



City Club of Eugene is getting a new venue starting with its Jan. 10 meeting. We wrote about a City Club survey of its members in this column back on Sept. 19, and one of the preliminary top three favorites for a meeting place was the Downtown Athletic Club. Looks like the DAC beat out the Hilton and LCC Downtown Campus in the final selection, offering a “wider set of food options and price points, as well as a lower guarantee for the club,” according to the club’s website. “That means more members may find a lunch that works for them, and we will take in enough to pay for the space.” The club has mostly been in the Hilton in recent years, but has used other venues in the past, including the DAC and LCC.

Springfield is now in the process of developing its Capital Improvement Program (CIP), a Community Reinvestment Plan, for the next five years and is seeking suggestions from Springfield residents and businesses for capital improvement projects. Examples include construction of streets, sewers, sidewalks, bike paths, streetlights and street trees. Deadline for suggestions is Friday, Dec. 6, and a form can be downloaded from the city’s website or picked up at Public Works at City Hall.

Aqua Serene is celebrating its 25th year in Eugene and is planning its annual Founders Day Celebration from noon to 4 pm Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 7-8. Live music by Skip Jones with Byron Case and “The Spirit of New Orleans,” prize drawings and other activities. Call 485-2171 or visit aquaserene.com.

Sunshine Limo Service this week held its seventh annual free Christmas Light Tour for area senior citizens and families of the Relief Nursery. The event has grown every year and this year a “full house numbering in the hundreds” participated, according to Cheryl Gregory of the company. Sunshine operates limos and party buses in the area. Call 344-5466.

ACTIVIST ALERT

- Local citizens concerned about the **global climate crisis** will gather at 12:30 pm Thursday, Dec. 5, at the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce, 1401 Willamette St., to give the Chamber a Golden Ostrich trophy, in recognition of the Chamber’s support for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and its blockade of progress on addressing the climate crisis. Call 484-9167 for more information.

- A public campaign event for **Kevin Matthews**, candidate for Lane County Commission, will begin at 6:30 pm Thursday, Dec. 5, at the Axe & Fiddle in Cottage Grove. The event includes live music plus words from Jerry Rust, Hal Hartzell and John Sundquist.

- City Club of Eugene’s** next topic is “Working Together on the BEST Outcomes for Kids” at noon Friday, Dec. 6, at LCC Downtown Center, lobby level. Speakers include Raquel Gwynn, Sharon Tabor and Randy Bernstein from Eugene School District 4J and Peter Chavannes, City of Eugene. \$5 for non-members.

- International Human Rights Day** will be celebrated from 6 to 8 pm Tuesday, Dec. 10, at the Eugene Public Library with the theme of “Celebrating our Basic Human Rights.” This free community event will feature a proclamation from Mayor Kitty Piercy, a keynote address by the Rev. Dan Bryant and remarks from Alley Valkyrie, Paulette Ansari and Michael Carrigan. Entertainment will be provided by NAACP ACT-SO students, folk musician Sam Brown, pianist Priscilla Dantas, violinist Juli Kim and singer Maggie Peake.

- Sheriff Tom Turner** is visiting communities in Lane County this fall for “Community Awareness Meetings” to report on the progress of the public safety levy passed by voters and to discuss public safety in the county. The next meeting is from 6 to 8 pm Wednesday, Dec. 11, at the Cottage Grove Community Center, 700 E. Gibbs St.

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NEWS

CRITICAL DETAILS HIDDEN IN WYDEN FOREST BILL

Sen. Ron Wyden released his long-awaited company bill to Rep. Peter DeFazio’s O&C Trust, Conservation and Jobs Act on Nov. 26, shortly before the Thanksgiving holiday. Environmental organizations such as Oregon Wild and Cascadia Wildlands immediately greeted the bill, which calls for “ecological forestry” on the controversial public lands, with disappointment and criticism. Andy Stahl of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics says buried within the bill’s language is a section that makes everything else in the bill become “irrelevant.”

The O&C lands, which are laid out in a checkerboard pattern, make up roughly 2 million acres of primarily Bureau of Land Management lands and have historically been logged to generate money for counties. The timber industry has argued the lands should be logged, while conservationists seek to preserve the forests, particularly old-growth and native stands, for recreation, wildlife, clean water and to protect against global warming.

Wyden says his bill will “more than double our timber harvest across 18 timber counties and ensure that harvest continues for years to come.” And the senator says the bill will ensure “old growth stands in moist forests currently over 120 years old and trees over 150 years old across the O&C landscape cannot be harvested.”

But Stahl says that language on page 119 of the 188-page bill overrides everything else. Section 117 Land Ownership Consolidation “directs BLM to consolidate

the checkerboard pattern of O&C land.” The section continues, “BLM is authorized to sell or exchange federal land that is no longer necessary or appropriate for continued federal management in order to consolidate land, to improve management efficiency and productivity, or to improve the conservation value on the federal land.”

The bill language says that the BLM is to “review and inventory federal land to identify lands suitable for sale or exchange with private or state-owned lands” within six months of enactment.

This section applies to “covered land” in the bill,

Stahl says, which is everything from old growth to proposed wilderness. He compares the language to the failed Umpqua Land Exchange Project back in the late 1990s and early 2000s that called for consolidating checkerboard BLM lands in the Coast Range. “It’s the Umpqua Land Exchange writ large,” Stahl says.

That land exchange was first proposed by Aaron Jones of Seneca Timber Company, who owned nearby land. Critics at the time said the exchange was designed to increase logging levels, not help wildlife.

Stahl says timber interests such as Seneca whose lands border the O&C forests would again stand to benefit from an O&C land exchange and would “get old growth under the guise of consolidating federal lands.”

Tom Towslee, Wyden’s state communications director, says, “Technically any lands covered by the bill could be covered by an exchange. However, an exchange could take place only if the [Interior] Secretary determined it was in the public interest to do so.” — *Camilla Mortensen*

‘Technically any lands covered by the bill could be covered by an exchange. However, an exchange could take place only if the [Interior] Secretary determined it was in the public interest to do so.’

— TOM TOWSLEE,
STATE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
TO SEN. RON WYDEN

IT’S ABOUT TIME

BY DAVID WAGNER



DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS,
PHALACROCORAX AZURITES

Darkness comes early in December, now that midwinter is upon us. Remembering that Solstice isn’t until four days before Christmas, long nights are going to be around for a couple of months. We treasure clear, chilly nights when the stars put on a show from early in the evening. I mark the yearly cycle with only one constellation: Orion of Winter. It is the easiest to recognize, after the Big Dipper and Cassiopeia. Orion has three bright stars decorating his belt; his sword marked by four close, smaller stars angling off below. I begin to see Orion in the late night sky on my midnight creep (last evening walk with the dog) sometime in the fall and say goodbye to Orion in the spring. These nights he seems to be pointing to Jupiter over his head, the brightest “star” in

the sky in the middle of the night after Venus has set.

Deciduous perennials are resting for their quiet season. The exotic weeds exhibit scant dormancy, throwing up green leaves as soon as the fall rains begin. None are as prominent in town as poison hemlock.

The Delta Ponds are flush with duck diversity. Every day I see at least a dozen water birds. Besides the year-round regulars — mallards, Canada geese, blue heron, kingfishers, coots and double crested cormorants — winter visitors have flown in. Old friends are buffleheads, wigeons, northern shovelers, grebes, gadwalls, teal and ringnecks. Rare in our pond are hooded mergansers and egret. No wood ducks yet.

David Wagner is a botanist who has lived in Eugene for more than 30 years. He teaches moss classes and leads nature walks. He may be reached at fernzenmosses@me.com.