

Commissioners oppose 'Rivers Democracy Act'

Wyden, Merkley would add 404 miles of rivers in county to national designation

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — A resolution opposing a bill in the U.S. Senate that would expand the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to include waterways in Wallowa County was passed recently by the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners.

The "Rivers Democracy Act," a.k.a. S.192 introduced to the Senate by Oregon's Democrat Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, would add 404 additional miles of Wallowa County rivers, streams, gulches, draws and unnamed tributaries, most of which are not classified as rivers and are not free-flowing or do not carry water year around, according to the resolution read by Commissioner Susan Roberts during the commissioners' Wednesday, July 21, meeting.

As she read, the Wild and



Ellen Morris Bishop/Chieftain File

The Imnaha River flows through private lands 10 miles upstream from the town of Imnaha. The River Democracy Act of 2021, which Oregon U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley cosponsored, would redesignate 58 miles of the river from Indian Crossing to Cow Creek, including this area, as a Recreational River, and label 4 miles of the river, from Cow Creek to the mouth of the confluence with the Snake River, as Scenic. On Wednesday, July 21, 2021, the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution to oppose the legislation.

Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 was to preserve certain rivers with "outstanding natural, cultural and recreation values in a free-flowing condition" and it already includes 300 miles of Wal-

lowa County rivers. In addition, Roberts said, S.192 expands buffer zones along such waterways from a quarter-mile to a half-mile. This would affect "economic development, pub-

lic access, water resource management, forest and vegetation management, ranching and grazing and other responsible multiple-use activities on an estimated 240,000 acres of pub-

lic lands and an additional 16,000 acres of private land in Wallowa County," Roberts read.

The resolution says such "arbitrary land designations ... impose restrictions and additional federal bureaucracy on multiple-use land management activities and federal courts have upheld legal challenges to those activities..."

The resolution also notes that the county "has experienced severe wildfires that have threatened and displaced our citizens, damaged private properties, affected water resources, impacted recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat and other natural resource values and affected the county's economy."

Such wildfires have burned "unnaturally overgrown and fire-prone lands administered by federal land management agencies and those agencies have failed to adequately mitigate the risks to Wallowa County communities and natural resources."

S. 192 doesn't direct federal agencies to use tools at their disposal to reduce fire risk or restore lands after fires.

The resolution also noted that rural counties, their businesses and landowners were not consulted in the designation of waterways to include in the act. Only a "few select individuals and organizations" were consulted, the resolution reads.

Wallowa County's commissioners are not the first in Oregon to oppose the act. Early this month, Union County's commissioners voted to oppose it and in February, Grant County did likewise. There also is opposition to the act in Baker, Harney and other rural counties, according to Eastern Oregon Media Group papers.

Roberts said the act adds 4,700 miles in Oregon to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. She said spokesmen for the senators said "the intent is to have no effect. ... Well, intent is wonderful, but it's not in the legislation."

Copies of the county's resolution are to be sent to the state's congressional delegation, Gov. Kate Brown and the county's delegation in the Legislature. It also requests all lands and waterways in Wallowa County be removed from the legislation.

County applies for grant to set up youth center in Wallowa

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Wallowa County is working to establish a youth center in Wallowa after the county commissioners voted to apply for a \$75,160 Oregon Youth Development Council grant Wednesday, July 21.

Mandy Decker, director of the county Department of Youth Services, said the grant would help disadvantaged youths in Wallowa, particularly those who are considered at risk.

"There are not a lot of resources in Wallowa, like there are in Enterprise and Joseph," she told the commissioners.

She said the center would be a place for kids — particularly youths 12-16 years old — to have a rec room with a ping pong table, a foosball table, space for jobs skills and other classes. "It would be somewhere for kids to meet with their mentors and, as you just approved, we have youth employment kids down there," she said.

She was referring to the commissioners' earlier approval of the hiring of Lucas Powers and Chance Pendarvis in the county's Department of Youth Services.

Decker also presented the commissioners with a budget that will be included in the grant application. It would include \$31,200 for personnel, \$21,960 for operating costs, \$2,000 for supplies and materials, \$8,000 for equipment, \$2,000 for direct supports and assistance to youths and \$10,000

for administrative costs.

The grant application noted that Wallowa is particularly in need of such a facility. It stated that Wallowa's population of 817 is well below the poverty line and that 40% of the combined household income there is less than \$25,000. Most at-risk youths in Wallowa attend school sporadically and live with caregivers or parents who do not engage well with the school district. The city has no place for youths to hang out in a "prosocial environment." They're 20 miles from the county seat and many families do not have the transportation to get there for mental health appointments, parenting classes and prosocial activities. There is also a minimum of public transportation. These factors often lead to higher dropout rates and other things that negatively impact the youths of Wallowa.

