

# Wally Hicks steps into county legal counsel role

By Annette McGee Rasch  
IVN Senior Contributing Writer

State Representative Wally Hicks is taking over the Josephine County Legal Counsel position, after having defeated long-term incumbent Steve Rich.

"My old job was to make policy and my new job is to enact policy. My role now is to provide legal guidance and representation to the citizens and government of Josephine County regarding matters that pertain to the county as a whole."

Hicks said one of his biggest challenges for 2015 is to ensure the county is best served by any possible forthcoming federal decisions pertaining to O&C lands.

"Lately, there's been a lot of activity in the federal courts regarding local, county and state governments - regarding the federal government's negligence pertaining to national forest service lands," Hicks said. "There are pending lawsuits and a lot to stay on top of

to best assess how these issues will impact Josephine County."

Additionally, Hicks said he wants to help re-establish more faith and trust in local government and plans to "maximize transparency, so that our citizens will know what their government is doing and know their officials are doing what they've been hired to do."

He plans to tackle his new job by picking out a number of projects - and topping that list is the county's code book.

"Hopefully, for the first time, all the county's codes and existing ordinances will soon be available to the public online," Hicks said. "My role also drafts new ordinances, so the public needs to be able to review existing ordinances to best sort out which need to go, which need to be enhanced, and where we need new rules. And my hunch is, there are some that need to be repealed."

"I think I can do more good for our community in this new role," Hicks said. "I'm very eager and looking forward to stepping into this new position."

# Wilson returns to Salem

By Judy Hoyle  
IVN Contributing Writer

From 1998 to 2003, Carl Wilson served three terms as State Representative for Josephine County. He will be sworn in for a fourth term as Oregon House District 3 Representative Jan. 12.

## What's your biggest challenge for 2015?

"Finding legislation that my district can support. Democrats will dominate the agenda due to having significant majorities in both chambers, plus the Governor's office. I will look forward to working on issues that we can agree on...issues that will be of benefit, not the detriment of my constituents."

## What new legislation do you anticipate taking place in 2015?

"That is hard to predict, but I expect that Democrats

will push the hike in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, paid sick leave for employees of businesses of all sizes, expanded gun registration including private sales, and an extension of the Low Carbon Fuel Standard sunset date...which would open the door to the adoption of the Low Carbon Fuel Standard in Oregon. It is said that adoption would raise the price of a gallon of gas in Oregon by anywhere from 33 cents to \$1.06 per gallon."

## What do you hope to accomplish in the state Legislature?

"I hope to press the awareness of economic blight in Josephine County and look to eliminate those things that are holding us back. The upstate power structure is not sympathetic to our plight. I'm also interested in getting most of the public land in Josephine County brought under state

management and away from the federal government. This will take years...but it is worth the effort."

## As a member of the House Committee on Education and the "Measure 91 Committee," what policy changes do you foresee?

"As a member of Education, I'm not sure I see any policy changes, but there could be a challenge to Common Core. There seems to be bipartisan interest in that. I'm certainly interested in that. As a member of the 91 Committee (recreational marijuana), it is hard to forecast changes as the committee has not met yet. The legislature will have to exercise uncharacteristic restraint to keep from turning this voter-passed measure into something unrecognizable. I'm hoping that restraint will be obvious."

# Oregon Caves Superintendant Vicki Snitzler sees park expand

By Annette McGee Rasch  
IVN Senior Contributing Writer

At the end of December 2014, President Obama signed a bill to create a new unit of the National Park Service (NPS): the Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve.

About 4,000 acres previously managed by the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest was transferred to the NPS, and at the helm of Oregon Caves since 2008, Superintendant Vicki Snitzler will now guide the expanded park into the future.

"I don't think there will be any significant policy changes at the start of this year, but I'd like to see planning for the Preserve get underway as a way to make decisions on future policy," Snitzler said. "That being said, there are differences between regulations that guide the United States Forest Service and those that guide the NPS - so there will be differences in how the NPS will manage resources in the Preserve."

The biggest challenge Snitzler faces in park management is to strike the right balance of time and effort between activities that occur every year at the Monument such as cave tours, Chateau tours, trail maintenance

and now, the opening of new Visitor Center exhibits along with planning for new Preserve activities such as camping, hiking, hunting and biking.

"I hope community members will have patience as issues get sorted out and I hope folks will be interested in helping the Oregon Caves plan for this new era in its long history," Snitzler said.

"One goal is to accomplish the implementation of a citizen engagement process with local communities to collect comments and feedback on planning for the new Preserve. I believe there may be new business opportunities that could be permitted

that would help visitors enjoy and learn about this new addition. For example, there might be the opportunity for an outfitter to provide guided hiking trips."



Superintendent Snitzler

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