

Cities adjust meetings to fit distancing guidelines

Bill Bradshaw
Wallowa County Chieftain

City governments in Wallowa County must take unusual measures in these days of the COVID-19 pandemic to continue to meet the legal requirements of access to the public and public meetings.

The Enterprise City Council, which next meets Monday, May 11, will offer a GoToMeeting option for the public to attend. Residents also can attend by phone at 1-800-650-3123,

with a call-in code of 336-949-525. City Administrator Lacey McQuead said some of the council members plan to attend in person and others will use the GoToMeeting format.

People who are present will maintain social distancing, she said. The meeting begins with a work session at 6 p.m. and the regular meeting at 6:30 p.m. A similar practice was held for the April meeting.

Public comment will be taken if submitted by noon the day of the meeting by

email at lmcquead@enterpriseoregon.org.

For more information, call city hall at 541-426-4196 or visit the city's website at enterpriseoregon.org or its Facebook page.

Wallowa is still holding in-person meetings, Mayor Gary Hulse said. "Right now, we're limiting it to one item on agenda so we can limit the number of people," the mayor said.

He said that with five councilmen and the recorder, four spaces are open. "We've been able to

space our meetings 6 feet apart," he said, adding that if they get more people, they may move to the fire station or outside.

At present, Wallowa is not planning any sort of virtual meeting. Hulse said that could change if they get many requests for it. The Wallowa council regularly meets the third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. in City Hall.

Joseph, on the other hand, has canceled the meeting that would normally be held Thursday, May 7, said

Larry Braden, city administrator. The Joseph council canceled the April meeting, as well.

Braden said he's not sure when the council's next meeting will be, but he'll know in a couple of weeks. He said the county commissioners have offered the use of a large meeting room in the basement of the Wallowa County Courthouse, if the Joseph council chooses to hold an in-person meeting. He said such a venue would allow for social distancing. A virtual meeting

option has produced some difficulties.

"That's been what the struggle is ... getting everybody on the same page" with a virtual meeting, Braden said.

On April 30, the council held a budget meeting where Braden presented the draft budget to the council. But that has to be approved in a regular meeting. He said that'll likely happen before the end of the month.

As for Lostine, there was no response to repeated calls to City Hall.

Court rejects lawsuit against grazing authorizations

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Environmentalists have failed to convince the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that grazing authorizations unlawfully harmed bull trout on seven allotments in Oregon's Malheur National Forest.

The appellate court has rejected allegations from the Oregon Natural Desert Association and Center for Biological Diversity that more than 100 federal grazing decisions — including permit approvals and operating instructions — violated the forest's management plan over a decade.

Contrary to the plaintiffs' claims, "the record amply demonstrates that the Forest Service is actively engaged in protecting bull trout habitats from the effects of livestock grazing by monitoring the effects of livestock grazing on various habitat indicators and implementing site-specific grazing limitations," the 9th Circuit said.

In 2018, a federal judge dismissed a lawsuit over



Cattle graze in the Malheur National Forest. A federal appeals court has rejected environmentalist claims against grazing on seven forest allotments.

grazing on the seven allotments that had originally been filed 15 years earlier, ruling that the plaintiffs hadn't proven grazing caused threatened bull trout populations to plummet in the Malheur and North Fork Malheur rivers.

The plaintiffs argued that each river should be able to support about 2,000 bull trout but instead contain only 50 individuals, which means grazing must be restricted enough to allow for the populations to recover.

The 9th Circuit has now determined the judge correctly ruled in favor of the U.S. Forest Service and 16 ranchers who rely on the allotments and intervened in the lawsuit.

