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"It's more than just the water being turned off. It's also concerning when they don't notify us when they're going to be turning the water off and the fact when they do turn the water back on ... we were never notified that we were able to drink the water again."

According to the resident, a letter was not sent out to customers informing them that it was safe to drink, with most getting word through the newspaper and on social media.

Calls to the MWD from Siuslaw New seeking clarification on the water bills sent to customers, and unconfirmed reports that sitting board members have resigned due to the latest situation, have gone unanswered and unreturned.

In addition, the resignation of Terry Saubert as MWD Board President has been posted on various social media platforms but has not been officially verified, and calls to Saubert were not returned as of press time.

One member of the WMD Board, Vice Chairperson Dustin

Basurto, has been willing to speak with *Siuslaw News*, with Basurto explaining that he wants residents to know there will be an opportunity this week to speak at a special session of the MWD board.

A Zoom meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday (time yet to be determined) to allow for the selection of new board members and for clarification of the path forward regarding the unclear hike in water bills.

"A few members of the board have agreed to make themselves available Wednesday night for a Zoom meeting," Basurto said.

"All details and the statement, as I said, are still in the works and [Lane County Commissioner] Jay Bozievich has been in contact as well. He has been surprisingly helpful and succinct with advice and steps moving forward."

MWD's remaining board members are holding the meeting to address the community's concerns.

Basurto also indicated a new board may be seated, including participation from a well-regarded Mapleton resident and long-time Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) volunteer.

"Jim Grano has stepped up from the community at large and I've asked him to form a committee of our customers/owners to address this issue and provide an avenue for discussion's moving forward," Basurto said.

Residents with questions or concerns can contact the MWD office at 541-268-4348.

Editor's Note: The arsonist who set the Sweet Creek Fire, Elia Newton Pendergrass, pled guilty to arson charges and was sentenced to 10 years in prison along with three years of post-release supervision.

INTERNET from page 1A

nationwide program to accelerate the construction of

the infrastructure required to provide reliable internet access to rural communities nationwide — and

Hyak has been selected to fulfill that goal in our area.

Hyak was formed in 2017 by the merger of Siuslaw

Broadband and Full Spectrum Computers and has become the area leader in providing expertise, installation and maintenance for computer systems of all types.

"This represents a significant investment in the outlying areas of Florence and Mapleton that we're excited to make," said Neil Ecker, COO of Hyak. "Federal support of these high-cost areas means we're now able to deliver our gigabit fiber internet to some of the most rural portions of western Lane County."

Hyak was awarded \$1.6 million to serve areas of the Siuslaw region outside of Florence and Mapleton, such as North Fork Road,

Indian Creek, Swisshome, Brickerville and Sweet Creek Road.

"These areas are generally served by satellite only today or limited DSL that no longer meets the definition of broadband," Ecker said.

Hyak CEO Robbie Wright believes the decision to provide substantial funding for this effort is warranted now more than ever.

"The RDOF program is a great solution for rural America and our community to create opportunities for families who live in our outlying areas," he said. "Access to quality internet has become even more important with distance

learning and remote work as the current pandemic continues to shape how our rural communities can operate."

Wright said the company wants to be a part of helping build a community where youth can choose to live and work — things not possible without addressing the need for affordable housing and quality internet.

The FCC has, among many other agencies, the responsibility for overseeing the nation's airwaves and internet infrastructure. The commission has moved aggressively since the onset of the pandemic to improve rural opportunities to utilize resources which may only be available remotely.

"Through a two-phase reverse auction mechanism, the FCC will direct up to \$20.4 billion over 10 years to finance up to gigabit speed broadband networks in unserved rural areas, connecting millions more American homes and businesses to digital opportunity," the FCC said in its announcement of the contract awards. "Without access to broadband, rural Americans cannot participate in the digital economy or take advantage of the opportunities broadband brings for better education, healthcare and civic and social engagement. In recent years, the commission has made tremendous strides toward increasing the availability of broadband in rural America. But more work remains to be done, and the RDOF is a key part of the FCC's continuing efforts."

The project timeline allows for a six-year window of completion, but Wright is hoping to have the work completed before that deadline.

The initial stages of the project have begun with preparatory work being done in advance of Hyak beginning to install and construct the extensive system, which will be needed to run fiber optics and the supporting equipment needed to monitor the system.

"We have quite a bit of work in front of us," said Wright. "We're looking at more than 80 miles of fiber to be deployed with requirements to be built out to 40 percent within three years, and 100 percent in six years. While we'd like to expedite those timelines, some of these areas are pretty remote with some challenging aspects of their build."

In addition, Hyak has opened its new office location at 1535 Ninth St. For more information, visit hyak.co.



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