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Herbicide opponents rally at Lake Selmac

By Darcy Wallace
 IVN Staff Writer

It began with a notice in an Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) paid subscription that Perpetua Forests Co. planned to spray herbicide on some 70 acres on recently-harvested areas near McMullen Creek and Lake Selmac.

Selma residents Mary and Orville Camp learned of the spray from their ODF subscription, and some

nearby residents started to take note, including Flying B Bar Ranch owner David Bianco, who sent letters to nearby media sources.

Valley residents began attending weekly meetings at the Cave Junction County Building and started Preciousdirt.org to attempt to make detailed pesticide information available to the public, and possibly stall or halt the planned herbicide spray.

But after Perpetua Forests Co. reportedly planned to begin spraying by the end of March, members of

Precious Dirt held an anti-herbicide demonstration at Lake Selmac with Elder Agnes Baker Pilgrim on March 22, followed by a town hall meeting in Grants Pass.

"It is legal and routine practice for herbicides to be repeatedly sprayed over and over again, within our Valley and throughout our county and our state, without our awareness," the Precious Dirt website reads on the home page.

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(Photo by Darcy Wallace, Illinois Valley News)

Steve Lyons holds an item during the Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce annual dinner while Jim Frick looks for the winning bidder Sat. Mar. 19, at the Deer Creek Center.

IVCDO celebrates Citizen of the Year

By Darcy Wallace
 IVN Staff Writer

The Illinois Valley Community Development Organization (IVCDO) held its annual presentation and awards ceremony summarizing progress made in 2010 and looking ahead to 2011.

On Thursday, March 17, IVCDO members met at the Kerby Belt Building, also holding its awards ceremony for some in the Valley who have made a difference.

According to IVCDO Executive Director Menno Kraai, the micro loan program through Rogue Community College's Business

Entrepreneurial Center (BEC) created jobs despite a recovering economy.

"I think, all in all, there were about 80 new jobs in the Valley," Kraai said.

Suzanne Vautier won IVCDO's Volunteer of the Year award, with a plaque presented by Roger Brandt. Sterling Savings Bank in Cave Junction received the group's Business of the Year award.

Kraai, who also works at the Oregon Caves Chateau, said he thought 2010 was a good year for the Chateau and the partnership.

"Almost all stats are greater than 2009," he said. "We filled more rooms, serviced more people and we took in more money, everything except souvenirs. Fortunately, our consignment items provided by local artisans...those numbers went up. I think people were buying quality rather than cheap quantity."

Other projects reviewed at the meeting included reports of the Forks trail project, a status update on fire fuels reduction, a Friends of the Caves partnership update and IVCDO's strategic planning.

According to the IVCDO website, the organization's main purpose when it was first established was forming a plan for Valley residents to improve economic standing, create jobs and encourage sustainable development.

"Strategic planning was at the heart of the community response team mission," Kraai said. "It's time to refresh that community strategic plan and look ahead with 20/20 vision. That's one of our major focuses coming up in the future."



(Photo by Darcy Wallace, Illinois Valley News)

Suzanne Vautier won this year's IVCDO Citizen of the Year award.

Local bats get visitors



By Darcy Wallace
 IVN Staff Writer

The Oregon Caves National Monument began its first tours of 2011 at 10 a.m. on Saturday, March 19.

Spring tours are scheduled from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. from March 19 through May 20, then expanding to 5 p.m. from May 21 through June 24.

A National Park Service news release said Southern Oregon Public Television plans to release two 30-minute films about the Oregon Caves monument, one about the natural history and the other about the human history. Both are scheduled to air in late spring.

According to George Herring, chief of interpretation at Oregon Caves, previews of the videos will be shown during the second half of May in the Valley and also in Medford and Grants Pass.

"Park service officials

expect this will increase visitation [to the Caves]," Herring said. "It could bring a wider audience next year and hopefully boost the local tourism economy."

The news release says tours are on a first-come, first-serve basis costing \$8.50 for adults and \$6 for those age 16 and younger. The park accepts "America the Beautiful" interagency annual passes and the Interagency Volunteer Pass for the basic cave tour.

At this time of year, ice and snow can still line trails leading to cave openings. Bad weather can also cause road closures or tour cancellations. Visitors are advised to check current conditions ahead of time.

Also, the news release warns that "white nose syndrome," a fungus from a disease damaging bat populations east of the Rocky Mountains, could threaten bats at the Oregon Caves. Herring said he's optimistic it won't

spread to the West coast due to the more solitary nature of bats at the Caves.

"There's no reports of it anywhere West of the Rockies," Herring said. "These bats [at the Caves] are not colonial bats, they don't roost together. Hopefully with the animals more spread out, there's less chance it could spread."

Herring said that officials will ask visitors to meet with a ranger when they first arrive at the Caves before purchasing a ticket, where they will be asked if they have visited a cave east of the Rockies within the last few years. Herring said that some visitors will be asked to change out of or leave behind items that might have been contaminated after recently visiting an affected cave.

On a brighter note, Herring said the Oregon Caves Chateau recently finished some updates and refurbishment. He said more information will be available in the coming weeks.