

Meeting about O&C county funding held; but media exclusion stirs DOJ complaint

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meeting,” said Toler. “It opened some doors and began some much-needed bridge building.”

“Hopefully, this will start a dialogue with the AOC being sort of a natural transmission line. And hopefully this will move toward some real legislation.”

But Maurer indicated that he didn’t hear solutions that worked for Southern Oregon.

“Our solutions are not their solutions,” Maurer said. “We want to have access to

timber. Don’t come up to us and say, ‘Oh the market’s bad.’ No. Let us have access to timber and let the market work that out.

“They don’t value our livelihood,” he said.

The meeting was inspired by an exchange between Toler and Wheeler, who met during a June AOC conference in Bend. Toler recalled how he was moved when Wheeler and a Washington County commissioner shared the perspective of their 1.6 million constituents, who value O&C lands quite differ-

ently than do counties which seek to recover timber revenue.

““Our constituents view those lands differently,” Toler recalled Wheeler saying. ““They see the value in the Nature that’s there. They want to spend time there. They have money. They are willing to pay for it.””

“The problem is,” Toler said, “we don’t have any mechanisms to see that value in terms of money for our county.” He argued that visitors use services, such as roads and law enforcement when they visit rural counties dominated by public lands.

“Your value-set,” he told Wheeler, “in no way pays for the services that allow you to enjoy those values. Would you be committed to working with us to develop some of those mechanisms?” Toler recalled asking. “They were like, ‘Yeah!’ I think it broke the ice a little bit.”

Though the meeting may have marked a first as far as getting players from disparate counties to discuss funding

strategies, exclusion of the media and other interested persons from the deliberation did little to assuage suspicions about the direction the discussion would take.

Despite the fact that the meeting was posted on Jackson County’s board of commissioner’s agenda, no official notification was put on Josephine County’s calendars. Smith expressed his surprise in an email to Toler and others on July 30, stating that he was unaware that the press had been excluded, and that having done so “runs counter to our practice as well as creating suspicion of government practice.”

Smith indicated that he had asked legal counsel to investigate any inadvertent violation of public meeting law.

Josephine County Commissioner Jim Raffenburg, who stated that he was informed about the meeting by a “concerned citizen,” voiced his irritation at the lack of notice during an appearance on a KAJO Radio talk show,

the day after the meeting.

“There was no news media release,” he said. “These were a lot of heavy-hitting public officials at this meeting. You would think that someone who was interested in open government would allow the media to be there.”

Some members of the media, including representatives of KAJO, KTVL-TV and Newswithviews.com arrived at Paradise Ranch Monday afternoon, only to be told they had to leave.

For his part, Toler believes the meeting worked best because it was not in a public forum.

“It would be so lethargic if every time we had to have a venue for the public to come in when we wanted to talk about something,” he explained. “Honestly if I could just say, ‘Media,’ I would say yeah, sometimes, we need the media in there.”

“Monday’s meeting is a really good example. If I could open it up and have only the media, I would do

that, but I don’t believe I can do that. I’m looking into that.”

“And frankly,” he continued, “we’ve got some folks who will really do their best to screw anything up. That’s their goal and their objective. And it would be downright embarrassing and very unproductive if Mr. Walter and his crowd would have been there.”

Paul Walter, of News With Views (dot) com, has filed a complaint with Oregon Dept. of Justice, alleging that Toler violated public meeting laws by excluding the public and media.

Raffenburg commented, “I don’t think everyone who attended it knew it was a secret meeting, and some of them might not have shown up if they had known. I don’t blame the attendees. I think he could have handled it a lot better.”

“If (Toler) wants to restore the trust of the people in the county, you have to trust them with what you’re doing and not stay in the shadows.”

New board elected to lead Kerby Ditch Association

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the West Fork, and ran through Kerby and Cave Junction, ending at Reeves Creek.

In a June 4, 2007 report, *Inland Rogue - Bear Creek Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plans*, the Inland Rogue Advisory Committee reported to the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture (ODA) on its work for the previous two years. From 1993 to 2005, ODA and Inland Rogue Advisory Committee worked on creating an area plan and rules in response to the 1993 Agricultural Water Quality Act.

The local committee is comprised of Illinois Valley land owners and individuals, nominated by IVSWCD. The report notes that state and local agencies assisted the local advisory committee in developing and implementing plans for agricultural water in accordance with a 1998 formal agreement.

