HERMISTON

City, feds and volunteers maintain Oxbow Trail

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

EO file photo

The Oxbow Trail in Hermiston is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation and managed by the city of Hermiston.

Four and a half years after the Oxbow Trail was dedicated, several sets of eyes are working to keep the area friendly to both humans and wildlife.

The land is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation, which allowed the city of Hermiston to build the paved trail that stretches from 11th Street to Riverfront Park.

Sean Kimbrel, field office manager of the bureau's Umatilla office, said the bureau is working to maintain the Oxbow property's primary intent to protect fish habitat along the Umatilla River. After a July 2017 fire burned through a dry field along the trail and spread to a nearby duplex, the bureau has also started working with the city and the property's neighbors to manage vegetation and mow a fire buffer near residences.

The property, like many areas along the Umatilla River, has drawn some homeless camps. Kimbrel said the Bureau of Reclamation works with law enforcement when that happens to enforce the camping ban and ask people to move along.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said the department gets "sporadic" complaints about transient activity in the Oxbow area. He said occasional meetings with the bureau have proved productive, and the department does what it can to keep an eye on the area.

"It's a unique situation, because the city has a vested interest with the trail, but it's federal land," he said.

Edmiston said the Oxbow Trail, which is inaccessible to patrol cars, is one of the reasons Hermiston Police Department bought a side-by-side ATV. The smaller vehicle can provide quick access if there is an emergency call half a mile down the trail, or allow officers more of a presence along the trail. The department even used it last winter to clear snow off the trail, which gets used year-round.

Edmiston said dealing with homelessness issues, such as panhandling and illegal encampment, is always a balance between being compassionate while also promoting public health, safety and livability. Helping maintain Hermiston's livability is one of the department's goals, he said.

There is also a balance that must be struck between maintaining habitat areas while also making problem areas more visible from the trail.

From a safety standpoint, Edmiston encouraged anyone walking the Oxbow Trail or other similar trails to take a cellphone with them in case of emergencies, and to avoid walking at night where there is poor lighting.

Private citizens have also worked to help maintain the Oxbow area's usability. Eileen Laramore has partnered with SOLVE and Columbia Riverkeeper to adopt that area and often brings groups of volunteers down to pull out invasive weeds like garlic mustard.

Laramore said she has been troubled by garbage she sees left behind sometimes in homeless camps, and tries to alert the Bureau of Reclamation when she sees problems on the property.

"I spend a lot of time down there," she said.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

PENDLETON

Project connects veterans, those in need

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

File photo

Patti Coffman introduces Teddy Bear, her border collie/blue heeler mix, to a volunteer during a past Project Community Connect & Veteran Stand Down.

Veterans as well as people who have low incomes or unstable housing are invited to attend the Project Community Connect & Veteran Stand Down.

The free event connects people to resources and provides on-the-spot services at no charge. In addition to a free meal, there are lots of giveaways.

The Home 4 Hope Coalition and veterans services with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Umatilla and Morrow counties have teamed up with numerous community partners to present the event. Project Community Connect, which alternates yearly between venues in Pendleton and Hermiston, is Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Pendleton Recreation Center, 510 S.W. Dorion Ave. Free transportation is available through Kayak Public Transit.

Coalition member Jaime Crowell said the group tackles issues surrounding homelessness and tries to find adequate solutions. The event, she said, offers people an opportunity to connect with services that they may need in the community.

"It's important to have all these services in one place at one time because people may not know what services are available they might need," Crowell said. "They can get all the information they need to fill any gaps that they have."

Crowell and Sharon Waldern, who both work in the education department at Good Shepherd Health Care System, said it's important to reach out to the homeless and others in need. The focus, Waldern said, isn't necessarily to change a person's lifestyle, but to provide assistance to help in meeting basic needs.

"We want to offer help where we can to help keep them warmer and drier and get a flu shot," Waldern said. "Or a chance to be seen by a physician or dentist to help keep them somewhat healthy."

Also, basic medical and dental examinations, a shower and haircuts will all be available. Screenings for colon cancer and diabetes will be conducted, and Waldern said, follow-up will be provided through St. Anthony Urgent Care Clinic in Pendleton and Gifford Medical Urgent Care in Hermiston.

Also, a veterinarian will be on hand to offer services to pets of participants. In addition, a "doggie day care" will be available onsite while participants are attending the event, Crowell said.

The event, Crowell said, typically sees 200 participants. She said it's amazing at how many people may be close to being homeless, which makes it that much more important for others to reach out and help[.

"Some people live paycheck-to-paycheck and you never know when your circumstances will change," she said.

For more information, send an email to home4hopecommunity@gmail.com. For questions or to volunteer, call 541-667-3509.

Umatilla County continues remodel of juvenile detention space

East Oregonian

Umatilla County continues to remodel the former juvenile detention facility for its developmentally disabled program.

The county board of commissioners on Wednesday in Pendleton voted 3-0 for the maintenance department to spend another $171,000 on the project. Kim Weissenfluh, manager of the developmentally disabled program, told the board the work will turn 10 cells into offices and change two shower rooms into storage space.

She also said the remodel will allow the county to hold regional training sessions at the facility instead of sending county employs to cities, such as Salem for training.

The county board also lifted the ban on non-agricultural burning. Burn day protocols remain in effect, so residents have to contact the county before burning. For more information, call the county's planning department at 541-278-6252 or visit the county website, www.umatilla-county.net.

All three commissioners also voted to extend Mel Keely's term on the Umatilla County Fair Board for one year. His term was to end Dec. 31, but the extension allows the county to recruit a replacement.

Commissioner Bill Elfering said new fair board members have a steep learning curve and need training under more experienced members. The commissioners agreed that's a better model going forward than continuing to extend terms, even if the board did that here.

Keely is the primary backer of Commissioner Larry Givens' write-in campaign for re-election. Givens did not mention that as a possible conflict when he voted.

Three domestic violence arrests since Sunday

East Oregonian

There were several domestic violence arrests in Umatilla and Morrow counties in the past few days.

On Sunday, Oct. 14, Elwood Davis, a Richland resident, was arrested in Umatilla County and charged for assault in the fourth degree, constituting domestic violence, and harassment. Davis was arrested for allegedly assaulting a victim and subjecting them to other offensive physical contact, which included spitting on the victim. Davis also committed those acts in front of a child.

Also on Oct. 14, Pendleton resident Eric Arbogast was arrested in Umatilla County for assault in the fourth degree, constituting domestic violence, harassment and theft in the third degree. According to court documents, Arbogast allegedly caused physical injury to a victim, and subjected her to offensive physical contact. He also stole a bicycle, which was the victim's property.

On Oct. 16, Irrigon resident Matthew Hanson was arrested for causing physical injury to a child younger than 10 years old. He was charged with criminal mistreatment in the first degree, assault in the third degree and harassment. The child was under Hanson's care at the time.

The *EO* does not name victims of domestic violence.

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