

Commissioners OK funding for public land projects

Work to be funded with SRS Act money

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The Wallowa County Board of Commissioners approved \$588,675 worth of projects on public lands Wednesday, Aug. 3, with Title II money received through the federal Secure Rural Schools Act.

The act provides critical funding for schools, roads and other municipal services to more than 700 counties across the U.S. and Puerto Rico, funding that comes mostly from public lands.

Commission Chairwoman Susan Roberts explained the three parts of the act. She said that Title I is money that comes directly into the county, 75% of which goes to the road department and 25% goes to schools. Title II is money that goes to projects on public lands. Title III can be used for such things as the sheriff's office and

work they do on the national forests.

"Years ago when this first came about, Title III was so hard to deal with, it was just onerous and so Wallowa County chose at that time not to do Title III, so all of our money is split between Title I and II," Roberts said.

Each year, the county will have to decide on how to divide money up. That would be affected by a hearing later that morning on the Road Service District voters will be asked to create in November.

"If folks pass that, we will be able to separate that money ... this way, the money goes to the Education Service District and the Road District, not the county," Roberts said. "They won't do their formula anymore and our PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) money should increase for the next couple of years and then we'll see after that, because none of it is set in stone."

Katy Nesbitt, the county's director of natural resources and economic development, discussed the process with

the commissioners.

"The county has traditionally run these projects ... and we vet them ... and then we give recommendations to the commissioners," she said. "This year, the Forest Service came out with the announcement at a different time of year and gave us too short a time period to get all the projects queued up for the tech committee, but the standing committee was able to look at all the projects on the Wallowa-Whitman (National Forest) except for two."

Nesbitt said projects aren't ranked because they came in after the standing committee met. One project is for weed control in the Umatilla National Forest, Nesbitt said.

"What we have done is zeroed out the (approximately) \$588,000 for the Wallowa-Whitman side,

meaning we've allocated out money to the projects that have been ranked so there's a zero-dollar amount," she said. "We had discussed keeping some back for next time and decided not to do that."

Nesbitt mentioned the vetting process that happens prior to it going to the commissioners.

"When something goes through the RAC—the RAC being the Regional Advisory Committee which Commissioner (Todd) Nash is a part of," Roberts interjected. "That Umatilla forest weed piece we have always done, so that is something to indicate to our members that we would like to see that move forward if it comes through the RAC."

Nesbitt said there should be a surplus on requests made for the Umatilla National Forest.



Hillock



Nash



Roberts

"On the Umatilla side, there's about \$85,000 to spend and we only have an application for about \$19,000," Nesbitt said.

Roberts was encouraged by that news.

Referring to the weed control project in the Wenaha Wilderness and Grand Ronde River area, Roberts said she hopes that although it was not ranked because it was submitted late, "I would encourage our board members on the RAC to see if they can husband through out of some of the remaining money that was left for the Umatilla."

Of the projects submitted, nine received a No. 1 priority ranking. The projects and their Title II requests are:

- Miller/Tyee Fence 2: \$47,700.
- Buck Creek Allotment-Sled fence: \$48,972.
- Wallowa County Canyonlands noxious weed management: \$51,092.
- Lower Jo riparian monitoring: \$27,560.
- Youth Trails Conservation Corps: \$30,000.
- Eagle Cap/Hells Can-

yon volunteer trail maintenance: \$29,700.

• Dougherty Campground well locate survey: \$15,900.

• Tepee Elk Allotment, Elk Pasture, Peavine Riparian Enclosure: \$55,544.

• Horse Creek/Cache Creek roads: \$61,525.

Receiving a No. 2 ranking with their requests are:

• Hells Canyon maintenance and weed treatment: \$27,805.

• Aspen Enclosure maintenance: \$20,145.

• Swamp Creek-Bennet Pasture fence: \$44,461.

Receiving a No. 3 ranking with its request is:

• The cleaning of 22 cattle guards: \$13,992.

The three items not ranked because they were submitted after the Forest Service's newer deadline and their requests were:

• Road drainage: \$84,279.

• Wallowa Resources youth crew: \$30,000.