History buffs will recall that the Kerby Ditch carried water for drinking and agricultural uses from Sucker Creek to farms and businesses in Illinois Valley, dating to 1887. It was an open ditch, with parts being a raised metal aqueduct, running south along a road that is now Hwy. 199. Parts of it still are visible from the highway.

It provided water for Kerbyville and Cave Junction for approximately 100 years. The Kerby Ditch eventually fell into disrepair, and parts of it were broken or blocked by gravel, rocks, trees and wear during the decades.

Around the time of the Kerby Ditch inception, the

Kerby Ditch Association was formed. Members paid dues to maintain the ditch. In modern times, smaller properties paid \$50 a year and larger ones paid more, according to their acreage.

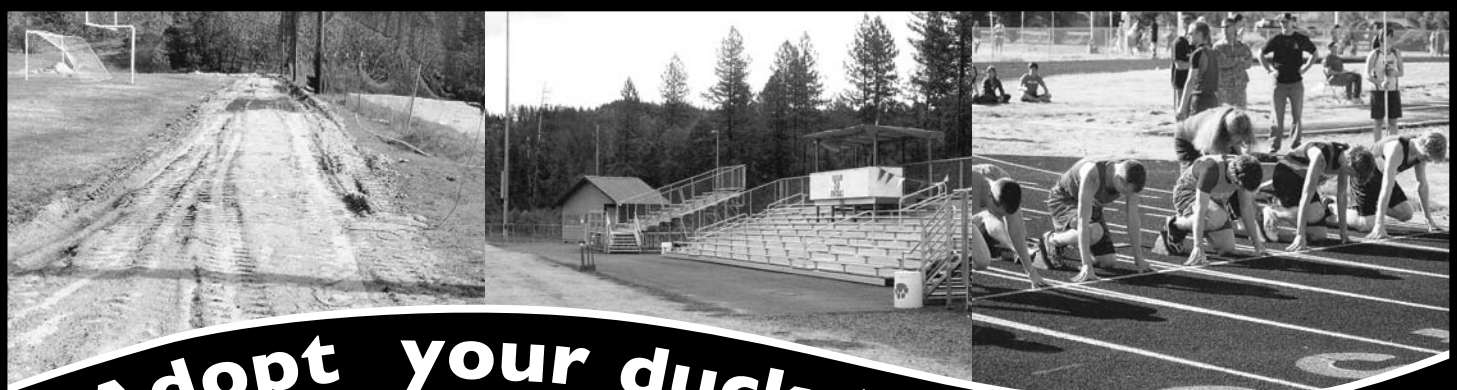
Twelve years ago the Ditch was ordered abandoned by government agencies. Plans were drawn for a pipeline running from the East Fork of Illinois River to serve the same properties that the Kerby Ditch had. The old pump from Sucker Creek was disabled and parts of the ditch were screened by IVSWCD.

To date, no pipeline has actually been built to replace the whole Kerby Ditch. Dues are no longer collected from association members, since there is no Ditch to maintain.

The two largest properties along the Ditch, the Q Bar X Ranch and Jack Sauer’s farm, have run their own pipelines to Illinois River, rather than wait for the powers-that-be to complete the project. The smaller land owners have been left high and dry. Some residents rely on limited well water to irrigate their land or water their landscaping.

The new board faces plenty of challenges in raising money for fund-matching grants and obtaining help from state and local agencies to move the pipeline project forward. The new pipeline would carry irrigation water to small farms, businesses and the Kerbyville Museum.

Kerby residents are hopeful that they will be successful in partnering with IVSWCD and other agencies to achieve this goal.



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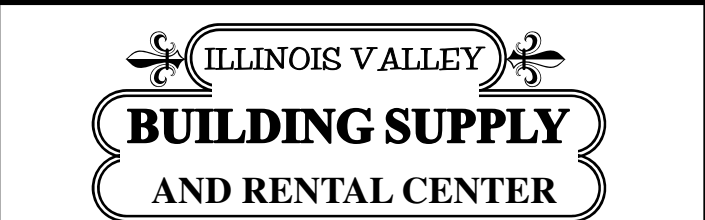
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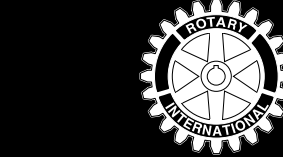
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