

FOREST: Residents sensitive about managing potential for massive wildfires

Continued from 1A

who aired their concerns. Montoya said it was a valuable experience that helped them evaluate possible changes.

Two new alternatives are now being developed, building upon the preferred alternative and their draft analysis. Montoya said these alternatives aim to increase the pace and scale of restoration — especially the second of the two, which would attempt to treat all "suitable acres" over the life of the plan.

In order to do that, the forests estimate they would have to treat 114,666 acres per year for 15 years or 86,000 acres per year for 20 years. Montoya said they would not be able to work at that aggressive a pace with their current staff and budgets, and would need outside help to get the job done.

East Oregonian, OPB to host Forest Plan panel discussion

The East Oregonian and Oregon Public Broadcasting will host a forum and discussion Wednesday, April 6 about the Blue Mountains Forest Plan revision, which covers 4.9 million acres of the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur national forests.

A panel of representatives will be on hand to talk about the plan, what it does and how it will guide management decisions across the landscape. Featured panelists include Malheur Forest Supervisor Steve Beverlin; Eric Quampts, director of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's

Department of Natural Resources; James Nash, rafting guide with Winding Waters River Expeditions in Enterprise; Darilyn Parry Brown, executive director of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council in La Grande; and King Williams, of Boise Cascade wood products.

The lecture will be held at Blue Mountain Community College, ST-200 Lecture Hall, in Pendleton. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m., with a live recording to begin at 7 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public.

The event will be broadcast the next day on OPB's "Think Out Loud" from noon-1 p.m., and again from 8-9 p.m. OPB can be found on the dial at 90.9 FM in Umatilla and Morrow counties.

"We're trying to move the desired conditions to where they need to be on the landscape," Montoya said.

Increasing timber production alone won't be enough, Montoya said. The forests will need to find other creative ways to deal with its backlog of overstocked vegetation. Prescribed burning, biomass production, livestock grazing and non-commercial thinning could also be part of the treatment.

Nick Smith, executive director of Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities, said it is important to see that the Forest Service is taking its re-engagement with the public seriously. But as of right now, Smith is unsure if the new alternatives will actually bring any new solutions to the table.

"It always comes down to the details," Smith said. "If you're able to increase the land base for management,

you can develop projects that are responsible but also support the economic needs of the local communities."

County commissioners from Eastern Oregon have previously rejected every alternative for the revised Forest Plan, saying they fell well short of management goals. Mark Davidson, Union County commissioner and chairman of the executive committee for the Eastern Oregon Counties Associ-

ation, said the group will take a close look at the final EIS after its release and will carefully consider whether their constituents' concerns have been addressed.

"Our counties in northeast Oregon are intermingled and dependent on each other. When one of our economies is damaged, it has a ripple effect throughout the region," Davidson said. "We don't want to see further erosion of our communities."

Davidson pointed out that Union County alone has lost at least three sawmills as timber production has fallen. That's led to a loss of jobs in a once-crucial industry.

Umatilla County Commissioner Larry Givens said residents also are sensitive about managing the potential for massive wildfires. They want to avoid a catastrophe like the Canyon Creek Complex last year near John Day.

"We've been extremely lucky on the Umatilla. But your luck can only last so long," Givens said. "I want

to find out what exactly (the Forest Service) means by more restoration, what are those projects and what could they include."

Once the final EIS is released, there will be an objection period through the winter. A final Record of Decision could be done by as early as spring 2017. Montoya said the final decision ultimately falls upon the shoulders of Regional Forester Jim Peña, who could adopt bits and pieces from any of the proposed alternatives.

Montoya said the Forest Service will share information in future newsletters to keep stakeholders informed. No final decisions have been made yet.

"We're not going to be able to make everyone happy, but hopefully people will at least be able to appreciate that the Forest Service is listening," Montoya said.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

Sheriff's office investigates captain's missing file

BEND (AP) — An Oregon sheriff's office is investigating the apparent disappearance of a background file on an officer who has been indicted on federal charges.

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office could not find the pre-employment background check of former Capt. Scott Beard, reported The Bulletin. Beard was fired from his position as head of the detectives division after his February indictment on charges that he stole public money, passport fraud and money laundering. He has pleaded not guilty.

"We believe the background investigation was removed from the Human Resources File Room," Sheriff Shane Nelson wrote in an email Thursday. "The time period in which it was removed and who removed it also continues to be under investigation."

The missing file is part of a larger internal investigation. The federal indictment claims Beard took more than \$200,000 in public funds

intended for investigative purposes between January 2014 and September 2015.

According to the indictment, Beard used the money to buy vacations, cosmetic surgery and a motorcycle for a woman he was having an affair with. She is a former employee of the office.

Beard was hired full time in 2002 and became captain — one rank below sheriff — by 2012.

Internal investigators learned in January that the background check was missing from Beard's personnel file, said Deschutes County Sheriff's Office Legal Counsel Darryl Nakahira.