The Oregon Youth Development Council is for youths ages 6-24 in a manner that supports educational success and career and workforce development with a focus on positive youth development, and is integrated, measurable and accountable, according to the OYDC website.

Decker said that within the budget is funding to pay someone to man the youth center. However, she said, if that should become an issue, she knows of parents in Wallowa who could help.

After the commissioners voted to approve the grant application, Decker said it is an "October grant" and

the county should find out in August if it's been awarded. She expected it would pay retroactively to July.

All three commissioners all expressed their appreciation to Decker for working on the youth project for Wallowa.

"We commend you for taking the time and effort to do something for Wallowa and to remind of our presence in Wallowa," Commissioner John Hillock said.

Fire concerns

In another matter, a landowner of property near the East Moraine expressed concern about recreationists who could start a fire there in light of the Elbow Creek Fire near Troy. He asked that the commissioners close the area to public access.

"I think that that's probably not going to happen because of all the recreational opportunities," said Jacob Hasslacher. "I'm not concerned about the horseback riders; I'm not concerned about the ranchers

and the local users of the land. I'm concerned about the people who don't understand what's going on (and through their practices inadvertently start a fire.) At the very minimum, I'm asking that the county commissioners put up signs at the gates saying, 'No fires, no campfires, no smoking, etc.' before something happens back there."

Hillock said he fully understood Hasslacher's concern. He said he had to take action Monday, July 19, when four campfires were discovered up the Lostine River. He said law enforcement was sent out and Forest Service personnel placed "no fire" signs in the area.

"I think we could have somebody make some signs and get them up for the rest of the season," Hillock said. "We are under a fire closure at this time and hopefully most people know that. ... We're watching what's going on."

Commissioner Todd

Nash said it shouldn't be an issue.

"We have a standing agreement to no fires up there," he said.

Addressing Katy Nesbitt, the county director of Natural Resources and Economic Development, Nash said, "Katy can probably get that whipped out in nothing flat."

She agreed to have temporary signs put up until more permanent ones are erected.

Signs can help, but Commissioner Susan Roberts expressed a bit of skepticism.

"You know, you can put up all the signs on the face of the Earth and ..." she said.

Other business

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved an inter-governmental agreement

between Wallowa County and Wallowa County Education Service District for information services. Stacey Fregulia, information technology director for the county, said the agreement is primarily to get part-time help for her.

"This is primarily to help me because I'm spread so thin," she said.

- Approved an inter-governmental agreement between Wallowa County and Oregon Health Authority for tort liability coverage as a provider for the Psychiatric Security Review Board.

- Approved bid of \$13,900 for a sound system at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds. Having been the only bid received, the fair board had recommended it be accepted.

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KNOW THE SIGNS

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Raised body temp Thirsty
Headaches Sweating heavily
Fatigue/Weakness
Poor coordination
Nausea/Vomiting Anxiety
Weak, rapid pulse

WHAT TO DO

Lie down in the shade or A/C
Cool compress or Tea towel
Cool shower or bath
Drink Water

HEAT STROKE

Delirious/Slurred speech
Headaches Nausea/Vomiting
Extreme thirst Rapid pulse
Deceptively cool skin
Body temp over 103°
Dry, swollen tongue

WHAT TO DO

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY
Reduce temperature until ambulance arrives

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Wallowa County Fair

FAIR SCHEDULE

Friday, Aug. 6	9:00am	Jr Rodeo begins
Saturday, Aug. 7	9:00am	4-H Dog Show
		Jr. Rodeo continues
Sunday, Aug. 8	Noon	4-H Horse Show begins
Monday, Aug. 9	8:00am	Open Class NON-PERISHABLE entries delivered to Cloverleaf Hall
	9:00am	4-H Exhibits delivered to Cloverleaf Hall Kitchen
Tuesday, Aug. 10	8:00am	4-H Horse Show continues
		Open Class Perishables to Cloverleaf
Wednesday, Aug. 11	10:00am	Cloverleaf Hall Opens
	Noon	Livestock Weigh-ins begin
	7:00pm	Team Roping Drawpot
Thursday, Aug. 12	8:30am	4-H/FFA Livestock Show begins
	10:00am	Cloverleaf Walk Opens
		Cloverleaf Hall Opens
Friday, Aug. 13	8:30am	4-H/FFA Livestock Show continues
	4:00pm	Bessie Bingo
	7:00pm	Team Roping Drawpot
Saturday, Aug. 14	10:00am	PeeWee Showmanspot
	11:00am	Games on the Grass
	1:00pm	FFA Barbecue
	3:00pm	4-H/FFA Fat Stock Sale

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