

# Eugene school mulls gender-neutral mascot

Home to the Axemen

Associated Press

EUGENE — A Eugene school is considering doing away with its mascot after it was presented with a petition asking the school to change it to something gender neutral.

South Eugene High School has been the home of the Axemen for almost 90 years, the Register-Guard reported.

In an email sent Tuesday to families and community

members, Principal Andy Dey said there has been an ongoing community discussion about changing the school's team name which resulted in a petition that garnered hundreds of signatures from students, parents, teachers, coaches and community members.

While the petitioners are passionate about the change, Dey said others have adamantly disagreed with the idea.

Dey plans to hold several meetings to discuss the matter with school and district leadership after students return to

**'We find the request for a change to be compelling, and one that shall receive full attention from the school's leadership.'**

Principal Andy Dey

school from winter break Jan. 3.

"We find the request for a change to be compelling, and one that shall receive full attention from the school's

leadership," he wrote. "The superintendent has expressed support for moving forward in conversation with the faculty, student groups and the school's Site Council."

Eugene School Board members also welcome the discussion.

The mascot's origin can be traced back to a 20th century club at the high school known for their annual group photo which featured members holding an axe, Dey said in the email. The members became known as "the men of the axe" and later shortened to "axemen."

Dey acknowledged that sports and the country have changed since the school's team named was adopted in the early 1930s. Today, girls

and women are allowed to play on sports teams and language and terminology used in the U.S. has also changed.

"Use of nongendered terminology (chairperson, firefighter, police officer, etc.) is now standard, while the use of male-specific pronouns to refer generically to all people is no longer a universally accepted social norm," Dey said.

He expects to send a recommendation to Eugene School District Superintendent Gustavo Balderas by the end of January.

# Senators question Forest Service role in sage grouse review

By GEORGE PLAVEN  
EO Media Group

Thirteen Democratic senators, including Oregon U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, are questioning what role the U.S. Forest Service played in the Trump administration's recent decision to review protections for the greater sage grouse.

In a letter sent Dec. 20 to Forest Service Chief Tony Tooke, the senators pose a list of 10 questions stemming from federal orders to review the 2015 sage grouse plans, which sought to keep the peculiar bird off the Endangered

Species List.

Those plans, the senators argue, were the hard-won results of negotiations between farmers, ranchers, sportsmen, conservationists and government officials to preserve sage grouse habitat while balancing rural economies. In June, however, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke issued an order to re-examine the plans to see if any provisions might hinder job creation and energy development.

Since then, the Forest Service has also announced its intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for multiple national forests and grasslands

in Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming and Colorado, which the agency says may warrant changes in land management for the sage grouse.

The notice includes:

- Idaho and southwest Montana (Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Boise, Caribou-Targhee, Salmon-Challis and Sawtooth national forests, and Cule National Grassland).
- Nevada (Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest).
- Utah (Ashley, Dixie, Fishlake, Manti-La Sal and Uinta-Wasatch-Cache national forests).
- Wyoming and Colorado (Bridger-Teton and Medicine Bow-Routt national forests, and Thunder Basin National Grassland).

The deadline for public comment is Jan. 5, though the senators are asking the Forest Service to extend that period by at least 45 days to account

for the acreage and stakeholders involved.

Sage grouse are found in 11 Western states, and are known for their elaborate courtship and mating rituals. The population was once estimated

at 16 million birds, but has since dwindled to somewhere between 200,000 and 500,000. More than half the remaining habitat is on land managed by either the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management.

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