

Dam breach in Washington to cost owner \$2.5M

By Don Jenkins
For the Chieftain

A Florida company has agreed to pay \$115,000 in fines and fund a 10-year, \$2.5 million project to repair damage to a creek caused when its dam breached last year on a southeast Washington ranch once owned by Ernest Hemingway's oldest son.

The resulting flood closed the main artery between Enterprise and Lewiston, Idaho, for a time.

A section of the earthen dam on the property in Asotin County gave away April 13, 2017, releasing an estimated 9 million gallons of water, sediment and debris down Rattlesnake Creek.

A huge pile of uprooted trees collected at the bottom of the grade and a jagged edge was ripped into the asphalt.

Portions of the damage are visible to motorists today.

The primary bridge near Boggan's Oasis was still standing, but another nearby span didn't fare as well. A metal bridge across Rattlesnake Creek was destroyed, taking out access to Kevin Botts' ranch. The cost to repair the span was estimated at \$100,000.



Courtesy Photo

A Florida company will pay a fine and repair damage caused by the breach of its dam north of Enterprise just off Hwy. 3.

Rattlesnake Creek is an important tributary to the Grand Ronde River and both provide habitat for fish protected by the Endangered Species Act. Summer steelhead use the creek for spawning, rearing and migration.

Washington State Department of Ecology announced the agreement with the current owner of Bonasa Breaks Ranch last week.

The breach severely damaged fish habitat, Ecology's water quality program manager, Heather Bartlett, said in a statement. "The dam break caused erosion, loss of thousands of mature trees that provided shade to cool water temperature, and sent boulders downstream and blocked migrating fish. Restoring Rattlesnake Creek is essential."



Courtesy Photo

Debris remains beside Hwy. 129 just across the Oregon border into Washington, the site of a flood caused by a dam break.

The dam was built in the '60s or earlier and had been enlarged without state permits in 2006-07, according to a post-breach investigation by Ecology's Dam Safety Office. Engineers reported that the breach was most likely caused by an inadequate spillway that led to water over-topping the dam.

Construction flaws would have prevented the state from issuing permits to enlarge

the dam, according to the investigation.

The 18-foot-tall, 414-foot-wide dam held back a 4.3-acre pond used for fish rearing and recreation, according to Ecology. The breach flooded a six-mile stretch of the creek leading to the Grande Ronde River.

The ranch was acquired in 2004 from Jack Hemingway's widow by a limited liability company registered in Ponte

Vedra Beach, Fla., according to public records. Efforts to reach the company's agent, Stephen Croskrey, who signed the agreement with Ecology, were unsuccessful.

Jack Hemingway was born to the famous writer in 1923 and died in 2000. He bought the property as a hunting and fishing retreat in 1990, according to a 2001 story by Forbes magazine.

The property's owner will pay a \$15,000 fine for failing to obtain permits to enlarge the dam and \$100,000 for violating the state's water quality law.

Over the next decade, the ranch must meet deadlines to plant trees and shrubs, remove fish barriers and create habitat. The ranch could face fines of up to \$500 a day for failing to keep on schedule, according to its agreement with Ecology.

The water and sediment released by the breach damaged a vacation trailer, flooded a public road, and damaged a bridge and highway, but no one was injured, according to Ecology records. The ranch paid the state Department of Fish and Wildlife \$72,240 this year to rebuild a bridge across the creek.

Commissioner-elect Dunn moves ahead with campaign promise

Advisory committee proposal goes to commissioners

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain



Dunn

Wallowa County Commissioner-Elect Bruce Dunn submitted his proposal to establish a Human and Social Resource Advisory Committee for the county to his future workmates.

The committee was part of Dunn's campaign platform and a way to bring stakeholders to

the table to work together to solve Wallowa County issues — and to limit the influence of outside ideas and programs designed for very different cul-

tures and landscapes. "We help ourselves move forward," he said during his campaign for County Commissioner. "We don't look for another government program or money."

Dunn has extensive experience with Wallowa-centric committees, having served as chairman of the Wallowa County Natural Resource Advisory Committee for two decades.

