

Water: 'The people who manage it should be the ones who live by it'

Continued from Page A1

"as-needed basis," which sometimes means only every few months, according to Hemphill. The board also puts out an annual budget for the county.

"The only people who take care of the creek channels are the land owners," Hemphill said. "Nobody wants to lose your property by floods and by the creek channel moving out."

Since 1999, the community has only had a couple of major floods, Hemphill said, but "this one last May was the worst one that caused trouble in Pilot Rock."

The six people running for positions suggest an interest not seen in recent years, and according to at least three of the candidates, that's because of the increased flooding.

"I think it's good that there's interest in it — that somebody is wanting to do something, to do something to improve it," said Andy Munsey, a retired forester who is running for Position 2 on the board. "That's certainly a benefit."

Munsey, who worked for nearly 50 years in the local timber industry and still does timber consulting, said the flooding played a role in his decision to run for a position on the board.

He said he sees ways that the timber industry can help mitigate flooding by providing trees for restoration and helping with streamside stabilization. He also said he would propose planting vegetation to hold soil in the ground and slow runoff and erosion.

"I think it's important because then you're going to control the erosion and control the flooding," he said. "We don't need further eroding in the streams."

Living near McKay Reservoir, Munsey said he had noticed some of the new



Crews from Pilot Rock Fire Protection District carry sandbags through the rising floodwaters from Birch Creek in downtown Pilot Rock on May 20, 2020.



Sunny Bernabe, center right, helps to distribute sandbags to fellow volunteers along Highway 395 in Pilot Rock on May 20, 2020.

developments made around Birch Creek and Pilot Rock, including waste treatment and pump systems for the city, and decided he wanted to do his part for the community as well.

Mary Weinke, a Pilot

Rock resident and board member who worked in the school district for many years, said she's glad there's more interest in the board positions this year.

"I just think, if you're going to help out in the

community, you kind of need to help out on some things," she said. "So many times you see that nobody's running when you vote. But I think this year, there seems to be a lot of people running for open positions. That's what

makes a community work. People serving and helping out with other people's needs."

Weinke said she ran for the position on the board because it appeared to her that the board wasn't filling positions or levying taxes.

"I saw that and decided to run and fill in a board position, because my husband's brother had been a founding (board member) way back in the 1970s," she said.

She said in recent years, however, local residents like herself have gotten good reimbursements from the floods, and she wants that to continue to happen.

"You have to follow certain state rules to meet and levy and file for tax stuff," she said. "And when you collect the money, then you're supposed to disseminate it under whatever rules you've set up that make you eligible to receive it. I think we went for a while with-

out any problems, but then I think it just got a little lax."

A retired farmer and Vietnam veteran who grew up in Pilot Rock, Hemphill was the chairman of the board for several years in the 1980s and 1990s. He also served with the Umatilla County Soil and Water Conservation District for over 30 years until he resigned in 2010.

Hemphill said there are several places along Birch Creek that have become problematic during times of high waters in recent years. One point, which he called the "miracle mile" due to its unpredictable nature during flooding, is located just south of Pilot Rock on East Birch Creek above Pilot Rock Elementary School.

Hemphill said farmers in the region have been hit especially hard by the floods. He said community members should be given the responsibility for taking care of the waterways.

"The people who manage it should be the ones who live by it," he said. "Because it's those people whose lives it affects."

According to candidate filings, running for the position against Munsey is Cliff Hoeft, a longtime board member, farmer and pilot. Running against Hemphill is John Johnson, a Pendleton resident and retired owner of fast food and pizza establishments in Hermiston. And running against Weinke is Jim Hatley, a self-employed construction worker from Pilot Rock.

Hoeft, Hatley and Johnson did not respond to multiple calls requesting an interview.

Birch Creek is essential for the vitality of the Umatilla River Basin, supplying a large percentage of its wild steelhead trout, according to Hemphill, who has served on the board since the late 1970s.

Cattle: 'We damn sure took a hell of a hit last year'

Continued from Page A1

to the pandemic, as plans and commitments need to be made months in advance.

"Things were a little uncertain and crazy to figure out what we could, how we could do it and meet the guidelines and all the things that were going on," he said.

But in January, when the board heard from scholarship recipients about the value of their education, they decided to move forward.

"We realized we had to be flexible," he said. "Trying to change the event was not going to be a sustainable or workable thing for us. A lot of people have done things virtually. We're an outdoor-type event, so we stuck with the plan we had in the past and tried to modify it as much as we could."

VanderPlaat said the event is especially important for young people looking to enter the agriculture industry after a challenging year where "jobs were somewhat questionable and money was a little tough."

"This is a huge agriculture area, a primary industry here," he said. "We need skills and knowledgeable young people to come back and keep it going."

In all, VanderPlaat said the event received much support from the community.

"People have been encouraging," he said. "It's our first event in Pendleton and it's been really good, all the people who have helped us get to where we are now.



People browse the Pendleton Cattle Barons trade show at the Pendleton Convention Center on Saturday, May 1, 2021.

We've really been blessed."