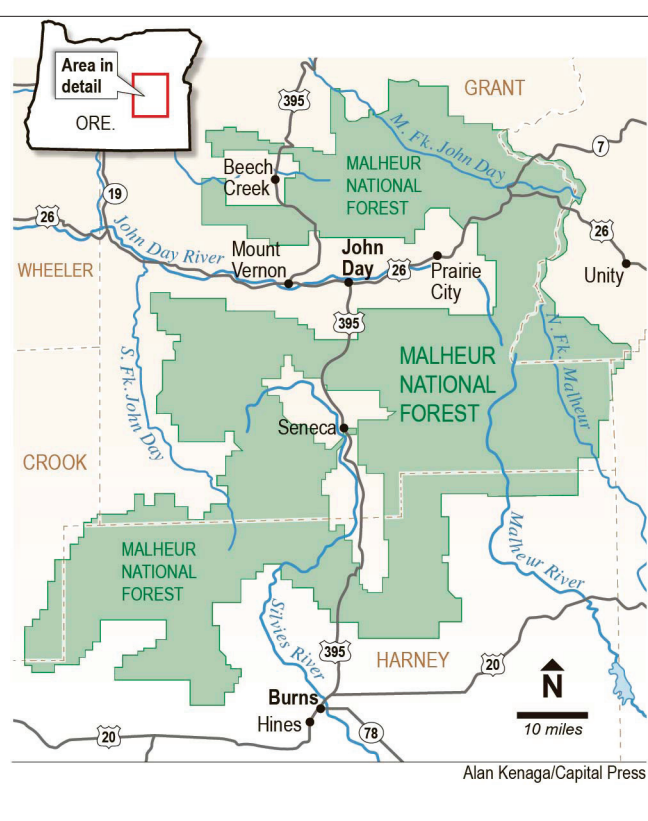
Under a federal strategy aimed at protecting the bull trout and other inland fish, the Forest Service must adjust or suspend grazing practices if "riparian management objectives" for stream health aren't met.

As indicated by the Forest Service's grazing curtailments, the agency "is

not only monitoring, but also enforcing plan standards related to the protection of bull trout habitats," the 9th Circuit said.

While the "continuing struggles of the bull trout" in the national forest are "undoubtedly troubling," the 9th Circuit cannot act as a "panel of scientists" and must "defer to the Forest Service's expertise" regarding grazing rules, according to the ruling.

Dams, irrigation, non-native species and other factors have also



affected the species, so the court "cannot effectively mandate, as ONDA would have us do, that bull trout numbers increase," the ruling said.

From a procedural perspective, the agency also isn't required to "analyze and show" in a written document that every grazing decision conforms with the forest plan, the 9th Circuit said. "Because the Forest Service was not obligated by statute, regulation, or caselaw to memorialize each site-specific grazing authorization's consistency with the forest plan, the absence of such a document is not in itself arbitrary and capricious."

Getting the greens in shape

Today, Alpine Meadows Golf Course looks like America's best kept front yard, but it didn't get that way overnight.

Weeks before the course officially opened the greens' crew of Mac Huff, Tristan Beck, Greg Oveson and Jon Hagan, spent many of the day clearing debris from last winter's fury. JD Hagan, greens superintendent, says, "With the many giant black willow trees on the course there's always tons of downed branches. The Johnson rake, Alpine Meadows purchased a few years ago, has lightened our load but there's still plenty of work to be done."

While JD and crew readied fairways/greens for opening, several volunteers were either making improvements in other areas of the course, or had done so in recent past.

Mike Reynolds set his sights sprucing up front entrance to clubhouse. He raked dried leaves, pulled thistles on both sides of fence, and set painted bumper logs in the parking lot. He also straightened the leaning light pole by the entry gate.

Chuck Haines, who is now remodeling the 'scoring booth' with the help of Mike Harshfield, built new steps to the #1 Tee box.

Another active volunteer, Ron Layton repaired cart paths and put down red cinder rock donated by EONL. Also, in early spring Layton removed the old BBQ brick pit and teetering light pole.

In regards to Covid-19 rule 'not touching',

TEE TIME

By Rochelle Danielson

Greg Oveson's idea of using pool noodles in greens' cups makes it safe to retrieve ball without removing flag sticks. During off-season, Oveson transported outdoor equipment out of town for repair. He and Tristan hauled mower reels to Buffalo Peak for sharpening.

In February several volunteers helped shovel snow off greens so fungicide could be put on. Again, Hagan commented, "Greens conditions are at their best due to actions taken earlier."

While Marvin Gibbs, clubhouse manager, claims he has nothing to do with outside improvements, he's ahead of the game inside. His friendly staff, Cheryl Kooch, Belinda Kuntz and Lil Harshfield, donned in colorful masks donated by Cindy Parks, are loaded with expertise. They're also efficient in wiping down golf carts.

President, Judy Ables says, "Thanks to all of you. It takes quite a team to make it possible for the golf course to work, and we're so lucky to have people who care for the course and are willing to pitch in."

And that my fellow golfers is why AMGC looks like America's 'best kept' front yard.

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