That panel was created to review implementation of agricultural, forest and natural resource provisions of Wallowa County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

"I think NRAC has been a

success in the sense that it's connected resources users from a lot of different levels, from agencies to resource users on the ground level," said Commission Chair Todd Nash.

Dunn's experience with NRAC and advising county commissioners informed his belief, repeatedly expressed throughout his campaign, that the county "needs a plan and we need a strategy."

The mission of Dunn's committee would be to address a broad range of issues, coordinate efforts and eliminate duplication of programs and maintain a tight focus on what is best for Wal-

lowa County. The 14-18 members of the committee would be drawn from the following areas of expertise:

City government, law enforcement, tourism, nutrition, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, library, family services, mental health, physical health, education, small business, senior services, fair board, disabled services, veteran affairs, physical fitness, real estate, economic development, land use planning and marketing.

"I don't know how often these groups talk to one another," Dunn said. "The more people you have, the more ideas you get."

Commissioners have indicated approval of Dunn's proposal.

"We have experts in a lot of different areas in Wallowa County, and we as individual commissioners can't be expected to be experts in all the different fields," Nash said. "Bruce Dunn's proposed committee would bring that (broad) work group together."

The committee would meet monthly or perhaps quarterly. The board of commissioners would appoint members of the committee, but those interested in being on the committee are encouraged to contact commissioners to express their interest.

True Value
BARGAINS OF THE MONTH
While supplies last.

YOUR CHOICE
12.99

Duracell®
16-pk. AA or AAA Batteries E 137 963, 962 B12

8-pk. C or D Batteries
or 4-pk. 9V Batteries, 13.99
E 850 605, 633, 674

M-F 8AM-6PM • SAT 8AM-5PM • SUN 9AM-3PM

Hurricane Creek Road
Enterprise, Oregon
541-426-3116

WALLOWA COUNTY
GRAIN GROWERS

BEHIND EVERY PROJECT IS A
True Value
Sale Ends 8/31/18

Help is free and confidential 24/7

Visit OPGR.org or call 1-877-695-4648 (MY-LIMIT)

Building Healthy Families
Wallowa County Prevention
207 E Park St, Enterprise, OR 97828
541-426-9411

COME MEET THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WRLC

Caroline Lobdell

Cloverleaf Hall
Enterprise
August 17th
8am

Caroline has extensive experience with complex litigation cases and contested case hearings and currently serves as the Executive Director and Clinical Law Professor for the Western Resources Legal Center. Caroline's practice is focused on agricultural law, administrative law, timber law, water law, mining law public lands, environmental and natural resources law. She is a frequent speaker on emerging laws affecting natural resource users and has been awarded the Oregon Cattlemen's Top Industry Promoter Award, Oregon Cattlemen's Exceptional Leadership and Service Award and the Oregon Women for Agriculture's award to agriculture award.

Western Resources Legal Center

10th Annual Wallowa Resources Barn Dance & Auction

Saturday, August 25th - 5 p.m. 'til late
LIVE MUSIC, LOCALLY CATERED FOOD & NO-HOST BAR

14 Amazing Auction Items

- ★ 6 NIGHTS STAY IN HAWAII
- ★ MINAM LODGE RETREAT FOR 2
- ★ GUIDED ANTLERLESS ELK HUNT FOR 5
- ★ SNAKE RIVER 5 DAY RAFTING TRIP
- ★ 4 NIGHTS STAY IN BAJA, CA
- ★ GUIDED FISHING TRIP
- ★ AND MUCH MORE!

All proceeds help Wallowa Resources promote land stewardship, job creation, sustainable energy and youth education

THE BLUE BARN
63327 TENDERFOOT VALLEY RD
JOSEPH, OR

TICKETS ARE \$35 (PRESEALE ONLY BY 8/19)
AVAILABLE AT WALLOWARESOURCES.ORG, WR BOARD MEMBERS, OR THE BOOKLOFT.
QUESTIONS? CALL 541.263.0648