

Wallowa sites featured on new coalition map

By **RONALD BOND**
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — A pair of preserved land parcels within Wallowa County are part of a new map highlighting protected lands throughout Oregon.

The new “The Oregon I Am” map, which was released by the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, “highlights 81 different locations throughout the state that anyone can visit, all of them made possible in part by Oregon’s system of nonprofit land trusts,” a press release from COLT states.

Among the land on the map are the Zumwalt Prairie Preserve and the East Moraine above Wallowa Lake in Wallowa County.

The preserve is 33,000 acres of land in the northeast portion of the county, while the moraine covers about 1,800 acres near the lake. A major part of the project is awareness — letting residents throughout the state know about these locations.

“Not a lot of people know about it,” Kelley Beamer, COLT executive director, told the *Chieftain*. “It’s been protected for the public. Having it on the map reminds people it’s this vast, majestic prairie that changes every season. We wanted to celebrate that property.”

“The East Moraine is a symbol of community coming together to make sure that landscape is protected.”

In all, the 81 locations encompass more than 100,000 acres of land in the state. The coalition includes 30 nonprofits from throughout the state, including the Wallowa Land Trust.

“Many of their properties, or properties they’ve helped conserve, have been open to the public for years. But only now have they been compiled in one place and all of them visible on one map,” Beamer said in the release. “This is your go-to resource to discover a new family favorite picnic spot, or walk, or river-side hangout. And it’s an invitation for everyone living in Oregon to step outside and to safely connect to each other and the wonder of our lands.”

The land is a portion of more than 350,000 acres coal-

ition members have protected. “What was included in this map shows what we felt like a community was safe and accessible to bring community members,” Beamer said.

She noted that among the land not included is habitat that could be considered more sensitive, such as wet-land areas.

“These kind of represent the crown jewels people can enjoy safely,” she said.

The idea behind the map was one that formulated about a year ago from a desire to show more places to more people.

“After this last year, we knew there was a thirst for seeing some of Oregon’s special places and sharing our community with more Oregonians,” she said. “This is a map, but it is also a story about this incredible community of organizations.”

They are locations, Beamer added, that are not necessarily featured through other state entities.

“They are often hidden gems. They are not necessarily found on the Travel Oregon website,” she said. “I personally have been astounded the last eight years going to these places that are so special. It was the perfect moment to launch something that we could get out there and connect them to local land trusts.”

As for whether The Oregon I Am adds to its map, Beamer wants that to be the case.

“My hope is that we continue to expand it and update it on a continual basis,” she said. “I know Wallowa Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy and other groups are always looking at new places. I’m assuming there will be more.”

And she hopes it helps the communities around these locations, including in Wallowa County.

“Anyone who lives in Wallowa County knows what a special place it is,” she said. “I think Oregonians know there are really incredible gems to be visited. By having this on this map it really brings to light — it’s a call to adventure, come, stay and invest in the community. Anytime a map is produced and excites people it’s an opportunity to support local businesses.”

Enterprise puts hold on any new Airbnbs

Enacts 90-day moratorium with possible extension

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — A 90-day moratorium on any new Airbnbs in Enterprise was approved by the City Council during its meeting Monday, May 10.

A resolution affirming the three-month ban with the option to extend it for another 90 days was approved unanimously, despite some disagreement between council members over the rights of property owners.

City Administrator Lacey McQuead said she had reached out to Airbnb owners to get their input with only limited response.

“The Planning Commission held a meeting. I sent out nine invites to Airbnb owners within the city of Enterprise,” McQuead said. “There are 16 Airbnbs so that means seven of them are not registered with us. Out of the nine, one couple showed up, but I did get some input from some other Airbnb owners. (Enterprise resident) Stacy Green also attended the Planning Commission meeting. There was great conversation between them — they happened to be neighbors, so the one she was concerned about had someone attending.”

Still, McQuead seemed disappointed more Airbnb owners hadn’t responded.

“That was it,” she said. “Even with all the advertising and invitations to come to the Planning Commission meeting and I invited them to come to this meeting, as well. That was all that we received.”

NEOEDD assessment discussed

But one of the main issues seemed to be the availability of affordable housing.

McQuead presented a letter from the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District that she asked Mayor Ashley Sullivan to read into the record. The letter was largely about



Enterprise city Administrator Lacey McQuead, left, talks to Mayor Ashley Sullivan, center, and Public Works Director Ronnie Neil during the Enterprise City Council’s meeting Monday, May 10, 2021.

short-term vacation rentals in residential zones and the economic impact of them. The NEOEDD recently conducted a Community Needs Assessment to assess the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since January, NEOEDD conducted more than 70 interviews with a wide variety of community leaders and organizations.

“Like many other rural areas, housing-related challenges are widespread.”

Among the results of the assessment were:

- More affordable housing is needed for workforce and moderate-income families and individuals. A lack exists due to the conversion of residential housing to tourism lodging by absentee property owners and second homeowners.

- Limited rental options are available for tenants due to them being priced out of units because of increasing property values.

The letter also cited the real-dollar impacts.

- People working in lower-wage jobs ... have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The majority of jobs in the region pay less than \$15 per hour, while two adults working full time would each need to earn at least \$16.06 per hour to cover basic needs in a household with one child, \$19.88 per hour for two children and \$23.09 an hour for three children.

- Lack of affordable workforce housing, an aging population, the high cost of living and underemployment have negative effects on retaining a workforce.

The letter stated that since the city already has zoning ordinances, “education and outreach could help spread understanding of the permitting requirements involved and the process by which conflicts are addressed.”

The NEOEDD also urged the city to review Hood River’s example. That city recognized the benefits both of visitor lodging and the downside of converting limited housing to visitor use.

Councilmen David Elliott and Rick Freeman had a difference of opinion on property owners being able to do what they want with their property.

“Some of these places are just used as drop-off sites for drug dealers because they know no one is living there,” Elliot said, citing research he had done.

Freeman questioned the high rents some had cited, saying he owns two rentals and charges \$800 a month for each, considerably lower than the oft-cited figure of \$1,200 a month.

But both voted with the rest of the council to vote in favor of the 90-day moratorium. This came after the Planning Commission met with city attorney Wyatt Baum to determine how any change in municipal code

should be conducted. The council expects to gather more information during the 90-day moratorium to determine if it warrants extension.

McQuead said interest in Airbnbs hasn’t subsided.

“In the time between the last council meeting and the Planning Commission meeting, I’ve had seven phone calls from people in the city of Enterprise interested in opening Airbnbs,” she said. “Three of them were approved based on the fact that they submitted their applications prior to the meeting; the rest of them had not. ... Every single one of the persons interested in an Airbnb are in a residential zone.”

Concerns over where the Airbnb owners would live also was an issue.

“The biggest issue we face right now is that a lot of people are moving out of town and they’re wanting to turn their property into Airbnbs,” McQuead said. “The commission’s concerns were that the property’s not going to be taken care of. Five other people who called me are not even going to be in the state of Oregon anymore. That was a huge concern to the commission. Beyond that, the majority are up around the school, so they weren’t comfortable enough just leaving things as they are — allowing things to continue — without further review of the concerns.”

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ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

JERICHO PETERS

Enterprise’s Jericho Peters had a strong performance on May 4th at the Mac-Hi Three-way track meet. Peters took top honors in the 100 meters (11.24 seconds) and 200 (23.68), and was second in the long jump (18 feet, 4 inches). The senior posted three personal bests on the day, making him this week’s Athlete of the Week!

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