

NEWS IN BRIEF

Amateur radio technician exam review offered

Radio Amateurs of the Gorge (RAGS) will be offering an Amateur Radio Technician Exam Review Class to prepare individuals to take the Amateur Radio Technician Exam Friday, Oct. 15 from 6-9 p.m. and all day Saturday, Oct. 16 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with the examination at 4:30 p.m. at the Hood River Fire Department. RAGS will also be testing for General and Extra Class licenses for those that want to upgrade their current license.

The class is free; however, there is a \$15 examination fee. The class is open to all.

For more information or to register for the class, contact Kevin Widener at kevin.widener@gmail.com or 509-528-9565. Registration is required and class size limited to 25; early registration is recommended.

'Harvest Hope for Kids' Oct. 10

Safespace Children's Advocacy Center of the Gorge hosts its Harvest Hope for Kids benefit on Sunday, Oct. 10 from 1-4 p.m. at The Griffin House, Hood River. The event will feature food by Michoacán Grill, live music, and live and silent auctions.

Tickets are \$30 per person, payable at the door. For information and tickets, visit www.safespacecac.org. Safespace is a 501c3 nonprofit.

Washington State Bag Ban Oct. 1

Washington's Plastic Bag Ban went into effect on Oct. 1. The ban is intended to reduce pollution by prohibiting single-use plastic carryout bags and charging a fee for acceptable bags in business establishments, said a Klickitat County Solid Waste press release. "As a consumer, you will want to bring your own bags, and as a business owner, you will want to ensure you know the rules so you are in compliance," said the release.

Correction

The matching grant challenge issued by Nancy Fath was the fulfillment of the stated wish of her late husband Jerry McKay, rather than a grant issued in his memory.

Fire restrictions lifted in Scenic Area

With the decrease in fire risk as we move into fall, U.S. Forest Service Fire Officials have recommended the elimination of public use restrictions in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Effective immediately, fire danger levels in the Scenic Area will be lowered from extreme to high, and campfires are now permitted.

Fire officials would like to remind everyone to continue to be cautious with any/all potential ignition sources. Vegetation, especially in the eastern Gorge, remains dry and is susceptible to sparks. Human-caused wildfire starts can exhaust local fire-fighting resources as many firefighters remain engaged in fighting fires across the west.

For tips on campfire maintaining and extinguishing a campfire, go to smokey-bear.com/en/prevention/how-tos/campfire-safety/how-to-maintain-and-extinguish-your-campfire.

For current wildland fire information in the CRGNSA, go to www.facebook.com/

groups/ColumbiaGorge.WildlandFireInfo.

Termination of Regulated Use (aka Public Use Restrictions) will open up and allow activities such as campfires and does not limit the shutdown time for things such as chainsaw use or mowing.

Also, for awareness, in coordination with the fire chiefs in Hood River and Wasco counties, the status of the Burn Ban for burn barrels and small backyard debris burning is as follows:

• **Hood River County** — Burn Ban was lifted effective Oct. 1.

• **Wasco County** — Burn Ban will be lifted effective Oct. 16.

This does not include slash burning associated with commercial forest operations or fuels treatment projects. ODF will reach out and work directly with those landowners to allow slash burning later this fall once the area has received adequate moisture for burning these larger piles.

Thrive hosts 'Land Use 101' webinar

Thrive Hood River will host a free webinar, Land Use 101, on Tuesday, Oct. 12 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. with guest speaker Greg Holmes. To register, contact jackie@thrivehoodriver.org.

Holmes will be presenting on Oregon's unique land use planning system that sets a framework to preserve wild places and farmlands, foster livable cities and rural areas, and prevent urban sprawl, said a Thrive press release. Participants will learn about the history, processes, and goals of Oregon's land use program, which is the core of Thrive Hood River's work.

Holmes is the Food Systems Program Director and Southern Oregon Advocate of 1000 Friends

of Oregon since 2002 and coordinates their statewide Food Systems Program, working with farmers and other partners to build equitable and sustainable food systems throughout Oregon. Holmes holds a master's degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Oregon. Prior to joining 1000 Friends, he spent more than 15 years in the energy policy field, including ratepayer advocacy and helping clients identify energy efficiency investment strategies. He has also done transportation advocacy work and has served as a board member or consultant to several nonprofit organizations.



Museum donation

On Sept. 25, Parkdale Grange donated two chairs found stored in their attic to the Hutson Museum in Parkdale. "These chairs date from 1929, when the grange was used as a Japanese school to teach Japanese culture and language to the Japanese children," said Mary Zenorini. "The grange was also a meeting place for the Japanese-American League." The inscription on the chair is believed to read "1929 Old Home Store." Pictured from left to right are Jean and Ivan Hardman, Doris Hill, Brian Honn, Larry Elliot, Terry Honn and Mary Zenorini; not pictured are Diane and Paul Romans and Paul Zastrow. The Hutson museum is "a local treasure," Zenorini added, and offers insight into the history of Parkdale from Native American times through the pioneer era and into current times. It also has an extensive rock collection.

