

Smokejumper base on National Register

(Continued from page 1)

in Cave Junction, and Kurt Krauss, owner of Krauss Craft, of Merlin.

The group acknowledges that converting the former base into a heritage tourism attraction is no ordinary undertaking.

“We need to have everything set up before we begin a serious promotion campaign,” said Westcott. She pointed out that inadequate preparation would increase the risk of a negative word-of-mouth campaign from dissatisfied travelers.

“We want visitors to go away from here and tell everyone what a great experience they had,” said Westcott. “We are actively taking responsibility to assure that everything being said about the historic site and Oregon is positive.”

The group has proposed installing exhibits and waysides, maintaining the grounds, cleaning the restrooms, and picking up trash along the road into the base and around the parking area.

“As our promotion efforts begin to take effect, visitor traffic at the site is going to increase dramatically,” said Gary Buck, SSMBP president, and a former smokejumper. “That will mean more cleanup work and maintenance.

“The cleanliness of the restroom and the trash on the roadsides are just as important to turning out positive word-of-mouth promotion as the story that visitors will enjoy in the museum and waysides.”

The group feels that the work it proposes to handle represents a savings of thousands of dollars each year for Josephine County.

The group also proposes to seek funding to repair the backlog of maintenance on the historic buildings. Dennis Strayer, chairman of the Kerbyville Museum, voiced his concerns about the buildings, especially the parachute loft.

“The south wall is losing shingles, and the windows need to be reconstructed,” he said. “There is also a leak around the chimney in the central part of the building.”

Strayer has had many positive experiences with volunteer groups that have worked on projects at Kerbyville Museum. He feels that a similar effort will materialize for work projects at the base.

“So much of our history has disappeared and an effort like this is very worthwhile,” he said.

The group also is proposing to tackle larger issues such as wheelchair accessibility and parking for tour buses and travel-trailers.

“There are many sectors in the tourism market that could be attracted to the site including families who travel in private airplanes,” said Brandt. “There is no question in my mind that all these sectors can be attracted to visit, but to make that happen we need to get the site ready to meet their needs for safety, parking, and comfort.”

SSBMP estimates that

the repair and upgrade work they propose to do would be worth more than \$100,000. “This will be done with volunteer assistance and grants so there is no cost to the county over the span of the next five years,” said Buck.

The group acknowledges that it is looking at a long, difficult road to achieve these objectives. But members are quick to point out that the effort will bring long-term benefits to the businesses in the region that depend on tourism for generating their income.

“The historic base represents a unique project of national historic significance. There isn’t going to be a road map for how this should be done,” said Strayer.

The group also wants to set up a small visitor center with a gift shop and basic food service for those who fly to the site.

“This is going to be a great opportunity for local artisans who want to make sales items for the gift store,” said Brandt. “This site gives our community a legitimate claim to the ‘parachuting firefighters,’ which to me means that we have a sales niche with no competition for hundreds of miles in any direction.”

The group is planning to focus a large part of their effort toward promoting other activities in the area and increase the time and money that visitors spend in the community.

“A very conservative estimate of what we might be able to bring to the Josephine County economy through our promotion efforts is about \$400,000 a year,” said Brandt. He emphasized that, “This is a very conservative estimate.”

Brandt feels that the base represents a significant tourism opportunity.

“There are no other historic sites like this for a thousand miles in any direction,” he said. “Josephine County essentially has a monopoly on one of Oregon’s greatest adventure stories; and great stories do well in publicity campaigns.”

Illinois Valley Airport was constructed by the U.S. Forest Service in 1940, the same year that the first smokejumping program began in the nation. It was first used by forest service planes that dropped supplies to crews fighting wildfires. In 1943, during World War II, smokejumping operations began at the airfield.

Construction of facilities at the airfield was slow until the war ended. By 1949 several buildings, including a barracks, mess hall, and bath house, were installed, and the parachute loft was under construction.

Another surge of construction took place in 1954 during the Cold War. The base was in operation for 38 years and dispatched jumper crews over most of the United States.

A memorial at the base of the flag pole commemorates the only death in the base’s history. Operations closed in 1981, and the airfield was given to Josephine County in 1986.



HOME VALLEY BANK will relocate this year to the site in Downtown Cave Junction of the former Select Market. Site preparation by Copeland Sand & Gravel con-

tinued this week. The bank’s Illinois Valley branch currently is located on W. Lister Street next to the DMV office. (Photo by ‘Illinois Valley News’)

Counties, cities receive OLCC’s liquor largess

Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) distributed \$1.01 million in December liquor revenue to Josephine, Jackson, Douglas, and Lane counties and their 37 incorporated cities.

Disbursements included Josephine County, (population 81,125) \$39,739; Cave Junction \$2,266; Grants Pass \$43,747.

Jackson County (population 198,615) \$97,291; Ashland \$30,310; Butte Falls \$629; Central Point \$23,408; Eagle Point \$11,796; Gold Hill \$1,528; Jacksonville \$3,614; Medford \$104,614; Phoenix \$6,704; Rogue River \$2,843; Shady Cove \$3,904; Talent \$9,073.

Douglas County (population 103,815) received \$50,853 with Sutherlin receiving \$10,672, the largest amount of any other city in that county.

OLCC distributed \$18.8 million statewide during December, using a formula based on Oregon’s population of 3.69 million, which has been adjusted upward from 3.63 million. The amount was 49-cents per

capita for counties; \$1.41 for cities.

The 36 counties received 10 percent of the total, \$1.81 million; 239 cities, 20 percent, \$3.62 million; state general fund, 56 percent, \$10.1 million; and city revenue-sharing account, 14 percent, \$2.53 million. Additionally, the State Office of Mental Health and Addiction Services received \$740,386 and the Oregon Wine Board got \$23,723.

OLCC revenue is derived from the sale of distilled spirits in 241 liquor stores, taxes on malt beverages and wine, license fees, and fines for liquor law violations.

The November revenue share was \$8.26 million.

OLCC collects privilege taxes of \$2.60 for a 31-gallon barrel of malt beverage, 67-cents a gallon for taxable wine with an alcohol content of 14 percent or under and 77-cents on taxable wine more than 14 percent. Of that, 2-cents a gallon goes to the Oregon Wine Board to fund research and promotion.

Wave good-bye to portions of coastline, reports OSU

The Pacific Northwest coast has experienced increasingly intense winter storms and higher wave heights during the past 25 years, both of which may be leading to earlier and more severe winter erosion.

So say scientists at Oregon State University (OSU) at Corvallis.

Entire beaches have been scoured away during the past several months, and cliff-side houses at Gleneden Beach and elsewhere are in jeopardy, said Paul Komar, professor emeritus at OSU’s College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences.

“We’ve seen some pretty intense winter erosion in Oregon,” Komar said late during

2006, “but I don’t ever remember seeing the extent of the problem this early. Usually, the erosion doesn’t take effect until January, February or March.

If the beach is gone in November, what will happen two-to-three months from now when additional storms hit and that buffer is gone?”

Komar said that there is no consensus on why storms have been getting stronger.

Some scientists believe global warming may play a role, while others say similar conditions occurred during the late 19th century, suggesting periodicity, if not some kind of cycle.

One thing is certain: Wave heights are increasing.

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