

FAIR MOURNS FOUR LOST IN PLANE CRASH

The June 23 plane crash that killed four “family members” of the Oregon Country Fair has left the organization “broken-hearted” and “profoundly affected,” General Manager Charlie Ruff said at a June 25 press conference held at OFC headquarters.

“We’re going to have an amazing celebration of life and remembrance,” Ruff said, noting that grief counselors from Eugene’s White Bird Clinic were already circulating among members and volunteers in the Country Fair community.

Shortly after take-off, around 3:10 pm that Saturday, a privately rented Cessna 172 carrying the four passengers — pilot Jerome “Roch” Delbosc D’Auzon, 41; Robyn “Bluesky” Leigh Weir, 40; Christopher Robin Kent, 37; and Erin Thomas Frank Noble, 27 — lost altitude and crashed into a wooded area near Suttle and Ridiculous roads in Veneta, a report from Lane County Sheriff’s Office said.

“They were sightseeing” and not on Fair business, Ruff said, noting that NTSB officials informed him D’Auzon had “the most amazing credentials” for a pilot.

At the press conference, Ruff said his staff was reaching out to the Red Cross in order to set up “a clear, consistent mechanism” for family and friends of the victims to contact grief counselors. “Everybody knows everybody out there,” he explained of the close-knit community of OCF staff and volunteers.

Erin Noble is the son of Deborah and Peter Noble of Eugene. A memorial for Noble is set for 4 pm Sunday, July 1, at Mount Pisgah’s White Oak Pavilion. Check the *EW* blog for updates on memorials.

— Rick Levin

ANIMAL ISSUES GO UNANSWERED

Despite vocal worries from animal advocates, Lane County commissioners voted 3-2 to award a contract to run the animal services shelter to Greenhill Humane Society. However, there is no actual contract yet, something that concerned Commissioners Pete Sorenson and Rob Handy, who dissented on the vote.

“This fits the pattern of what seems to be happening with decision-making,” Handy says of the vote. He says earlier in the process when the county sent out its request for proposals (RFP) animal welfare advocates, including some who serve on the county’s animal services advisory committee, wanted a hand in writing the proposal. Handy made a motion for the board to have input or review the RFP, he says, but it also failed 3-2.

“The board majority was basically comfortable with bureaucrats and Administrator [Liane] Richardson writing it,” he says, adding that the June 25 vote on the authorizing Richardson to deal with the Greenhill contract was a similar dynamic.

Greenhill Executive Director Cary Lieberman says, “Everyone is still hopeful for a smooth transition on July 1, but we still don’t have a contract drafted with Lane County.”

The animal advisory committee and animal welfare advocates have brought up questions about the transition that remain unanswered about transparency, access to

information and cost. They have requested an oversight committee for the shelter, as Lane County Animal Services (LCAS) has had in the past, but have been told that on Eugene’s part the Police Commission will serve as oversight.

Handy says there is little or no interest from Commissioners Jay Bozievich, Sid Leiken or Faye Stewart in having oversight or involvement. Bozievich has told *EW* he will only comment to the paper on county issues if a public records request is made. The county charges for public records requests.

One concern that has been raised about Greenhill is the euthanasia policy. LCAS had largely gone “no kill,” only euthanizing pets if there is no other option due to illness or severe behavioral issues. Tamara Barnes of the Cat’s Pajamas Rescue cited a Facebook post by a Greenhill volunteer that says kittens with ringworm are killed due to lack of foster homes. “The animal has to not only be treatable, but the treatment possible,” the post says.

Barnes wrote in an email to the commissioners and the Eugene mayor and City Council that this is a “typical kill shelter excuse. So if other animals need a foster home and they don’t have it, are they killed

too? This is not only morally reprehensible, but not Save Adoptable and Treatable Animals and certainly not No Kill.”

Lieberman says Greenhill has successfully treated many ringworm cases, but “unfortunately there were some that we were not able to treat.” He says ringworm is a challenging disease and that in a “shelter environment, which is often more stressful and may be populated with a number of animals with compromised health, it spreads easily and is often considered untreatable in that environment.” Lieberman’s full comments on the issue are at eugeneweekly.com/blogs

The city of Eugene is working on a FAQ (frequently asked questions) document regarding the transition and Greenhill is working on that with them, Lieberman says. “I do not know if Lane County is working on something similar at this time,” he says.

Handy says that after a decade of progress with saving adoptable and treatable animals and community involvement and standards around how animal care is practiced the county has given no assurances as to how things will move forward in this new model being proposed.

— Camilla Mortensen



Marbled Murrelet

PHOTO CREDIT USFWS

STATE FORESTS UNDER FIRE

Oregon’s state forests are the focal points of protests and lawsuits this summer. The culminating action of the Earth First! Cascadia Bioregional Rendezvous on June 25 was a lockdown at the state Capitol protesting the increased logging and clearcuts on Oregon’s state lands.

Activists from Cascadia Earth First! and Cascadia Forest Defenders (CFD) chained themselves together and staged a “die-in” in the offices of Treasurer Ted Wheeler and Secretary of State Kate Brown while others climbed the building’s flagpoles, hanging banners reading, “Oregon: For Sale by Kate Brown and Ted Wheeler” and “Defend Oregon, No Compromise, Earth First!”

Brown and Wheeler are members, along with Gov. John Kitzhaber, of the State Land Board, which voted to nearly double the clearcuts on the Elliott State Forest, the protesters say. The groups are also calling to separate public school funding from state forest management.

In the end, according to Oregon State Police reports, six protesters were arrested, including two from Eugene, Cameron Michael Kennedy and Nicole Dentrement. CFD says at one point the support crew for the protesters locked down in Brown’s office was asked to leave and the door was covered over blocking the view of concerned fellow protesters.

Conservation group Cascadia Wildlands has been working on the state forest issue from another angle. At the end of May, together with the Center for Biological Diversity and the Audubon Society of Portland, the group filed a lawsuit in federal court charging that “Oregon’s clearcutting practices illegally harm threatened marbled murrelets within the Tillamook, Clatsop and Elliott state forests in violation of the Endangered Species Act.”

Cascadia Wildlands says the most recent status review of marbled murrelets by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that the swift, potato-shaped birds have been declining at a rate of approximately 4 percent per year and that the decline is probably related to the continued loss of habitat, primarily on state and private lands.

In response to the suit, Oregon halted eight of the 10 timber sales the groups objected to. The other two timber sales had already been cut, Josh Laughlin of Cascadia Wildlands says. He says Cascadia Wildlands is pleased the state of Oregon has suspended operations on these clearcutting projects that are harming the murrelets through the injunction relief phase of the case. “Now we call on Gov. Kitzhaber to initiate balanced conservation plans on our coastal state forests instead of continuing to make Swiss cheese out of them.”

— Camilla Mortensen