"It is highly unlikely that background investigations were not done," Nelson wrote. "There are other relevant confidential documents which would indicate there was an investigation."

He also wrote that, as of Thursday, there was no credible evidence pointing to the location of the background file.

State sees spike in unaffiliated voters choosing a party

By KRISTENA HANSEN Associated Press

PORTLAND — The hot presidential election is apparently motivating a lot of Oregon voters who would otherwise be shut out of the state's closed primary to take steps that will let them choose a presidential candidate.

Data from the Oregon Secretary of State shows roughly 20,500 voters this year have switched to one of the three parties that can select a presidential candidate in the May contest. That's almost three times the number of voters who made a switch during the same timeframe in 2008, the last presidential election with contested primaries in both major parties.

Of this year's figure, about 16,670 registered as Democrats, 3,200 as Republicans and 700 as Independents.

Most of these voters were previously nonaffiliated, which makes up about one-quarter of registered voters in Oregon.

"It is clear that national election coverage and Oregon's possible role in the presidential nominating contests have piqued voter interest. This is great news," Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins told The Associated Press.

Democratic contenders Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton have both begun courting voters in Oregon

ahead of the May 17 primary. Sanders drew about 11,500 to a rally in Portland on March 26 following a surprise stop by Bill Clinton earlier that week.

None of the Republican presidential candidates have brought their campaigns to Oregon so far.

Nearly 3/4 of Oregon's 2.2 million registered voters are eligible to vote in the state's presidential primaries. It's unclear whether the relatively tiny number of people who are changing parties will impact the outcome, said Paul Gronke, a political science professor at Portland-based Reed College who specializes in voter behavior.

But the numbers could certainly continue rising through April 26, the deadline for all voter registrations and changes.

"I would not be surprised if we break records here in this primary," he said.

Oregon posted a 58 percent primary turnout, or 1.17 million voters, in 2008, the state's highest for a presidential election year since the mid-1970s.

"The question is with all these new voters coming in, how will that impact these down-ballot races in unexpected ways," said Gronke, referring to local nonpartisan races such as the Portland mayoral contest listed further down on the ballot.

Another factor this year is that Democrats and Republicans are sharing the May contest for the first time with another party, the Independent Party of Oregon, which has about 110,600 registered members — up from 16,000 in March 2008, according to the Secretary of State.

The Independent Party ballot is also open to the state's 540,000-plus nonaffiliated voters, a number that's been surging this year due to the state's new automatic voter registration system. Nonaffiliated voters must notify their counties by April 26 in order to receive an Independent Party ballot.

However, it's still unclear how the Independent Party's presidential nominee — selected through write-ins on those ballots — will be counted as part of overall primary results.

Corrections

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

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Closed major holidays

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East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published daily except Sunday, Monday and Dec. 25, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Copyright © 2016, EO Media Group

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AccuWeather.com Forecast. Includes today's weather (A t-storm in spots in the p.m.), Sunday (Partly sunny and mild), Monday (Cooler with a couple of showers), Tuesday (Breezy with some sun), Wednesday (Pleasant and warmer). Includes temperature forecasts for Pendleton and Hermiston, an almanac for Pendleton and Hermiston, a regional forecast map, and a sun and moon schedule.

REGIONAL CITIES. Table with 2 columns: Today (Hi, Lo, W) and Sun. (Hi, Lo, W). Lists cities like Astoria, Baker City, Bend, Brookings, Burns, Enterprise, Eugene, Heppner, Hermiston, John Day, Klamath Falls, La Grande, Meacham, Medford, Newport, North Bend, Ontario, Pasco, Pendleton, Portland, Redmond, Salem, Spokane, Ukiah, Vancouver, Walla Walla, Yakima.

WORLD CITIES. Table with 2 columns: Today (Hi, Lo, W) and Sun. (Hi, Lo, W). Lists cities like Beijing, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Seoul, Sydney, Tokyo.

WINDS and UV INDEX TODAY. Winds: (in mph) Today (W 7-14), Sunday (WSW 3-6), Pendleton (W 7-14), Sunday (W 4-8). UV Index: 1, 3, 5, 5, 3, 0. 8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m. 0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High 8-10, Very High 11+, Extreme. The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY. Shows noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are high for the day. National Summary: Clouds and showers will extend along much of the Atlantic Seaboard today. Advancing arctic air will spread wind and snow eastward across the Great Lakes. Much of the Central and Western states will be sunny.

NATIONAL CITIES. Table with 3 columns: Today (Hi, Lo, W) and Sun. (Hi, Lo, W). Lists cities like Albuquerque, Atlanta, Atlantic City, Baltimore, Billings, Birmingham, Boise, Boston, Charleston, SC, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, El Paso, Fairbanks, Fargo, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Louisville, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, New York City, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Portland, ME, Providence, Raleigh, Rapid City, Reno, Sacramento, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Tucson, Washington, DC, Wichita.