Relief and relaxation

Many attendees came clad in Western wear — 10-gallon hats, blue jeans, lassos and cowboy boots. They strolled around the trade show, with its vendors offering homemade barbecue sauces and other memorabilia from across Eastern Oregon, and around back at the Round-Up Pavilion, where ranch horses and working dogs were previewed and sold.

And for many, there was the sense of relief and relaxation simply to be outside and away from their homes.

"It's been relaxing to see people out and about," said Laura Jones, a clerk from St. John, Washington.

Jones woke up at around

3:30 a.m. on May 1 and made the drive to Pendleton for Cattle Barons, eager to finally attend something that would get her out of the house. Raised in Hermiston, she grew up attending events like the Round-Up and would meet up with family at Cattle Barons before her birthday.

"We're glad to be out and seeing things kind of opening back up and getting available," she said.

And for Cody McKillip, the owner of McKillip's Catering in St. Paul, the event was a respite from a hard year for his family's business.

"We damn sure took a hell of a hit last year," said McKillip, who competed in the barbecue competition. "Our business was down

about 65%, but this year's looking a little more promising."

Despite the hardship, his business was still able to get by with takeout orders, at times cooking 80 orders at a time for more than 300 local customers.

Like many of the attendees, McKillip said he was "proud of Cattle Barons for staying with this."

"It's something that needs to happen," he said of the event. "There's no reason why we can't do it. I understand the need to be safe and do things differently, but it's good to show everyone in the Northwest that these things can actually happen. They're going on everywhere else in the country, so why can't we be like them?"

Bill:

Continued from Page A1

especially useful to certain groups of people, such as patients who live in assisted living facilities.

Telehealth can be particularly useful for follow-up visits, she said, when providers have already diagnosed the problem but need to check in with a patient to see whether their symptoms have improved or if their new medication is working.

She said she hopes St. Anthony will be allowed to continue providing telehealth options for patients after the pandemic is over.

Troy LeGore, vice president of Good Shepherd Medical Group in Hermiston, said in an email that Good Shepherd Health Care System as a whole has had a "robust" selection of telehealth offerings since prior to the pandemic. Just a few of those have included genetic counseling, tele-cardiology and tele-endocrinology in the clinics and pediatric critical care in the Family Birth Center.

Once the pandemic hit, Good Shepherd added telehealth for all primary care clinics and urgent care, as well as adding other options for patients who didn't want to come inside, such as curbside service for prescription pick-ups. LeGore said they plan to continue all of those options.

Telemedicine has its benefits and drawbacks, he said. On the negative side, some patients don't feel like they got their money's worth if they didn't see a doctor in person and some struggle with figuring out the technology. There are also some more hands-on assessments that need to be done in person, such as taking blood pressure.

On the other hand, LeGore said, telehealth gives patients in more rural areas access to specialists they would otherwise have to travel long distances to see, and helped limit patients' and providers' exposure to each

other during the pandemic.

Telepharmacy bill offers help

While the future of some telehealth options are still up in the air, a bill introduced by Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, would allow pharmacists to provide virtual services in certain circumstances.

Senate Bill 629 is currently scheduled for a hearing in the House Committee on Health Care on Thursday, May 6. The bill would allow for a pharmacist to remotely supervise a pharmacy technician or speak with a patient rather than being on site. It would give pharmacies in small cities without enough work to support hiring a full-time pharmacist the ability to operate as a satellite office, where a pharmacy technician dispenses medications to patients under the supervision of a pharmacist at the main location.

Hansell said he had previously helped get funding for a medical clinic in Elgin that was affiliated with the Grande Ronde Hospital in La Grande. The small clinic would like to be able to dispense medications to patients on site, he said, but instead patients have to travel an hour round trip to pick up medications because there is not enough work to support a full-time pharmacist for the clinic. Under this bill, a pharmacist with Grande Ronde Hospital could remotely supervise a pharmacy technician at the clinic in Elgin.

"We anticipate that other clinics are in the same situation," he said.

He said when he sponsored the bill, it was after finding out that Oregon is the only state west of Texas not offering it as an option.

"I thought, if it's that universal, if there are concerns, we can work them out," he said.

The bill has received the support of the Oregon Society of Health System Pharmacies, Oregon State Pharmacy Association and the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems.

BMCC:

Continued from Page A1

suggested the college solicit donations from the college's unions or start GoFundMe pages to help save the positions.

"I'm throwing any noodle that'll stick to avoid losing this much talent," he said.

But Green said BMCC needed to look for a way to sustainably operate, and while fundraising drives could help in the short term, it couldn't offer a long-term solution for the college's fiscal issues.

After about a 30-minute discussion, the board voted 5-2 to approve the staffing cuts. Puzey and board member Heidi Van Kirk

voted against the motion.

The latest round of staff reductions nearly completes a rough 12-month period for BMCC. The college cut 23 positions in May 2019, five positions from its corrections education program earlier this spring, and now another 14 reductions.

In an interview after the meeting, Green said she understood the impact

the cuts would have on the services the college offers and morale.

But she added that the restructuring the college is making at the supervisory level and the new initiatives BMCC is starting would put the college on the path to success.

"BMCC is choosing opportunities over closing," she said.