

## Biscuit Fire salvage aim of Atkinson

A measure sponsored by Sen. Jason Atkinson (R-Jacksonville) to address the Biscuit Fire that ravaged the Illinois Valley last summer, has been approved by the Senate. It now goes to the House for consideration.

Atkinson said he introduced Senate Joint Memorial 2 to send a clear message to the federal government and the Bush Administration.

The measure urges the federal government to revise its forest firefighting priorities to match the forest-fighting priorities of the state of Oregon and to cooperate with state and local agencies when fighting fires.

It also calls on the federal government to quickly salvage the Biscuit Fire region in cooperation with the Oregon Dept. of Forestry; to restore and replant the landscape in the region; and, to provide funding for reforestation and economic renewal in the region.

"Salvaging the burned timber quickly will not only provide a much needed boost to the Illinois Valley but is also essential to reducing the fuel load on the forest floor for this summer," Atkinson said.

The measure further recommends the U.S. Forest Service permanently station a rappelling or smoke-jumping team in Illinois Valley where the facilities for such a group are already in existence. "It is too bad it took this disaster to prove why we need to reinstate the smoke jumper base," Atkinson commented.

The measure, Atkinson said, "will not fall on deaf ears on Capitol Hill or in the White House."

Atkinson noted that President Bush visited the Biscuit Fire region last summer and is "very much in tune" with natural resource issues in Southwestern Oregon.

"Not only will this fall upon (the president's) ears the right way at the White House, but also upon a Congress that is wondering how come fire season was so bad in 2002 and how can we avoid it," in the future, Atkinson said.

Atkinson represents Jackson and Josephine counties, including the area devastated by the Biscuit Fire. He is the vice chairman of the Senate Rules committee and serves on the Senate Water and Land Use Committee.



**COOL IN POOL** - There was good attendance last summer at Illinois Valley Swimming Pool in Cave Junction, as shown by this file photo. A committee, led by CJ Councilman Rita Dyer, is working on a financial plan to keep the pool open this summer.

## Chamber, IVCRT look at possibility for cell phone 'advertising' to help tourists

Taking advantage of cellular telephones carried by persons on vacation, who could obtain business and tourism information as they enter Illinois Valley, was a topic during an I.V. Chamber of Commerce meeting.

The chamber board met on Thursday, March 20 in the Junction Inn. The idea of cell phone "advertising" was outlined by George Fence, chairman of the board for I.V. Community Response Team.

Fence said that discussions have been held with frontier/Citizens Communications telephone company, and the Oregon Dept. of Transportation (ODOT). The phone company is said to be working up a cost for cell phone mailboxes that could be used by valley merchants, and which could be accessed by persons coming into the valley. ODOT has been contacted regarding highway signs that might be used, and Fence suggested that the chamber's two

"Welcome" signs along Redwood Hwy. could be utilized.

Chamber directors took no action on the matter, but indicated that they thought such a plan has potential advantages for the valley's merchants.

In other matters, the chamber board:

\*Heard from Pam Cooper, director of Community Education in the valley for Rogue Community College, that 14 new classes are among the 28 offered for the spring term. In addition, she said that she is working on the summer schedule, and that those with ideas for classes, or who want to teach classes, should contact her through (800) 411-6508, Ext. 7373; or at the Learning Center in the RCC Belt Bldg. in Kerby.

\*Heard from Cooper, as board chairman of I.V. Family Coalition, that the organization is sponsoring a fundraising circus on May 15 on a site between I.V. High School and the coalition center.

\*Was advised that tours of Oregon Caves National Monument, 20 miles east of Cave Junction, resumed on Friday, March 21 following the winter closure due to snow and low attendance.

\*Was told by Jana Fincher, chairman of the annual Concerts in the Park program, that this year's series will begin on June 28 with a classic car show in cooperation with Cave Junction Lions Club. Six other concerts are planned after the first.

\*Noted that there are possibilities of seeking grants from the city of Cave Junction and Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce to replace Christmas decorations. It was stated that the current decorations were used when obtained by the chamber some 25 years ago, and that they are worn out. The board also indicated that the city should take at least partial responsibility for Downtown CJ decorations.

## RCC president freezes salary to aid budget

College managers' salaries will be frozen next year because of revenue decreases

To help bridge a \$2.3 million gap between revenue and projected expenses next year, Rogue Community College President Rick Levine has requested a freeze of his salary.

Salaries of all RCC managers will be frozen next year, and collective bargaining is under way with faculty and classified (non-teaching) units in hopes of achieving "zero cost" salary adjustments.

Levine, whose salary and benefits are negotiated directly with the RCC Board of

Education, said that he wants to be treated "like everyone else."

RCC officials are grappling with the prospect of a \$2.3 million revenue shortfall next year, and a \$5.7 million shortfall during the biennium. The college board accepted Levine's offer with thanks.

In another attempt to meet the projected revenue shortfall, the board approved an increase in fees for equipment replacement and college services effective July 1. A \$2-per-credit technology fee, implemented for the first time this school year, will be doubled. The fee is used to fund computer and other technical equipment replacement.

In addition, a registration fee, also implemented this year, will be renamed to "college services" fee. It's based on the number of enrolled credits per term, and also will double.

Students who take one or more non-credit classes will

pay \$10 a term, while those who enroll in one to five credits would pay \$30 per term. Half the college services fee will continue to be used in the next general fund; the other half will be used to establish a special fund to offset operations of facilities. Every \$1 of fee increase generates approximately \$120,000 in additional revenue, said RCC.

In another matter, the board accepted a \$144,730 grant from the U.S. Dept. of Labor through the Oregon Dept. of Community Colleges and Workforce Development. The grant will help fund a new coalition of regional education and social service providers "that has teamed up to make staff employee training stronger and more cost-effective for area agencies."

## House considering extending state unemployment benefits

The House Business, Labor and Consumer Affairs Committee, chaired by Rep. Betsy Close (R-Albany), has voted unanimously to send legislation to the House to extend unemployment benefits to unemployed Oregonians for an additional 13 weeks.

Senate Bill 2 was forwarded to the House with a "do-pass recommendation," and the committee also removed a subsequent referral to the Joint Ways and Means Committee to expedite the bill through the legislative process.

"SB 2 is a good bill that will help unemployed Oregonians during the current economic crisis," said Close.

"I've received unemployment benefits in the past after losing my job and know how important these dollars are to Oregon families."

SB 2 extends benefits to Oregonians who have lost, or will soon lose, all access to unemployment benefits. It would provide \$29 million for those benefits; money that was set aside during last year's first special legislative session.

Republicans and Democrats applauded Close's efforts on SB 2. It was to be heard on the House Floor this week.

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