

# Illinois Valley News

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## DeFazio Waldon - Schrader O&C Bill moves forward

WASHINGTON, DC—After nearly a year and a half of negotiations, House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) announced that the bipartisan O&C Trust, Conservation, and Jobs Act (OCTCJA) will be brought to a vote in the full committee on Wednesday, July 31. The legislative proposal from DeFazio, and Representatives Greg Walden (R-Hood River) and Kurt Schrader (D-Canby), would create thousands of private sector jobs in Oregon, provide stable funding for failing Oregon counties, and protect old growth and natural treasures while saving the federal government hundreds of millions of dollars.

DeFazio issued the following statement in response:

“After a year and a half of negotiations, the House Natural Resources Committee will finally move forward on our bipartisan, balanced O&C solution that creates private sector jobs, provides revenues to failing counties, and permanently protects old growth and other irreplaceable environmental treasures.

“In response to comments we’ve received over the last year, including recommendations from Governor Kitzhaber’s task force, several changes have been made to better protect Oregonians’ drinking water and fish bearing streams; language has been added to address historic inequities for two federally recognized tribes; and, provisions have been included to require yearly, substantial investments in riparian areas on neighboring private lands.

**See O&C on A-3**



(Photo by Dale Sandberg, IVFD Media Dept)

Illinois Valley Fire District Chief, Dennis Hoke gets a tank refill during a structure fire in the early hours of July 26. Kendall Phillips was found dead in the debris.

## Meeting slated to update on Labrador Fire

By  
**Annette McGee Rasch**  
*IVN Contributing Writer*

Six major lightening-caused wildfires in Josephine and Douglas Counties have burnt more than 30,000 acres so far. Winds from the north ushered smoke from the largest of these fires, the Douglas Complex, through the Illinois Valley, creating hazardous air conditions. Air quality will likely remain poor for the foreseeable future.

Closest to the Valley is the Labrador Fire, with more than 900 acres

burnt at the time this paper went to press. The fire is located south and west of the Illinois River, approximately 12 miles northwest of Selma. Heavy smoke prevented aircraft from initially fighting this fire and steep dangerous terrain had kept ground crews at bay as well.

More than 400 firefighters are now geared up to tackle the Labrador Fire and some of the nation’s top fire ex-

perts are also on board in SW Oregon. A Joint Information Center has been set up at the Grants Pass Interagency Office to provide information on all the fires.

On Thursday evening at 7 p.m., a community public meeting at the Cave Junction County Building, located at 102 S. Redwood Highway, will inform and update Valley residents about the Labrador Fire. Maps will be

available that show the sizes and shapes of all the fires in the region and offer a logistical perspective regarding how those battling these blazes are sharing resources.

The Incident Management Team taking charge of all the fires is made up of interagency cooperators that includes the U.S. Forest Service, BLM, ODF, Josephine, Jackson and Douglas county government officials, local fire districts and departments, sheriff’s departments and Search & Rescue teams.

**See Labrador on A-10**

## I.V. Little League hosts annual Blackberry Festival

By  
**Jenna Larkin**  
*IVN Contributing Writer*

The Illinois Valley Little League will host its third annual Blackberry Festival August 3-4. The festival will run from 10 a.m. 6 p.m. On Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday.

Organizing a festival is no small feat, even for a small town such as Cave Junction. In the summer of 1982 that’s just what Les and Pat Lesiecki decided to do. In an effort to boost tourism and to find a way to use the abundance of blackberries found throughout the Valley, the Blackberry Festival was born. The third week in August is when the festival took place, running for three days; Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The festivities kicked off with a parade going through downtown Cave Junction displaying everything blackberry and the princesses of the festival. There was a pie eating contest hosted by Shop Smart, live music all weekend, a quilt show, the crowning of the Blackberry Queen, and many other festivities that took place along with the many booths that seemed to fill the town.

Though there were many booths, there were two main requirements for all vendors participating. One, all items for sale had to be handmade or home baked. No manufactured products were allowed and all booths had to have some sort of blackberry theme. At the end of the festival the booth that represented the Blackberry Festival best was awarded, along with second and third place booths.

While talking with Jeanette Montgomery, daughter of the Lesieckis, it was fascinating listening to the many stories she had to tell about growing up around the Blackberry Festival and how she was able to see it develop into something that the community looked forward to every year and could be proud of. Many returning tourists also had become accustom to attending the festival and some even set up booths. One particular story that fascinated me while talk-

ing with Montgomery was one year a jelly jar costume was made to help promote a booth for another up-and-coming festival. Although it started out as a joke as to whom would wear the costume, ultimately Montgomery was elected to wear the jelly jar costume. As Montgomery sat across from me telling me this story, her face lit up and she was ecstatic reminiscing about past Blackberry Festivals.

