

Wyden calls out USFS over stalled Mt. Hood landswap

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA
News editor

Sen. Ron Wyden joked at Saturday's town hall meeting that "there's no script, no teleprompters" in his town halls. The Hood River town hall, his 734th, was a wide-ranging forum attended by about 75 people. Wyden discussed trade, education, infrastructure, Medicare reform, foreign policy, oil train transport and many other issues, but when it came to stalled land swap between Mt. Hood Meadows and US Forest Service, Wyden was clearly working without a script.

Wyden, when asked by citizens about the impasse, was visibly surprised and angry, and leveled criticism at USFS for holding up the land trade that was approved after considerable negotiation and legal challenges six years ago.

He turned to his legislative aid, Mary Guitteau.

"We're trying to get this done. This has become one of the longest running battles," she said. In the exchange, the 2009 Act called for 770 acres at Cooper Spur, owned by Mt. Hood Meadows, to be traded for 120 acres at Government Camp owned by the Forest Service.

"The message was sent six years ago," Wyden said. "It's called a bill. It is a law — passed in 2009."

USFS was contacted Friday morning but did not re-

spond by press time.

When asked by Wyden, Guitteau said the holdup seems to be over wetlands issues.

Wyden responded, "That doesn't pass the smell test. I knew they had been dragging their feet but I was not aware of this. It's almost an unprecedented lack of responsiveness," Wyden said.

"The Forest Service doesn't respond," Wyden said. "We're going to stay on this until it changes."

In a May 25 letter to members, Hood River Valley Residents Committee president Polly Wood wrote, "HRVRC has been working for a solution for over a decade and we have one: a land trade that conservation groups, recreation clubs, local residents, the public, Hood River County, Mt. Hood Meadows and our Congressional delegation wholeheartedly support. All these parties support the land trade because it is a great solution allowing Mt. Hood Meadows to develop in an area that is appropriate and zoned for development while bringing 770 acres of beautiful forest land in the Crystal Springs watershed into public ownership. We are extremely disappointed in the Forest Service's failure to make reasonable progress and negotiate this trade in good faith. The Forest Service is supposed to be a public agency working for, rather than against, a clear public benefit."



The letter was cosigned by board member Michael McCarthy and HRVRC executive director Heather Staten, who noted that the issue comes down to three issues, including a conservation easement on 8 acres of wetlands on the USFS Government Camp properties and the need for the exchange to go through NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act), which is a review of the environmental impacts of the trade. This allows citizens and policy makers to get environmental information on the trade properties before it is complete.

"The conservation groups have already vetted the proposal extensively and NEPA would, in our view, focus on the future management of the North side of Mt. Hood," Staten said.

Third, the property values



Photos by Kirby Neumann-REA

will need to be equalized, according to Staten. The Cooper Spur property is much larger but the Government Camp property has much more development potential because of its zoning. The idea was that the properties would have similar values. An appraisal will be done on both the properties and some equalization may be necessary.

"One effect of the Forest Service 5 year delay in completing the deal is that the trees on the Cooper Spur property have grown — the timber cruises are stale and

need to be redone. Much of the Cooper Spur land value is in its timber — so more timber and higher timber prices than in 2009 make that property worth more and create a disparity between the two trade properties.

"By taking so long to complete the trade, the Forest Service has really worked against the public benefit as we are likely to receive less land than the 770 acres envisioned by the Act due to increases in land values as USFS delays," Staten said.

MOST SEATS were filled at Hood River Valley Adult Center, where staffers passed the microphone for citizens to ask questions of Sen. Wyden. Mayor Paul Blackburn introduced Wyden. The center's new director, Suzanne VanOrman, facilitated the Q-and-A, in the room also used for community meals, Bingo nights, and other gatherings.

Leos reschedule bottle drive July 11

Hood River Valley Leos have their monthly bottle and can collection on the first Saturday of each month.

However, with the Fourth of July parade and other festivities, the club has rescheduled July's collection to the next weekend — Saturday, July 11.

Leos along with the HRV Robotics team will be collecting, sorting and redeeming containers with a nickel deposit from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. to support the Robotics team's activities.

"We hope to capitalize on the Fourth of July holiday," said Olivia Acosta, HRV Leos co-President and member of the robotics team. "With all the celebrations on the Fourth, we're hoping everyone will bring their bottles and cans July 11 to help support our club and the Robotics team. It

could be a record day!"

The HRV Leos club has been doing monthly bottle and can collections on the first Saturday of each month for more than six years.

As a result, the club has raised nearly \$20,000 for a variety of local causes, including Lila Mae, Wy'east Middle School's summer program, 4-H Leaders, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and St. Francis House.

Hood River Valley Leos meets on the first and third Sundays of each month at Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital.

Youth ages 12 to 18 are invited to get involved with Leos and make a difference in our community. For more information, contact Leos advisor Kristin Reese at 541-806-0278 or email kristinr@hrecn.net.

HEAT

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western and central Columbia River gorge. The Northwest Interagency Coordination Center in Portland advises that "A surge of moisture and instability will continue moving northward across Oregon and Washington today and tonight. Lightning strikes are expected to ignite new fires despite showers with the thunderstorms. The combination of fire danger, instability, and numerous lightning strikes is creating nearly optimum conditions for ignition and growth of large, costly fires across much of the geographic area through Mon-

day before conditions moderate during the new week."

