

all the freeway projects and a few bike projects. Here are the bike projects:

- **Springfield Middle Fork path.** An MPC amendment last month “slips construction to 2010” of the first phase of this \$6 million project. Curiously, Willamalane has planned the first \$3 million phase as the portion east of the planned Quarry Creek Bridge. Funding for the second phase west of the bridge, connecting the path to popular Dorris Ranch, remains unclear. Also unclear is funding for a possible bike bridge across the river to the Buford Park/Mt. Pisgah Arboretum area. Biking from Eugene all the way to Pisgah on scenic and quiet off-road trails along the river has long been a dream of local cyclists.

- **Delta Highway overpass.** Half of this \$6 million project is funded by the Obama stimulus and is supposed to start in the next month. A few right-wingers (including a Republican U.S. Senator from Oklahoma) have complained about this and other bike projects. But the bridge is more about mitigating the impact of a dangerous freeway that cut off huge neighborhoods full of kids and families from the city’s riverfront parks and bike paths, one of the city’s most popular amenities. The elevated bridge will also provide scenic views of the Delta Ponds, former gravel pits excavated for the freeways that are now successfully restored into habitat for heron, turtles, geese and beaver.

- **Eugene riverfront bike path under Beltline.** This \$2.2 million project will mitigate the impact of the Beltline freeway cutting off the 17,000 people in Santa Clara from the river by providing an underpass and connection to the riverfront bike and park system. Accommodating unsafe gravel truck driveways delayed the project and added another \$1 million in cost to relocate the path to the other side of an access road. The project now appears to be planned and funded, but it’s unclear when the bike path will be completed.

- **I-5 underpass.** As a tiny part of its ongoing \$180 million I-5 bridge widening



Katu Ku

project, ODOT has included a \$1.5 million project to connect the riverfront bike trail through the freeway mess. — Alan Pittman

DOGS POISONED

When Shay Casey sent her boyfriend and their two dogs off for an afternoon of fishing on Elk Creek in Douglas County on Aug. 21, she thought Porter Cable the puppy and Kuta Ku the therapy dog would spend a couple of hours romping in the sun and water. Instead both dogs died within minutes of arriving at the river.

Casey says her boyfriend got to the confluence of Elk Creek and the Umpqua River near Elkton around 4 pm and began to fish. Within 15 minutes Porter, the puppy, began going into convulsions. Thinking the dog was drowning, the pup’s owner began to give him mouth to mouth, only to see Kuta begin to convulse. Suspecting poison, he rinsed his face and mouth, gathered Porter in his arms and began to run to his truck. The puppy died on the way there. Kuta died in the truck shortly after. “I just feel like I let them down,” Casey’s boyfriend says.

What killed the dogs, and even what is going to be done about it, is still unclear. Casey thinks the fast acting toxin may have been some sort of predator poison — strychnine or an M-44 cyanide device — set out to kill coyotes. Brooks Fahy of Predator Defense, who has been working

to ban such predator poisons that kill family pets as well as the coyotes they target, agrees. He says this case sounds like many others he has looked into over the years.

Dwes Hutson of the Douglas County Sheriff’s office, one of the many agencies involved in investigating the issue, says a search didn’t turn up any toxic residue, but Casey and her boyfriend, who asked not to be named, say they have now been told that both the remains of meth manufacturing and a possible illegal baiting situation were found.

Casey says at this point from talking to other people in the area, it appears that at least three other dogs have all died at the creek in the past three weeks. As of Aug. 24 no signs had been posted at the creek to warn others of the danger.

“We don’t know if it’s a criminal case or just a tragic accident,” Hutson says. “Our priority is to find out what the substance is.”

Hutson says the Sheriff’s office will begin posting signs near the creek Aug. 25.

According to Fahy, if there is illegal baiting near the river, it could also affect wildlife like eagles and osprey that feed on carrion.

The remains of Porter, a 9-month old blue heeler, and Kuta, a husky, will be tested for toxins. Casey says that Kuta was a therapy dog for the alter-abled whose owner is currently teaching in Thailand. “They were both really good boys,” she says. “They didn’t do anything to anyone.”

Fahy says it’s not unusual for victims of pet poisoning to not come forward or not

want to give their names, “People are so intimidated by this,” he says, “it’s scary.” He adds, “People are afraid of retribution.”