That is the goal of I.V. Little League, to bring the festival back to what it was. Little League board members would like to be able to bring back many of the festivities that made the festival so popular. Like the street dance, pie eating contest, the kids area and the art show.

“I remember as a kid the streets on both sides of the highway were full of vendors and there was a street dance on Saturday evening,” said Shelly Davis, president of I.V. Little League. “Right now, we as a board are having a difficult time getting the festival to where we would like to see it. When we should be planning for the Blackberry Festival, we are in the middle of little league season.”

With many board members moving up to the high school with their children, the planning of the Blackberry Festival will become easier to plan and run. The festival will still be hosted by Little League but with many past members focusing their time on the planning and organizing.

This year’s festival will have plenty to keep one busy. Along with the many arts and crafts booths there will be food vendors and live music. The C.J. Lions will also host a breakfast at the County Building on Saturday, August 3 from 8 to 11 a.m. and bingo to follow starting at 12:30 to 4 p.m. Many local businesses will also have a blackberry special running throughout the weekend. A list of the participating businesses will be provided at the Blackberry Festival booth. Some of the past businesses that had blackberry specials were: Taylor’s Country Store, Carlos’ Mexican Restaurant, and Dos Gringos.

**See Blackberry on A-10**

## Fire takes life of Valley fixture

By  
**Judy Hoyle**  
*IVN Contributing Writer*

Early in the morning of Friday, July 26, Kendell and Tammie Phillips woke to the sound of a smoke alarm and saw a fire in their laundry room. They called 911 and both safely made it out of the residence. Kendell went back inside the burning residence to save the family cat, but he and the cat succumbed to the smoke and heat before he was able to escape.

Twelve crews from the Illinois Valley Fire District responded to the structure fire in the 200 block of Ollis Road and were able to contain the fire in about an hour. Oregon State Police (OSP) Arson & Explosives Section and the Office of the State Fire Marshal responded to assist Illinois Valley Fire District in the investigation. The fire was determined to be caused by a faulty extension cord plugged in to operate a window air conditioner. The residence is considered a total loss.

Phillips’ mother and sister also died in a house fire in 1961. Kendell and his brother Kerby were raised by his grandparents at Ft. Briggs Ranch on Holland Loop. They raised race horses which competed as far away as San Francisco and Portland. Kendell graduated from Illinois Valley High School in 1973 and celebrated the 35th anniversary with fellow graduates in July. Classmate Janie Pope

said, “He was a wonderful guy. He helped so many people and volunteered to do so much and he will be missed. I’m glad he got to see everyone last month. We all had a great time.”

Phillips left the Valley briefly but returned with his wife, Tammie, about 25 years ago. They discovered the I.V. Grange’s charter was about to be revoked because membership had dwindled and they decided to save the organization. In 2009 their hard work paid off when I.V. Grange was awarded “Oregon Grange of the Year” for outstanding community service for contributions to the I.V. Food Coalition, IVHS and 4H youth agricultural projects.

The couple each served as Grange Master over the years. They won many awards for their jams and jellies at the Josephine County Fair, where Tammie also won 1st place in the Oregon Grange Art and Lecture Contest for her artwork.

Kendell was an avid amateur historian who travelled to Salt Lake City, Utah to trace his family history. He served as curator of the Kerbyville Museum from 1995 to 1998 and wrote a 500 page book titled “Josephine County, Oregon Cemeteries” published in 1991, covering every historic cemetery in the county including the information carved on every headstone.

Current museum president Dennis Strayer stated, “Ken’s perseverance was a real testament to his dedication to

our local history. People come in every summer to do family research and this book is the best resource we have of marriage and death records.”

Edith Decker of the Grants Pass Daily Courier fondly recalled, “I met Ken when I first moved here. He was a “cemetery crawler” like me. He took me on a tour of I.V. cemeteries, down all these crazy little roads. Then we’d have to hike in for a mile or so. He was a good guy and a great local history resource.”

Meadow Martell, who served with Phillips on the board of the I.V. Medical Center stated, “He’s done so much for the Valley, and has been a real leader. He was one of those quiet givers in the community. His passing will have a real impact around here. I’m going to miss him.”

River Valley Village neighbors Linda and Rob Weber have placed collection cans in several businesses including Shop Smart, Taylors, True Value, IV Building Supply and area restaurants. The Phillips weren’t able to insure their home due to its age. Accounts have been opened for Tammie at Evergreen Federal Bank and Washington Federal.

In addition to his wife, Phillips is survived by his brother Kerby, niece Audrey, aunt Peggy and several cousins. A memorial service will take place at Bridgeview Community Church at 1 p.m. Wednesday, August 7, followed by a potluck.

**See Phillips on A-10**