

RANCH

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"In the face of present and future water scarcity, modernizations like this will only become more imperative," he said. Ditching flood irrigation may also have a positive effect on water quality, Maxwell said, reducing the amount of standing water in fields that can become contaminated with sediment, bacteria and toxins before draining back into streams.

Water saved through the irrigation upgrades will be transferred back into the Lostine River, which harbors summer chinook and steelhead populations. Wolfe Ranch will also vol-

untarily abstain from irrigating in August and September, when the river reaches critically low water levels.

The changes may allow Wolfe Ranch, a sixth-generation family operation, to begin growing more high-value food crops, which could have a ripple effect down the entire Wallowa County agricultural industry. Local businesses are already slated to provide approximately \$2 million in construction materials and labor.

"Production and economics must always be taken into consideration with projects like these," Maxwell said. "This will have positive implications for the landowner and the local economy."

The Freshwater Trust has been working with farms and ranch-

es on the Lostine River for more than a decade, Maxwell said, after chinook runs were nearly wiped out in the 1990s. The organization was also awarded \$114,265 from the Water Resources Department last year to study whether irrigation efficiencies could help protect salmon on upper Catherine Creek in Union County.

Woody Wolfe, owner of Wolfe Ranch, said water scarcity and quality issues aren't going to simply go away.

"Projects like this help further the responsible use of our natural resources while benefiting the environment," Wolfe said.

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Speaker urges unity

By Claire Withycombe
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A few thousand demonstrators gathered on Oregon's Capitol mall Saturday in a show of solidarity one day after the inauguration of President Donald J. Trump.

Keynote speaker Shelaswau Bushnell Crier, a former Willamette University law professor and former vice president of the Salem-Keizer NAACP, pointed to these divisions — historic and current — within Oregon and called for unity.

Crier said that, at first, she wasn't sure, as a black woman, whether she would be welcomed to join the ranks of post-inaugural women's marches in Oregon, or whether she was merely an "afterthought." For many years, Crier said, "wom-

en" did not always mean all women. For example, women's restrooms in the Jim Crow era distinguished between "Ladies" and "Colored Ladies."

"Division has been a tool to keep all of us subjugated," Crier said.

And divisions are not just a thing of the past: The mother of a son who attends the University of Oregon, Crier said she wondered whether she should withdraw him from the school after the news emerged this autumn of a white law professor there hosting a Halloween party in blackface. On second thought, she said, "hell no" to that, and demanded "to be seen" — as a woman, as a person of color and as an American.

Crier invited demonstrators to attend public meetings, defend civil rights, and demand a "seat at the table."

RACE

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The 2015 and 2016 winner, Brett Bruggeman, 46, of Great Falls, Montana, took second place this year in an exciting finish — just one minute behind Mumford with a time of 35 hours 36 minutes. Bruggeman also took the ECX Veterinarian's award for Best Cared-for Team. He finished the race with just 8 dogs, dropping four tired or foot-sore dogs only 45 miles into the course.

Ironically, Mumford won using a dog team owned and trained by Bruggeman's son, Spencer.

"I was given a great team,

already conditioned and trained to run this race," Mumford said. "Brett really handed the race to me."

In another nail-biter, Clayton Perry won the 100-mile race, finishing in 22 hours, 52 minutes — only two minutes ahead of second place winner Bino Fowler. Both mushers have competed in the ECX previously, with Fowler winning the 2015 race in a record time of 17 hours, 51 seconds. Both mushers have also won the coveted "Best-Cared-for Dogs" award in the past.

Local talent dominated the shorter races. Morgan Anderson, 17, a high school senior in Enterprise, captured the 62-mile-total "Pot" race,

which consists of two 31 mile races run on two consecutive days. Her total time was 7 hours and 53 minutes. Anderson competed in the Junior race in 2015.

Austrian exchange student Charlotte Burkhard, 16, who lives with Morgan and her family, won the Junior race with a time of 3 hours 1 minute.

It was a year when, for some racers, the biggest challenge was just getting to the event.

