

CTUIR, Umatilla County pursuing quicker fix to Thorn Hollow Bridge

Replacing the bridge is estimated at \$4.6 million

By ALEX CASTLE
East Oregonian

MISSION — At an estimated replacement cost of \$4.6 million, the Thorn Hollow Bridge left impassable by the raging waters that flooded the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Umatilla County in February isn't on track to be replaced until at least 2025.

During a meeting between the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's Board of Trustees and the county board of commissioners Wednesday, Sept. 30, the two entities focused on expediting that replacement while establishing a better relationship for joint recovery efforts from February's floods.

"We're looking at the future and trying to figure out what our options are to make all the Umatilla County residents who live up there have options for safety," said Sally Kosey, treasurer for the CTUIR Board of Trustees.

Without the Thorn Hollow Bridge in place, residents have had their direct access to Highway 11 cut off. The CTUIR is concerned that in the event of wildfires or other emergencies, the community's ability to evacuate has been significantly hindered without that access.

"That's a real concern for us because, not only do tribal members live up there but nontribal members live up there," said Kat Brigham, chair of the CTUIR Board of Trustees. "And they're having big changes in their lives."

The problem is the county says it doesn't have the money to fund the project itself, even with the hope of eventual reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

A bridge in Thorn Hollow bows as the Umatilla River rises below it on Thursday, Feb. 6, 2020.

"In the county road department, we just don't have big enough pockets for \$4.6 million," said Tom Fellows, county roadmaster and public works director.

Fellows said the county explored funding through the federal bridge replacement program, but there wasn't enough emergency funding for the project, either. But Fellows said the county had recently secured roughly \$600,000 to begin designing a replacement for the bridge.

"That will get us a bridge design that's ready to go," he said.

The CTUIR questioned the county's priorities in infrastructure repairs from the floods, noting the county had found a temporary bridge to reopen Harris Park earlier this year.

"We know it'd be an additional cost," Kosey said. "But if we can get a temporary bridge to put at Harris Park to a dead end, surely there's something we can do to help the people at Thorn Hollow Bridge."

Fellows said the bridge for Harris Park was a loan from Lane County and that it was only needed to cover 40 feet, unlike the 200 feet needed where Thorn Hollow Bridge spans. For a temporary solution, Fellows said a foot bridge of some kind may be able to be installed but he hadn't found a temporary option that would

accommodate vehicles.

Jill-Marie Gavin, an at-large member of the CTUIR board of Trustees, also expressed some of the Tribes' frustrations with the lack of communication from the county until the Sept. 30 meeting and the desire to build a stronger collaborative relationship moving forward.

Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer agreed that the relationship can and should be stronger, and said holding more joint meetings between the two government entities going forward would be one way to work toward that.

The boards agreed to schedule quarterly meetings every three months moving forward as each work to recover from recent disasters, with the next meeting planned for Dec. 16.

In the meantime, the boards also agreed to each look to additional funding sources, while combining any future lobbying efforts to Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Legislature in exploring quicker options to replace Thorn Hollow Bridge.

"I think we can come out of this with a sort of a joint group that can pursue all kinds of targets," said Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock. "And if we have a joint proposal between the county and Tribes, I think that goes a lot further in Salem."

Annual corn maze opens in Echo

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

ECHO — Fall is here, and so is the Echo Corn Maze.

The 8-acre maze is located at 100 N. Dupont St. in Echo, and takes approximately one hour to complete. The property also includes other attractions, including smaller mazes for young children, a pyramid of hay bales for climbing, a small zipline, a pumpkin patch, and fire pits that can be reserved for group gatherings.

Owner Gina Tyhuis said her family started the maze five years ago to celebrate the adoption of her son. Now, each year is a celebration of that anniversary for their family as they work together to run the maze.

This year, they had to do

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the Echo Corn Maze, including hours and pricing, visit echocornmaze.com or call 509-528-5808.

extra work to bring the maze back, after the entire property was covered by water during the extensive flooding of the Umatilla River in February.

"We flooded in the spring and had to start over, so that's what's pushed us back some," she said as she worked to wrap up preparations on Thursday, Oct. 1.

She said the community participation is always "awesome," including sponsors and volunteers who help make it possible.

The maze opened Friday, Oct. 2, and will stay open through the end of October, Tuesday through Sunday. The

haunted Field of Screams version will be available Oct. 17, 24, 30 and 31 from 7-9 p.m.

In light of COVID-19, masks will be required on the property and hand sanitizing stations will be available. Guests are asked to keep 6 feet apart from other groups and not visit the site if they are experiencing any symptoms of illness or may be contagious. Health experts have recommended outdoor activities as a safer alternative to indoor events during the pandemic, and Tyhuis said the corn maze offers a good open-air option as the weather turns cooler.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Fire burns Hermiston apartments

HERMISTON — Four apartment units at Ridge-way Apartments in Hermiston were damaged in an early morning fire on Sunday, Oct. 4.

According to a news release from Umatilla County Fire District #1, the district received a call at 2:10 a.m. about a fire in a two-story apartment building at the apartment complex.

"When crews arrived at 2:13 A.M. heavy fire was showing from the first-floor apartment window, extending into the second-floor apartment window and roof eaves," the release stated.

Two units in the building were damaged by fire and two more were damaged by smoke and water. Fire crews also "opened up" walls and ceilings on the units to bring the fire under control.

The cause of the fire is under investigation. According to the release, no one was injured "because the occu-

pants of the apartment complex were very effective at getting everyone out before fire crews arrived."

Two people injured in M-F crash

MILTON-FREEWATER — Two vehicles collided on West Crockett Road just before 4:50 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 4, injuring two people, officials said.

Joshua L. Hyatt, 29, of College Place, Washington, turned left on West Crockett Road from Highway 11 near Milton-Freewater in front of driver Kylie L. Kemp, 21, of Clarkston, Washington. The two vehicles crashed together.

James B. Weber, 23, of Clarkston, was riding with Kemp. He reported pain and was transported to Providence St. Mary Medical Center, according to a release from Oregon State Police. No information was available on his condition.

Hyatt reported a broken leg, but refused medical treatment, and was not transported

by ambulance, officials stated.

He was cited for an unlawful left turn, according to Oregon State Police.

Inmate dies on hospice care at TRCI

UMATILLA — A 57-year-old man incarcerated at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla died while on hospice care on Friday, Oct. 2, according to a press release from the Oregon Department of Corrections.



Soto

Edward R. Soto died at the prison after being incarcerated in December 2019 from Marion County, the release stated. His earliest release date was Aug. 27, 2023.

Per standard protocol, the Oregon State Police have been notified of the death.

— EO Media Group and wire services

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