

Walden fields forestry, immigration, economic questions at Town Hall

By Ellen Morris Bishop
Wallowa County Chieftain

U.S. 2nd District Congressman Greg Walden explained his recent work, listened to constituents, and answered questions at a town hall meeting in Wallowa on Sunday, June 30. About 30 people attended the meeting. It was part of Walden's 5 Day, 942-mile town pre-4th of July sprint to hold 13 town halls.

Four concerns dominated the meeting: Timber and other natural resource issues, health care and Medicare, robo calls, and immigration.

Walden kicked off the meeting with a summary of his recent legislative work.

"The improvements to the farm bill that we made last year are now law," he said. Many of those apply to timber harvest on federal lands, including the application of "Categorical Exclusion" (CE) to the harvest and management of tracts up to 3000 acres to get action for disease and insect infestation, hazardous fuels reduction, and collaborative working landscape projects. Walden's work on the Farm Bill has also allowed expanded good neighbor policy so that states and local governments can play a bigger role in working with the Forest Service to get ahead of problems, Walden said.



Oregon Congressman Greg Walden fields questions on timber salvage and other topics at his town hall meeting June 30 at the Wallowa Senior Center.

"But there is more that we need to do, he said. Walden is advancing the Resilient Federal Forest Act that "...provides the ability to clean up the forest after fires, remove burned, dead trees while they still have value, and replant forests for the next generation," he said. "Too often these trees just rot and fall over and produce fuel for the next fire. I'd like to see us get in there in a timely basis, get

the burned dead timber out of there on a timely basis."

Harvesting larger diameter trees can also contribute to forest health, Walden noted. "We are still stuck with the 21" diameter rule on the east side, which I think was put in by Clinton administration but now stands in the way of timely scientific and active forest management, so we would get rid of that."

Continuing his emphasis on harvesting trees killed by fire, Walden noted that 75% of carbon emissions occur after the fire as the wood and burned materials decay. "So if you are concerned about emissions its good to limit the fuels and then get the fires out," he said.

Walden's other major accomplishment has been his work to limit "robocalls". There were 47.8 billion unwanted, spoofed and illegal robocalls in America last year. The 541 area code received 12.8 million of them.

So Walden has introduced the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act. It empowers the FCC to track calls from overseas and requires U.S. carriers to use authentication technology that can block disguised or "spoofing" calls. "Your phone may show a call coming in from a Wallowa County number," Walden said, "but it's coming from India or somewhere."

When time came for questions, several Wallowa County residents expressed concerns that their Medicare benefits were not able to cover needs that included higher technology hearing aids or admission just for observation to a hospital.

Forest Service management and harvest—or lack thereof—from the 2017 Grizzly Fire prompted questions and comments about forestry. Issues included

the movement of bugs and diseases moving from the burned area onto private forested lands.

"We have a lot of diseased trees that are over the 21" and we cannot harvest those and get them out of the system to take care of the disease problem. It doesn't make sense to have to harvest the young trees that are growing and leave the dead and diseased ones behind," said one frustrated landowner.

Several other people questioned Walden about his response to the ongoing immigration crisis at the southern border, especially for children. In response, Walden explained that he had voted for a senate bill that provided strictly humanitarian care for asylum-seekers. "The bill is all humanitarian aid," he said. "It provides up to 2.88 billion for care of unaccompanied minors and others. There is no funding for a wall in that bill."

"The border is very much a humanitarian crisis," Walden said. "This is the safest many of these people have been since they left their home countries because now they are out of the hands of the coyotes and away from the drug cartels they just marched through. We are taking care of the children as fast and as best we can. We never should have separated those kids at

the border in the first place. That was wrong. I voted last July to prevent that from ever happening again."

The last major issue raised at the meeting came from commissioner Todd Nash. It was a wholly economic one.

"The commodity prices that we see here at the ground level have not kept pace with inflation," he said. "I did some calculations and going back to 1959, a \$500 calf would be worth about \$1870 today, just on the basis of inflation. But today, calves are worth about \$750. Timber prices the same way. We'd be up over \$1500 for Doug fir — we get \$300 most of the time. The trade policies we were hoping this president would capture for the rural areas are not there. When I talked with Sonny Perdue last summer he said "Be patient." And there is, or was, a level of patience, but that's running out."

Walden seemed to agree but offered little consolation except to hope that newly opened negotiations with China and elsewhere would improve commodity prices and demand for Wallowa County producers. "I've never been a big tariff fan," he said. "The clock's ticking. If we don't get these agreements nailed soon, it's likely that we'll be losing market share for wheat and other commodities that we raise."

Judge extends order against Hammonds' grazing allotments

By George Plaven
Capital Press

PORTLAND — A federal judge on Friday extended a temporary restraining order against two Eastern Oregon ranchers, preventing them from grazing cattle on a pair of public allotments.

