

Safety net \$

(Continued from page 13)

quently, the corresponding revenues shared with rural counties throughout the country declined precipitously, hurting school and transportation funding.

During 2004, legislation authorized by Wyden to provide an alternative source of county funding was enacted into law, establishing a six-year payment formula for counties that receive revenue-sharing payments for USFS and BLM lands. The formula established a stable source of revenue, a safety net or “full payment amount,” to be used for education, roads and county services in rural areas.

The legislation also provided funding for ecosystem restoration, infrastructure maintenance and stewardship projects on national forests, fostering all-too-rare cooperation between counties, timber interests and environmentalists, Wyden said. The safety net amount was based on historic timber receipts.

Last month, Wyden and other Western senators introduced the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Reauthorization Act of 2007, legislation that would restore funding for the critical “county payments” law by reauthorizing the successful program for seven years

Nature gave us two ends -- one to sit on, and one to think with. Since then, a person's success or failure has been dependent on the one used most.

- George H. Kirkpatrick -



LORNA BYRNE MIDDLE SCHOOL students of the month for January were honored last week for their outstanding characteristics. (From left) Sixth-grader Morgan Barnes; seventh-graders Chase Weir and Brandi Wollerton; and eighth-graders Rhianon Quall and Alex Hess. Sixth-grader Andrew Steelman was absent. The smiling tall kid in the rear is Principal Tom Hewkin, who will retire in June after winning a large Megabucks prize. (Photo by Michelle Binker/Illinois Valley News')

Gas quality good statewide, reports ODA

Based on final statistics for 2006, Oregon motorists are generally getting good gasoline statewide.

Routine inspections conducted by the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture (ODA) this past year indicate few problems -- meaning that consumers should feel assured they are getting what they pay for when purchasing gasoline in Oregon.

“Motorists should feel confident about the quality of the motor fuel they purchase in Oregon,” said Clark Cooney, assistant administrator of ODA’s Measurement Standards Division. It checks motor fuel at pumps for such qualities as octane levels and the amount of water found in

underground storage tanks.

“The general lack of problems is clearly shown by the numbers we are seeing,” said Cooney. “There was ultimately approximately a 99.6 percent compliance rate with the gasoline we looked at in 2006.



The year-end report shows that ODA inspectors conducted 2,426 screenings of gasoline routinely sampled from nearly 29,000 Oregon fuel dispensers. Using a hand-held octane meter, inspectors found only 32 screenings that

failed the initial test of matching up with the octane level posted at pumps. Official samples were then drawn from those 32 for an actual laboratory analysis of the octane level.

Of the 32, only 14 proved to be below the actual octane rating standard listed at the pump. That means that less than 0.6 percent of the pumps inspected were out of compliance for octane. The figure is just slightly higher than 2005’s figure of 0.4 percent.

“The statistics show a very remote chance that someone in Oregon is actually going to get gasoline with an octane level lower than what is posted at the pump,” said Cooney.

Josephine County did well in tobacco sales to minors

Coming off its most encouraging results, Oregon this month begins a new round of unannounced visits to the state’s tobacco retailers to check compliance with laws forbidding sales to minors.

During the 2006 inspections, clerks at 11 percent of the 489 retailers visited sold to minors, the state’s lowest recorded rate during the 12 years of the program and less than a third of the rates recorded during the first two years of inspections, 1995 and ‘96.

“The low rate reflects a national decline in tobacco sales to minors, a rising public consciousness about the alarming health risks of tobacco and a growing recognition among retailers that they play a vital role in this challenging public health issue,” said Bob Nikkel, Oregon Dept. of Human Services assistant director for addictions and mental health.

The lowest previous rate of sales was 14.6 percent for 2004. The ‘05 sales rate was 17.8 percent.

In conducting the inspections, a retired Oregon State Police officer and a minor buyer visit randomly selected tobacco retailers. The minor, who is and looks age 15 or 16, tries to purchase cigarettes. If the clerk sells, he or she is cited and can be subject to a fine of \$100 to \$700 for selling tobacco to a person under 18.

Nikkel said that this year’s inspections will be conducted at 702 of the approximately 3,000 Oregon retailers that sell tobacco. Last year, Nikkel said, the highest rates of sales to mi-

nors occurred at minimarts, small food markets and gasoline stations. The lowest were at tobacco shops, and department and drug stores.

Counties in which 10 or more retailers were visited, and in which the sales rates were equal to or better than the 11 percent statewide rate, were Josephine, Jackson, Benton, Coos, Deschutes, Jefferson, Klamath, Lincoln, Linn, Wasco and Washington.

He said that most sales occur as a result of a clerk either not checking identification; or checking it, but failing to accurately compute the individual’s age.

“Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of disease, disability and death,” Nikkel said. “Whenever we see a clerk checking I.D. or refusing to sell to a minor, we should say we appreciate the extra effort both to obey the law and to protect people’s health.”

He said that DHS has an education packet available to merchants.

Nikkel said that most addicted adult smokers took up the habit as teen-agers. Nationally, he said, the lowest rates of tobacco sales to minors tend to be in states that license tobacco retailers and can revoke the license for sales to minors.

If a state records a sales rate of more than 20 percent, it can lose up to 40 percent of its federal substance abuse prevention and treatment block grant. After recording a sales rate exceeding 23 percent during the 1999-2000 inspections, Oregon was required to expand its program by visiting all tobacco retailers for three years.

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