



TRAIL BLAZERS LIVE UP TO NAME - Members of the Trail Blazers, supervised by Josephine County Sheriff's Office, perform many types of community service work in lieu of jail time. The group cleared nearly two of three acres between Lorna Byrne Middle School and the track off Old Stage Road

recently. Their work, supplemented with efforts this week by members of the Illinois Valley High School track team, is designed to establish an outdoor, Nature-based environment for many types of educational activities, and to make the wooded area accessible and safe. (Photo by Britt Fairchild)

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DEQ, EPA take aim at diesel emissions

Agencies plan reductions because of announced health hazards

Air quality officials from the Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ) announced the recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposal to curb emissions for non-road diesel engines is a step in the right direction.

And it coincides with a variety of efforts DEQ is making to reduce harmful emissions caused by diesel engines throughout Oregon.

EPA's proposal calls for a significant reduction in emissions from new non-road diesel engines used in construction, agricultural and industrial equipment.

New emission rules would go into effect beginning with 2008 model year engines and be fully phased in by 2014.

According to a report issued last year from two national air pollution control organizations, more than 100 premature deaths a year in Oregon are caused by air pol-

lution from non-road diesel-powered equipment and machinery. Non-road equipment includes everything from tractors, backhoes, road graders and pavers to pile drivers, bulldozers and cranes.

These vehicles and pieces of equipment produce more fine particulates than all the nation's diesel-powered cars, trucks and buses combined, according to the report from the State & Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators and Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials.

Diesel engines contribute to elevated levels of ozone and fine particulate matter that scientists have linked to heart and respiratory illnesses, asthma and premature death. These engines affect not only the workers who operate them but also persons living near construction sites and agricultural fields.

In Oregon, approximately

2,400 asthma attacks a year and 20,600 work loss days are triggered by exposure to non-road diesel engines, adding up to \$879 million a year in economic effect.

To date, several different types of fleets in different parts of the state have agreed to install clean diesel technology on some of their vehicles, including Beaverton School District, Rogue Disposal in Medford, and CSU Trucking in Arlington.

Diesel particulates have been identified by numerous international, federal and state agencies as being toxic air contaminant.

In addition to these efforts to reduce exposure to diesel particulates, DEQ is developing a state-wide Air Toxics Program aimed at reducing releases of other harmful air pollutants not addressed by EPA's non-road diesel proposal and other federal air quality regulations.

Trivia Time by Walter Branch

- Who was the final survivor of Hitler's inner circle until August 17, 1987?
 - What city did Truman Capote see as "a diamond iceberg floating in river-water"?
 - What U.S. state did James Michener go on and on about for 868 pages in a 1988 novel?
 - What Muppet said: "Never eat more than you can lift"?
 - What movie showed Brooke Shields receiving her first screen kiss?
 - What percent of the popular vote did George Bush receive in the 1988 election?
 - Which star of "The Witches of Eastwick" lost her original part to Cher?
 - Who claimed that he made up quotes for Ronald Reagan because the president "had almost nothing to say"?
 - What city's World's Fair had "Energy" for its theme?
 - Who was the last surviving star of the movie "The Wizard of Oz"?
- Trivia Time Answers

- Rudolf Hess; 2. New York City; 3. Alaska; 4. Miss Piggy; 5. "The Blue Lagoon"; 6. 54; 7. Susan Sarandon; 8. Larry Speakes; 9. Knoxville's; 10. Ray Bolger
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IVHS Grad Night fund-raiser
 Saturday, May 3
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Legislators continuing PERS struggles

Two recent bills are aimed at dealing with the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), which has emerged this year as a major financial problem.

The House PERS Committee has passed House Bill 2020, the successor system for the current PERS, to the House Floor with a do-pass recommendation. The bill establishes a defined contribution retirement plan for all public employees hired on or after July 1, 2003. House Bill 2020 affects only new hires, although Tier 1 and Tier 2 members may move into the new system if they choose to do so.

"I believe this is a fair, affordable and sustainable retirement plan for our public employees," said the committee chairman, House Majority Leader Tim Knopp (R-Bend). "The new system has defined costs, and will ensure that our state and our public employers do not end up in the same situation they are in as a result of PERS."

The new retirement plan, dubbed the "Fair Retirement Plan," will allow an employer match of up to 6 percent of salary for general service and 7.15 percent for police and fire, and allows the member to contribute up to the amount allowed by federal law. Employers would contribute a 3 percent base regardless of employee contributions. House Bill 2020 prohibits employer "pick-up" of the employee contributions which have

compounded the problem in the current system.

House Bill 2020 sets up a system that will be administered by the Oregon Investment Council and will offer nine different investment options to accommodate employees. Similar to other proposed plans, Knopp will offer a separate bill regarding police and fire disability.

"The retirement system we currently have for our public employees is not sustainable," said Knopp. "The new system, while being more generous than some, looks more like the 401(k) type of retirement found in the private sector. By implementing this type of system, we will be able to gain back some of the credibility we've lost as a result of employees retiring at over 100 percent of their final average salary."

Rep. Dennis Richardson (R-Central Point) presented the plan to the House PERS Committee. "The Fair Retirement Plan provides attractive, affordable and flexible retirement benefits to public employees at a reasonable cost to Oregon taxpayers," he said.

House Bill 2003, which restructures the crediting and reserving policy for the Public Employee Retirement System, has passed out of the House PERS Committee with strong bi-partisan support.

House Bill 2003 maintains the accrued benefits public employees have earned to date, but works to slow the growth of the accounts to

make up for the over-crediting of accounts in the past. The over-crediting occurred in the 1990s when the PERS Board credited accounts as high as 20 percent when required to credit the accounts 8 percent.

"House Bill 2003 will correct mistakes that were made in the '90s without removing money from our retirees' and our current public employees' accounts," said Knopp. "With a growing number of public employees retiring with benefits more than 100 percent of their ending salary, and the potential for employees to retire at 200 percent of salary in the future, we must fix this problem to regain credibility with the taxpayers of Oregon. House Bill 2003 represents a significant step in PERS reform which is the top priority of this Legislature."

Specifically, HB 2003 provides that Tier 1 regular accounts will receive no investment earnings until the deficit reserve is eliminated, and that those accounts may not be credited with any earnings that would result in another deficit. The bill would move the 6 percent employee contribution that is picked up by a majority of PERS employers into a separate, transition account.

The 2 percent COLAs for retirees who left after 1999, when member accounts were over-credited by 8.7 percent, will be suspended until that amount is recovered.

The bill saves \$677.6 million for 2003-2005.

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***** **May Events: 7-10 p.m.** *****

***Friday, May 2**
Route 66
Country Dance Band
Dinner special
Enchilada Dinner - \$7.95
***Saturday, May 3 - 'Rapp Brush' - Folk/Country**
***Friday, May 9 - Artwalk - 3 Daves and a Chaser**
Sheriff Dave Daniel sings 'Hippie Music'
***Friday & Saturday - May 15 and 16**
'IMBAS' returns

***Thursdays - UBA-Star open mic with Jake Thompson and SCRABBLE COMPETITION**
***DINNERS SERVED* Thursday, Friday & Saturday - 5 p.m.**
Prepared by Chef Michael Smith

SERVING BEER AND WINE ESPRESSO Open for breakfast 6 a.m.