Photo courtesy of Hutson Museum

Hood River Interstate Bridge load testing Oct 9-24

Intermittent single lane closures expected

HOOD RIVER — In response to the lowered load rating imposed by Oregon Department of Transportation in March, the Port of Hood River will conduct extensive live load testing on the Hood River-White

Salmon Interstate Bridge Oct. 9-24. Testing activities will take place on the bridge seven days a week during this period.

Bridge users should expect intermittent single-lane closures between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. daily throughout the testing period, with delays of approximately 30 minutes possible depending on traffic volume. Flaggers will direct traffic around the moving work

zone.

Full bridge closures are anticipated to take place on Oct. 13, 18, and 20, with delays of 30-45 minutes possible.

Throughout the project, the port will work with contractors to provide public notifications of closure schedule updates as they come available. These updates will be posted to the port's Facebook and Twitter feeds online.

"The reduced weight limit on the bridge has caused

significant impacts to some important local businesses," said Port Executive Director Michael McElwee. "The port commission is committed to determining whether it is feasible and cost effective to restore the 32-ton weight limit. The results of the live load tests will be a critical factor in the weight limit restoration decision."

For more information, contact the Port of Hood River via email to porthr@gorge.net.

Board discusses fee policy, increases for Wasco County

■ By Mark Gibson
Columbia Gorge News

The Wasco County Board of Commissioners articulated a new policy in a work session Thursday, Sept. 30, for setting user fees within county departments.

Under the new policy, all user fee increases would be applied "across the board" with a base increase or decrease tied to inflation or the Consumer Price Index. Those department heads seeking an increase above or below the base formula can then justify that request in the budgetary process.

County Administrative Officer Tyler Stone said such a policy would reflect the current methods used to set many fees, although he noted many fee changes are driven by state legislation. "That is exactly what I did this year. I said 3%, and they brought forward the exceptions," noted Stone.

One of those exceptions was a 200% fee increase for some planning applications within the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. The policy, previously unstated, was scheduled for discussion at the final board meeting of September when the board sought input on proposed fee increases.

"A fee that goes up 200%, that raises red flags for me," explained Commissioner Kathy Schwartz, who asked for the policy discussion.

After agreeing that the proposed 3% increase for the coming year, which was based on the Consumer Price Index, made sense as policy, the board turned to discussing the dramatic increases proposed for some

planning work within the scenic area.

Central to the discussion was whether the fees should represent actual cost or be subsidized. During a public hearing on the proposed increases last month, Stone said, "Most of our fees are highly subsidized. One of our over-reaching budget principals is, 'How do we stay stable over time?' All your costs go up every year. We are trying to tread water, not increase the cost to our citizens. Most of these are already highly subsidized. That's our philosophy to try and keep this county healthy."

Stone noted the county's stated goal for fees assessed by the planning department, however, was to fully cover the cost of providing those services. The goal in planning was to have those costs paid for by those benefiting directly from the work, builders and homeowners.

"Building codes, those fees are designed to be paid for by those seeking to build," noted Hege. "We aren't making up the cost, we are just trying to cover that cost. I don't care where the money comes from, I just think the ends should meet in that program, somehow."

Nevertheless, on average current building fees cover only about 60% of the cost of the service, according to Stone. The proposed fee increases for planning needs within the Scenic Area reflect the actual costs of those services, Stone said.

The board then discussed whether permits and services directly related to Scenic Area requirements should also be subsidized to the same degree as those related to

county requirements.

"It makes sense to me that we are subsidizing the county work. The Scenic Area is not our responsibility, its not our authority," noted Hege. "It isn't a county statutory responsibility. We took that on because it made sense for county residents for us to do so."

Schwartz disagreed, noting it was a county responsibility. "We agreed to do it, so it is our responsibility," she said. "If we say, 'You're in the scenic area, that's too bad for you,' that doesn't seem fair." She noted recent funding from the Gorge Commission will help cover some of the county's costs in managing the Scenic Area planning needs.

Commissioner Steve Kramer noted that Scenic Area planning responsibilities were "forced upon us." He said it seemed fair to charge for the services needed by those building within the Scenic Area. "Why

wouldn't we collect the dollars from those requiring the work?"

Stone noted the fees in question related to "full service reviews," which are usually only required for new homes, and agreed to bring more details before the board regarding the Scenic Area fees and whether or not that are subsidized to any extent to the Oct. 6 board meeting, when the proposed fee increases are scheduled for a final public hearing and board decision.

During the first hearing on the higher fees, Kramer noted he supported the 3% fee increase.

"I'm in favor of moving forward on these fees. We do subsidize heavily, but we need to be a little more on track in term of costs. I think we are going to see more and more user fees. If you are going to build it, your going to have to pay the fees — I think that is right around the corner."

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