The couple is determined however to find out what happened to the dogs, “I don’t want this thing to be forgotten about because they are just dead dogs,” Casey says, “They’re family members.” She says that the couple wants to get the word out, to warn others who may be going to the creek during the next warm spell or over Labor Day weekend.

The couple plans to have the dogs’ bodies taken to OSU for testing. Results on the tests will take several days. Casey says, “Seeing the dead dogs in the truck, I’ll never get that picture out of my head.”

— Camilla Mortensen

ACTIVIST ALERT

- A community reception for Eugene’s new **Police Auditor Mark Gissiner** will be from 4 to 6 pm Thursday, Aug. 27, in the McNutt Room at City Hall.

- **City Club of Eugene** is on summer break and is planning an informal gathering to collect input, feedback and suggestions. The free, no-host event is open to anyone interested in City Club, and begins at 6 pm Thursday, Aug. 27, at High Street Brewery and Café, 1243 High St. To get on City Club’s mailing list, send a note to mm@prpr.com

- **Friday, Aug. 28, is the extended deadline** for public comments to Lane Regional Air Protection Agency on Seneca’s proposed wood-burning power plant. The burner will emit about 500 tons of pollutants into west Eugene’s air every year. Deliver comments to LRAPA, 1010 Main St., Springfield 97477 or email to colleen@lrpa.org or call 736-1056. Find talking points at www.oregontoxics.org

- The Pitchfork Rebellion is planning a **free concert and mock trials** at 2 pm Saturday, Aug. 29, outside the old Federal

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- **Who’s responsible** when an inmate is released early? This week the family of a local woman who was raped by John Reid Dawson filed notice of intent to sue Lane County government. Dawson had been released early from the county jail after spending less than a day of his one-year sentence for shoplifting and resisting arrest (not theft and assault as the R-G story claimed). He went on to commit much more serious crimes. Ordinarily, the county cannot and should not be held responsible for the actions of former prisoners, whether they are released early or not.

What could be relevant if this case goes to court is the method by which the Sheriff’s Office determines who gets an early release. At this point it’s all a big secret, declared confidential by the judges, the sheriff and the warden. Why was Dawson released after one day while homeless people who steal shopping carts occupy jail beds? Citizen efforts to find out how the system works have been thwarted, and even the county commissioners have not gotten the information they have requested. We hear the commissioners have been promised one day’s statistics, but it will take 140 staff hours to compile at a cost of \$4,000. How hard can it be to extract useful information from a computerized database? And what can we really learn from one day? Perhaps the family eyeing the lawsuit sus-

pects the Sheriff’s Office has something to hide.

We recognize the difficulty in deciding who gets out early and who doesn’t, but we need a much higher level of transparency in the risk assessment process. Without that transparency, the county commissioners, county Budget Committee and voters will not be able to make informed decisions on how our limited public safety resources should be spent. And more lawsuits could be coming. What’s ironic is that the county government is liable for screw-ups in the risk assessment program, but the commissioners have no knowledge of how it works. Where’s the accountability? You can’t sue the courts, or even sit in on judges’ meetings.

- The more we learn about the **Seneca biomass burner**, the less we like it, particularly since less toxic ways to generate power from waste products are being proposed in Junction City and elsewhere (see News Briefs this week). One of the problems with the Seneca plant that hasn’t gotten much attention is the huge amount of ash that will be generated daily. We’re not talking about anything on the magnitude of coal ash in Tennessee, but still, tons of toxic wood ash will need to be disposed of, and Seneca figures it will just work it into other products to be distributed around the area in landscaping, agriculture and forestry applications. The

ash will contain manganese, chloride, sodium, barium and mercury. Will the products containing this dangerous ash be labeled? Doesn’t look like it. Friday is the last day to submit public comments to LRAPA on the Seneca plant (see Activist Alert).

- Oregon’s campaign finance laws serve a very important purpose. Without them there would be little difference between a contribution to fund a political campaign and a bribe. Enter **Sid Leiken**, the Republican mayor of Springfield now running for Congress. When cornered, Leiken claims he gave \$2,000 in campaign contributions to his mom, supposedly for a poll. But as yet, there’s scant evidence the poll was actually done. Did Leiken simply pocket the money? Why did he give his mom a bundle of cash rather than a check? Why did he hire his mom for a poll rather than someone with experience in scientific polling? Was the \$2,000 “donation” to Leiken in exchange for something? Has this happened before? Should someone who can’t/won’t provide documents to answer these questions be mayor, much less sent to Congress where the stakes are much higher?

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com