Environmental groups sued the government in May over reissuing grazing permits for Dwight and Steven Hammond, whose imprisonment for setting arson fires sparked the 2016 occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge near Burns.

The lawsuit, filed by the Western Watersheds Project, WildEarth Guardians and the Center for Biological Diversity, seeks to overturn the Hammonds' grazing permit, which was reissued by former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in January. President Donald Trump pardoned the Hammonds in July, 2018.

The environmental groups have requested a preliminary injunction against grazing cattle on the Mud Creek and Hardie Summer allotments near Steens Mountain while the lawsuit is pending to protect populations of sage grouse and redband trout.

U.S. District Judge Michael Simon issued a temporary restraining order against grazing on the allotments. The order was set to expire July 2.

During Friday's hearing, Simon extended the order through July 17, allowing more time for attorneys to submit additional evidence in the case.



Capital Press File/Capital Press

Cattle graze in Eastern Oregon. A federal judge has extended a temporary restraining order preventing ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond from grazing cattle on two allotments.

Simon said he will rule on the preliminary injunction by then, though he will need time to review the new material.

Originally, Stephen Odell, an attorney for the federal government, had proposed a compromise on the injunction in which the Hammonds would have refrained from grazing on Mud Creek in 2019, and to reducing grazing on Hardie Summer from 50% utilization to 30%. But, he said, the sides could not come to an agreement.

Both Dwight and Steven Hammond were at the hearing. Steven Hammond declined to talk about the case.

The hearing proceeded with seven hours of testimony from witnesses, who discussed

how cattle grazing would affect the sage grouse and redband trout.

Clait Braun, a sage grouse expert who has studied the bird since 1973, said he was "shocked" by habitat conditions on the Mud Creek allotment due to grazing and wildfire. He estimated it could take up to 60 years for the land to recover, and said it should not be grazed for the foreseeable future.

"It is going to take time for forbs and native grasses to become re-established," Braun said.

Boone Kauffman, a professor of forest ecology at Oregon State University, said cattle also tend to prefer grazing in cooler, greener riparian areas before

going to the uplands. That can lead to overgrazing, trampling streambanks and harming water quality, he said.

Matthew Obradovich, a wildlife biologist for the Bureau of Land Management Burns District, pushed back against the notion that cattle grazing is universally harmful to habitat. Grazing can help keep down fine fuels on the range that are driving bigger and hotter wildfires, he said.

Obradovich also said grazing on the allotments would not pose significant harm to sage grouse on either the Mud Creek or Hardie Summer allotments.

For Simon to grant a preliminary injunction, the plaintiffs must prove that grazing will cause irreparable harm to the species. Neither allotment has been grazed for the last five seasons.

Both the Oregon Farm Bureau and Harney County, Ore., also filed briefs opposing an injunction.

"The consequences of a preliminary injunction on a rancher and their community can be extreme, and it should only be granted where the plaintiff has made a true showing of irreparable harm," the Farm Bureau wrote. "The harm alleged by plaintiffs in this case does not rise to this level, and OFB's membership is concerned about the precedent that would be set by this decision."

Harney County wrote that the injunction should be denied because halting grazing would exacerbate the risk of wildfire and negatively impact the local agricultural economy.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

No test of Attainer shall be required

To Hold public office.
That is a Religious Test.

I Suppose that is a Good Thing.
Behavior itself speaks Louder than Words.

But How about a Stupidity Test?

If you think turning Wolfs Loose in the Wild, is a good idia
Please Stand up. Make Yourself Known.

IN My oppinion, You Are Stupid,
unfit for office.

Suggestion: Do Not Sit down Again,

Move to the Back Door, pick-up Severance check on your way out.

Do Not Re apply.
When this state was first formed
The First Thing The Legislature did, Was to Remove the Wolf
Because it made cents.

How Long? Probably untill
Someones child gets Killed by Wolf.

Sound Logic Demands this
Ought NOT Happen.

Sincerely
Thomas B. Harrington
Joseph

Editor's note.
This letter was received at The Chieftain as a hand-printed mis-sive on Monday, July 1st.

The letter above is as accurate a reproduction of his letter as possible. Attempts to reach Mr. Harrington to confirm his intended usage and style were unsuccessful.

2019 JULY 12th - 13th **Joseph State Airport (KJSY)**

Wallowa County Fly-In

and Airshow

Friday July 12
Banquet at 5:30pm
Buy Tickets Online!

Saturday July 13
Admission: \$5. /Time: 7am-2pm
Airshow, Static Displays and Educational Hangar

Pancake Breakfast
\$ 10. + Admission /Time: 7-10am
(10 and under entry/eat FREE)

For more information about the event visit:
WallowaCountyFlyIn.com
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