations through this process. If you have questions or concerns as the project progresses, you can direct these to Larry Hobbs, Project Superintendent: larry.hobbs@symbioticsenergy.com. For general information and updates on the project, a binder is available at the Ruch Library labeled "Applegate Dam Project." Stay informed!

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Upper Applegate Bicycle Lanes

BY PHIL DOLLISON

Following in the footsteps of Symbiotics, with their plans to construct a power-generating facility at Applegate Lake and lay the transmission lines underground along Upper Applegate Road, the Applegate River Watch Group, Inc., hopes to construct approximately nine miles of bicycle/pedestrian lanes along Upper Applegate Road, from Ruch to the far side of Applegate Lake. This will connect to approximately nine existing miles of bicycle lanes already in place along Upper Applegate Road. The nine-mile addition will provide almost 18 miles of safe bicycle/pedestrian lanes stretching from Ruch almost to the California border.

In order to keep construction costs down, we are hoping to hire a retired roads engineer to work with us, coordinating with Jackson County Roads Department, to engineer and design the first section of road-widening for construction of bicycle/pedestrian lanes. Symbiotics has offered to deliver excess crushed rock for use as shoulder (bike lane) base material at no charge and Jackson County has agreed to allow us to store the crushed rock on county land along Upper Applegate Road.

As our bicycle-lane project is getting started, we are looking for donations and pledges to begin our first section from the

two-mile marker on Upper Applegate Road to Little Applegate Bridge. At the same time, the U.S. Forest Service is looking for grant funding for the approximately 2.3 miles of roadway they control along Upper Applegate Road. To date, we have \$1,100 in an account at Rogue Federal Credit Union (under the auspices of the Applegate River Watch Group), as well as \$1,900 in pledges. In addition, 14 local residents have agreed to support us with their tax-deductible donations. By the time Symbiotics begins trenching from Ruch to the Applegate Dam along Hamilton Road (in January of 2012), we hope to have sufficient funding to begin engineering our first section: Seven-tenths of a mile between Hamilton Road and Little Applegate Bridge.

Applegate River Watch Group, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit community organization and, as such, all donations are tax-deductible. If you would like to donate to this worthy cause, please send your donation (or monetary pledge) to Applegate River Watch Group, Inc., 6621 Upper Applegate Road, Jacksonville, OR 97530.

Phil Dollison
541-899-9601

Applegate River Watch Group, Inc.

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