• Wenaha Wilderness/ Grande Ronde River noxious weed control: \$28,514.

More complete descriptions of each project is available at the courthouse.

Oregon Department of Forestry withdraws fire-risk map

County objected to method used to create it

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Action to automatically appeal the listing of any property in Wallowa County as having a "high" or "extreme" risk of fire danger by the Oregon Department of Forestry seems to have been heard in Salem.

On Aug. 3, the Board of Commissioners decided that any properties designated as having high or extreme fire risk would be automatically appealed in hopes the ODF would reconsider.

"There's a lot of concern over the fire maps that have been put out and the way they were developed," Commissioner Todd Nash said. "There's concern that people have been put in 'high' or 'extreme' categories and wrongfully so and, in many cases, susceptible to fires."

Nash said Aug. 8 that it appears the actions of Wallowa County and some legislators prompted the state forester to re-do the fire risk map posted online on June 30.

Cal Mukumoto, Oregon state forester and director of the ODF, issued a statement the day after the commissioners' action. In the statement, Mukumoto said, "In response to input received since posting, we have decided to

remove the current iteration of the wildfire risk map from the Oregon Explorer and withdraw the notices sent. We will immediately begin working with Oregon State University on some refinements to improve the accuracy of risk classification assignments based on what we've heard from property owners thus far."

Mukumoto also said the appeals process, which gave landowners until Sept. 21 to appeal their designation, would "become moot." Any appeals that have been filed will be reviewed, the forester said.

Nash said Aug. 8 that he is unaware of any Wallowa County landowners who have appealed the designation.

He said Aug. 3 that the random way in which the ODF came up with the risk designation could have many unintended consequences. He said it opens landowners to fines from the state fire marshal, puts insurance companies on a heightened alert and those companies — in some cases — raise rates or cancel policies.

Nash was particularly critical of the methodology by which the fire maps were created to support Senate Bill 762. He said ODF contracted with OSU to create the maps, which used satellite imagery to map areas rather than sending out people to see the land firsthand.

"The map, itself, where people have houses in mid-

dle of irrigated pasture and because it's all one tax lot, it's all lumped together," he said.

During last week's meeting, Nash suggested landowners visit the ODF website where they can type in their address to see how their property is rated.

He said a more on-the-ground approach should have been used and the current maps should be withdrawn and reconfigured.

The commissioner said he does not know if OSU will actually send out individuals to view the sites of potential high or extreme risk designations.

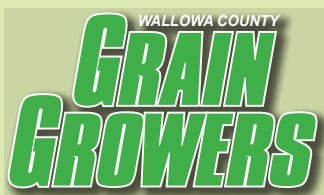
"We'll find out, won't we?" he said.

Nash remains concerned for the risk of fire in the

county, but has faith in landowners to mitigate that risk, such as with the Firewise Communities that have been created here.

"Our state doesn't think we have common sense ... they're going to map it out from a satellite and declare what category you're in," he said. "This is typical of the current dynamic of the legislative makeup. The impact it has is 100% on rural communities."

Commission Chairwoman Susan Roberts asked Nash for a motion on the matter and he moved that the county automatically appeal any "high" or "extreme" designations by the state, a motion approved unanimously.



IMPORTANT NOTICE

To: Wallowa County Grain Grower True Value Customers

I would like to inform all of our customers, that due to a labor shortage within the True Value Store, we have decided to close the store for business on Sundays until further notice.

This is a necessary step to help keep our current employees from burning out. Short staff and more days worked for each of them has been the trend for a long period. **This will go into effect on Sunday August 21st 2022.** We apologize for this inconvenience and hope that the labor pool will get better in the future.

Thank you for your understanding.

Stacy Beckman
Stacy J Beckman
General Manager

GET TO KNOW OUR PROVIDERS!

Dr. Annika Maly

Dr. Maly joined the Winding Waters team in the fall of 2016 after completing her Family Medicine Residency in Boise. She provides comprehensive primary care services including women's health, obstetrics, newborn/well child care, Accutane treatment, trigger point injections, home visits, and end of life care.

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