



County joins Lostine Corridor safety project suit

Environmental groups oppose logging in area

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa County Board of Commissioners has voted to file as an intervenor in the lawsuit filed by environmental groups Oregon Wild and Hells Canyon Preservation Council to stop the Lostine Corridor Safety Project.

The project is an attempt by the U.S. Forest Service to remove hazardous trees and allow some logging while also performing proscribed fire

treatment along the 11-mile corridor, which the Forest Service contends is at high to extreme risk for wildfire.

The suit alleges that the Forest Service project violates the law on several counts: The Forest Service violated the National Environmental Policy Act by categorically excluding the project from environmental analysis and not using a collaborative process to develop the project, which they contend is mandated under the categorical exclusion.

Western Resources Legal Center will file the petition on the county's behalf and represent the county if the petition is successful. Intervenor status will allow the county to participate in the lawsuit process without permission of the litigants.

“THIS IS IN WALLOWA COUNTY. IF WE DON’T HAVE STATUS, THEN NO ONE DOES.”

Susan Roberts
Wallowa County Commissioner

Commissioner Todd Nash said after the July 3 vote that the commissioners are grateful for the legal center's efforts on the county's behalf.

Nash also said the lawsuit made him question the legitimacy of the two environmental groups as collaborators. “These two groups do not deserve a seat at the table when it comes to real solutions for our forests and community well-being,” he said.

Commissioner Susan Roberts said the initial suit left the county with lit-

tle choice but to petition the court. The county has done it in other matters, such as wolf de-listing.

“The Lostine Corridor Project is an issue of the same import to the folks and visitors in Wallowa County,” Roberts said. “That corridor needs something done, and this is a pretty good cross-section of folks who worked on it ... We really need to do something in that corridor to preserve human life and animal -- and the scenery itself.”

Roberts added that the commissioners are there to serve and protect the people they represent, and the petition is one way they can do that.

“We would be derelict if we did not do it,” Roberts said.

She said that during the 2005 Community Wildfire Protection Plan, the Lostine Corridor was at the top of the list to receive fire treatment.

“I would guess that we have thousands of people go up that corridor every year, and their safety, and the safety of the people who live in the corridor is important,” she said. “Here we are in 2017 updating the plan and nothing has been done in all these years. It's in worse shape.”

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FIDDLING IN WALLOWA

Photos by Paul Wahl/Chieftain



If it was an Irish jig you were hoping for, John Weed is the fellow to play the tune. Weed, who has lived and taught in Ireland, was one of the instructors at the Wallowa Fiddle Tunes Camp 2017 in Wallowa last week. Here, he performs with his fellow instructors at the Wallowa Fiddle Tunes Camp 2017 on Thursday evening on the courthouse lawn in Enterprise. Above: Ethen De Avilla of Albany, Ore., joined his classmates for the final performance Friday after a week of studying and fun at the Wallowa Fiddle Tunes Camp 2017 in Wallowa.

Enterprise City Hall hits reset button

New digs announced; recovery projects underway after fire

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

Enterprise's municipal government is digging out of the mess left by a fire July 10, and making plans to rise from the ashes.

Enterprise City Hall is temporarily located at 117 E. Main Street, on the main floor of the EM&M building in downtown Enterprise across from the Wallowa County Courthouse. The offices were formerly those of Dr. Rusty Woods.

The State Fire Marshal has determined the source of the fire as a fluorescent light in City Administrator Michele Young's office.

The ballast failed, most likely due to age, and the hot ballast from the light fixture fell on a seat and the air conditioner fanned the fire quickly.

It is the same cause of fire as the one that destroyed the Elks Lodge in 2014, Young said.

The Enterprise Fire Department, Joseph Fire Department, La Grande Rural Fire, Wallowa County Sheriff's Office, Enterprise Police Department and Oregon State Police

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Joseph loses two key city employees

By Steve Tool
Wallowa county Chieftain

In what Joseph Mayor Dennis Sands called “the grimmest day in my nine years as mayor,” the city learned of the impending loss in two weeks of two of its key employees: Donna Warnock, the city's administrator and recorder and Jim Lewis, the city's public works director. Their resignations are effective Aug. 2.

The two employees announced their decision at an executive session followed by an emergency city council meeting on Monday evening.

At the emergency session, the council voted unanimously to accept Warnock's and Lewis' resignation and pay for Warnock's health insurance for one year after her departure. The council also worked out a tentative agreement with Lewis for his services to supervise city workers during an August street-paving project.

Much of the rest of the session focused on strategy for finding replacements for the two employees.

Warnock served the city for 24 years. Lewis was already retired from the city's public works department and working in a supervisory capacity until the city could find someone to take the job on a permanent basis. He has worked nearly 24 years for the city.

Warnock worked as assistant to the city recorder for 17 years before being named administrator. Warnock succeeded Noma McDaniel, who had been city recorder for 15 years before her retirement in 2011.

Library group seeking grant

By Paul Wahl
Wallowa County Chieftain

If a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, the Wallowa Valley Library Foundation Board has around 998 remaining to take in their effort to form a library district in the county.

The group adopted leadership and began the quest to place the district on the 2018 ballot several weeks ago.

Kim Witherrite of Imnaha is chair and Autumn Wilburn of Enterprise vice chair. Maggie Holcomb of Wallowa serves as secretary and treasurer. Other members include Lorien James of rural Enterprise, Kay Sawin and Kirsten Rohla of Joseph and Tamara da Silva of Enterprise.

The first formal motion was to move ahead with applying for a grant from Oregon's Library Services and Technology Act Program. The application is expected to be completed later this month or early August.

According to Wilburn, the money would be used to pay a consultant to conduct a feasibility analysis on the proposal to form a district. Finishing touches were being put on the application last week. The maximum the Wallowa County group can request is \$30,000, which Wilburn said is approximately amount the study is expected to cost.

Although consultant selection would come after awarding of the grant, the nod is expected to go to Ruth Metz of Ruth Metz Associates in Portland, who has helped

other groups in the state form library districts.

The consultant would also help with the political and public engagement process, district boundaries, a service plan and a three year budget, as well as determining the tax rate. All of those are required to qualify for a ballot slot.

“We plan to engage the public early and often in this process,” said Wilburn. “That's very important.”

While part of that strategy has been word of mouth, the board has also taken a step into cyberspace.

A Facebook page has opened at Wallowa County Citizens to Save the Library. As of Friday, it had 48 members.

“There is a lot of info to gather in

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