

Cultural site: considered sacred

(Continued from page 1)

In a Jan. 30 letter addressed to the Walkers, Griffin said he had determined that the site, which he called the Dry River Gorge at Horse Ridge, is eligible for listing on the national register.

The area has the potential of yielding "significant information" on the importance of the area to the Paiute people, Griffin wrote.

Griffin's endorsement is important, because the nine-member State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation must approve the nomination before the site can be reviewed by the National Park Service for listing on the national register, said David Bogan, spokesman for the Heritage Conservation Division of the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department.

It's unclear how long that process will take.

Deschutes County commissioners plan to vote on whether to permit the mine at an upcoming meeting.

The Walker property has also been the subject of another local effort to protect the site.

On Jan. 26, the landmarks commission unanimously recommended that the Deschutes County Commission add five acres of the parcel to the county's inventory of historic and cultural resources.

If commissioners approve the recommendation, the addition could make county planners "more likely to carefully consider adverse impacts" from surrounding land uses, according to a report authored by Pat

Kliwer, cultural and historic planner who works for the city of Bend.

Of 1,734 surveyed archaeological sites in Deschutes County, the Walker site — which contains more than 200 pictographs, or rock paintings — has been determined most significant by archaeologists and the University of Oregon's archaeology department, Kliwer's report states.

The site is significant not only for its history. Tribes that consider the site sacred and currently visit include the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, the Burns Paiutes, the Northern Paiutes and the Klamath Tribes, the report says.

"This is more than a place that is just an oddity or a place where there are old things," Kliwer said. "This is part of ongoing culture."

American Indian visitors have migrated across what is now the Walker property for millennia, according to the Landmarks Commission report.

Water, game animals and a nearby supply of obsidian, which was used to make tools, drew tribes from British Columbia, Washington, Idaho and the Columbia River Gorge from the north, while Klamath tribes visited from the south.

The Walker ranch was part of an 1,800-acre ranch established by George Millican in 1870. Other homesteaders followed, and by 1915 there were 60 homesteads and 500 acres of rye and wheat crops being cultivated in the Millican Valley, according to the report.

But a drought that hit around the same time as the 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic halted growth in the community. Lumber mills that opened in Bend around the same time drew set-

ters away, leaving only cows and a few ranchers.

Since the rock mine was proposed in the area last year, tribes have weighed in on the significance of the site.

"This area is one of very few left that has such special meaning to us as a connection to our past, present and future," wrote Perry Chocktoot, a cultural resource protection specialist for the Klamath Tribes. "It would be a tragedy to lose another sacred area to the so-called progress of America."

The Burns Paiutes have a connection to the site as well, said Minerva Teeman Soucie, a tribal elder who wrote urging Deschutes County to protect the area.

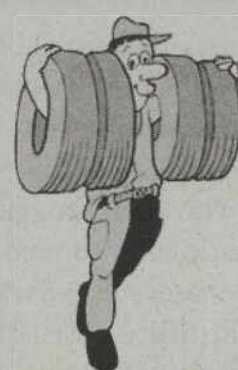
"This is a sacred area and we should do all we can to protect it from damage," Soucie wrote. "This is one of the treasures of the area and I feel that one day, someone will come in on an all-terrain vehicle and cart the rock art away."

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