On Monday DOF announced that a high pressure system is forecast for the southern Oregon area, with high temps, dry weather and slight chance of thunderstorms. The National Weather Service is calling for a hot and dry air mass to settle back into the Willamette Valley and Portland areas through the end of the work week; a Red Flag warning for thunderstorms is in effect for northeast Oregon.

To assess the overall impact, pilots and observers in three aircraft were dispatched Monday to survey the affected area, according to Orlando. She reported 13 fires Sunday in the DOF John Day unit, in east central Oregon

SCIENTIST ADDRESSES FOREST FIRE SUPPRESSION ISSUES

It's a timely public talk given the onset of what will be a hot, dry summer in the Mt. Hood National Forest. Dominick DellaSala, Chief Scientist of the GEOS Institute of Ashland, will give a free talk at the Hood River County Library on July 8 from 6 to 8 p.m.

DellaSala will discuss the ecological benefits of wildfires in our public forests. The talk

will focus on the conservation needs of burned forests, how to live safely in fire-country, and the controversy surrounding wildfires in a rapidly warming and changing world. The talk will include a short video and time for a discussion with the author.

Free handouts will be available re: how to have a "fire-wise" home.

FOURTH

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The grand marshal will be the people associated with Fish Food Bank which opened its new facility last month. The theme is "Beautiful Bounty" describing the wonderful area of the Hood River Valley and Columbia River Gorge and the assistance that is given to our neighbors by the Fish Food Bank. Attendees are asked to bring a can of fruit or soup to Jackson Park that will be given to the FISH Food Bank.

A flyover is planned at about 10 a.m.

For safety to children and adults along with keeping the parade route litter free, the Hood River Lions ask that no candy be passed out or thrown from the entries. The Hood River Rotary Club and Heights Ice Cream are

again teaming up to offer ice cream at a discounted price in Jackson Park for the children after the parade.

Onlookers will be treated to about 50 local entries but also a Portland band called "The Beat Goes On" with its musicians and baton twirlers. They will also perform in Jackson Park for 40 minutes starting at noon with the raising of the American Flag.

At 11 a.m. the Hood River Fire Dept. will begin serving its annual barbecue lunch. Around 1:00 p.m. we will be entertained by the Willy & Nelson band. Also in the park will be ice cream, two bounce houses, face painting and some games for the children.

Donations for the fireworks program are needed and can be mailed to Eye-opener Lions, 1767 12th Street #136, Hood River, OR 97031.

WATER

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Ayers said the record low snowpack and stream levels affect agriculture and fire danger most profoundly. "What's called 'potable' or drinking water is in good shape. But our irrigation districts are deeply concerned," Ayers said.

Camarata said FID is reaching out to large users including schools, churches, and Hood River Goff Course, to conserve as much as possible.

"We are asking our community to help our orchardists," Camarata said.

FID draws from the Kingsley reservoirs, west of Hood

River. The lower reservoir is half way down, Camarata noted, explaining that the district keeps the upper reservoir full and then draws down to the lower one as needed.

"People go to the upper reservoir on the weekend and it looks full," he said. "We'll bring water from the upper to the lower soon and people will see that change pretty dramatically."

Camarata also asked that FID residents who see water being spread inefficiently — onto roads or sidewalks, or at times other than mornings or evenings — to call FID, which will then speak with the offender.

"We hope that peer pressure will kick in and we can get through this," he said.

WHAT IS ERC?

ERC (Energy Release Component) is a number related to the available energy per unit area (square foot) within the flaming front at the head of a fire. Daily variations in ERC are due to changes in moisture content of the various fuels present, both live and dead. Since this number represents the potential "heat release" per unit area in the flaming zone, it can provide guidance to several important fire activities. It may also be considered a composite fuel moisture value as it reflects the contribution that all live and dead fuels have to potential fire intensity. The ERC is a cumulative or "build-up" type of index. As live fuels cure and dead fuels dry, the ERC values get higher, thus providing a good reflection of drought conditions.

CHASE

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to remove Matilton from the vehicle and perform lifesaving measures until EMS personnel arrived.

Matilton was transported from the scene by Hood River Fire and was ultimately flown by LifeFlight to Legacy Emanuel Hospital in Portland, where he was listed in

grave condition Monday night.

ODOT assisted at the scene, as interstate traffic was closed to a single lane while the investigation was conducted.

No shots were fired by law enforcement personnel, nor were any of the responding units injured during the incident. The Hood River County Sheriff's Office is leading the investigation, which is still ongoing.

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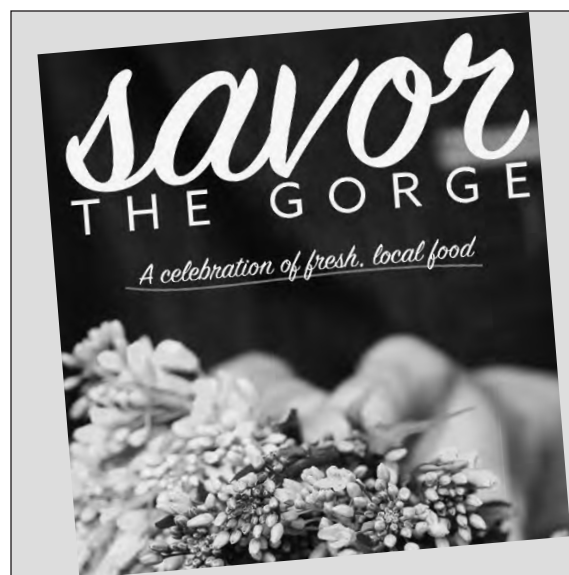
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