Bino Fowler, Dave Bush and Gabe Dunham, all 100-mile racers, drove over icy and often officially closed highways from their homes in Bend. The normal seven-to-eight hour trip took 18-to-20 hours, chaining up multiple times, inching around wrecks, stranded semi's and disabled vehicles. At one chain-up spot, Dave Bush started to lay out the chains. He slipped on the ice; the truck chains flew into the air, and struck him hard enough to knock him out for a few minutes.

"It was not a fun trip," Bush said.

The trip from the south was equally adventurous. With Interstate 84 closed at Ontario, Neil Bowlen of Park City, Utah, and John Kunzler of Vernal, Utah, resorted to maps and GPS to find a way north past Ontario and into Baker Valley. They caravanned, the Bowlen's

Toyota following Kunzler's bigger one-ton Dodge truck. Their arduous journey included following a snowplow along Highway 203 out of Baker City towards Union and LaGrande.

"We thought we had it made," Kunzler said, "until the plow stopped and turned around. The driver said he couldn't go any farther. He said we should go back." The Kunzlers and Bowlens didn't flinch. They kept going.

"The drifts were four-foot high and sometimes we had no idea where the road was," Bowlen said.

The two mushers, their dogs, and handlers missed the Wednesday vet check, but still got to Joseph on Wednesday evening about 9 p.m., just in time to draw their numbers for the 200 mile race and chow-down at the potluck dinner, which was just ending when they drove in.

The drive from Seattle or Cle Elum wasn't any easier, either. Connie Starr, of Cle Elum, Washington, recounted driving past two "Road Closed" signs—one on the freeway, and the other on Highway 204 over Tollgate.

"We drove past one state patrol car that maybe didn't see us," she said. "On the Tollgate highway, though, a patrolman stopped us and asked what we were doing out there. He just advised us to go really slow, as

there was a semi being towed up the hill in front of us. We got around it all. But it was pretty icy out there." Star, her handler, and her dogs arrived in Enterprise just as the vet check was ending Wednesday afternoon.

As the race started Thursday, snow fell on icy trails. Five to 10 miles out, several racers encountered trouble. Maeve Waterman's team slipped off the edge of a steep, icy embankment and slid about 100 vertical feet down a near cliff.

"I had to cut some of the dogs loose to get them back up the slope," Waterman said.

No-one was hurt, but Search and Rescue was called to ensure that Waterman and her dogs made it safely back up the slope.

A little farther along the trail, Brendan Jackson encountered a similar fate when his sled skidded off the trail and over a cliff, dragging all 12 dogs with it. Musher Bino Fowler stopped, anchored his team to a tree, and then helped Jackson right his sled and pull all 12 dogs back up the cliff and onto the trail.

Drifts made the trails slow and hazardous to travel. An 80-MPH gust tipped Gabe Dunham's sled over while she was traveling. Drifts obscured the trail, and in some places, mushers had to snowshoe as far as two miles ahead of the sled,

and then return to their dogs to ensure they could guide their team along the proper course.

"It was blowing so hard," said 100-mile-race musher and Iditarod finisher Steve Madsen, "you couldn't see any dogs in front of you. It was like a hurricane. My dogs completely lost the trail, and in one place they had to belly-crawl up a cliff to get back to it."

Despite bad trail conditions and hazardous travel, mushers had praise for the support and professionalism of the 110-or-so volunteers who make the Eagle Cap Extreme happen each year.

"It's an extremely challenging course," said musher and last year's 200-mile winner Brett Bruggeman. "But it is extremely well-organized. I really feel at home here. I'll be back again."

About 150 people — mushers, volunteers, sponsors, and supporters — gathered at the Saturday night Awards Banquet to reprise the race, hear musher's stories, and learn who won. Head veterinarian Kathleen McGill presented the coveted Best Cared-for Team awards to 200-miler Brett Bruggeman and 100-miler Bino Fowler.

ECX public relations manager Troy Nave was presented with the Terry Heimsly award for his years of outstanding volunteer service.




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