

Getting political

Watershed Council Director departs to organize campaign

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Pam Reber, longtime director of the Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council, called the non-profit organization, which works to improve wildlife habitat and water quality for the nearby branch of the Willamette River, a "collaborative entity."

"It really doesn't serve its purpose for me to be strongly political," Reber said, adding that, after 10 years with the Council, she's leaving this month to pursue a much more political path.

At a going-away party of sorts for Reber and an introduction of her replacement at the Axe and Fiddle Pub on Tuesday, Oct. 27, she announced that she will soon be taking a new position as head of the campaign of Julian Bell, a Democrat and Ashland physician who plans to run for governor of the State of Oregon against Kate Brown on a climate change agenda.

"I don't feel we as a society have time to wait to make changes with regard to keeping carbon in the ground," she said. "There is more coal and oil in the ground than the climate could afford to have us burn."

Bell spoke of his aspirations at last week's reception, which also introduced Amanda Wilson, formerly of the McKenzie Watershed Council, who is busy transitioning into the position of Coast Fork director. Wilson, who lives in Cottage Grove, said her first goal is to assess the desired direction of the Council.

"It's going to be fun to see where we can take this," she said. "I'm excited for the future."

For Reber, efforts to restore the Coast Fork and its tributaries began about 10 years



photo by Jon Stinnett

Former Watershed Council Director Pam Reber — in Halloween garb — enjoys a farewell reception with partner Brad McCormick.

ago. After working in the woods on various projects, she earned an environmental studies degree from the University of Oregon. Reber moved to Cottage Grove, settling near the Row River in 2002, and she said her experiences near the river helped convince her to get involved in local watershed restoration.

"I have a strong commitment to the democratic process," she said, "so from the beginning I wanted to have the community as involved in restoration as possible. There weren't any habitat restoration projects going on when I came on, so the first priorities were parks in Cottage Grove and Creswell."

Restoration efforts have been extensive in Cottage Grove's Row River Nature Park and Creswell's Garden Park, which Reber said helped introduce locals to the need for habitat restoration. A major and ongoing project to restore habitat in Mosby Creek also aimed to provide habitat for fish returning to the watershed, and the recent return of Chinook salmon to Mosby Creek, the Row and the Coast Fork is being viewed as a victory for habitat restoration.

"It's great that a lot of people are interested in seeing this resource improve,"

Reber said. She explained that local dams "continue to be hurdles" to fish viability and that providing places for fish to spawn helps provide organic material that continues to feed the watershed.

"It's been challenging," she said. "There's not a lot of capacity in Lane County for this kind of work."

Public involvement in restoration efforts has also been fostered by the recent Science Pub gatherings at the Axe and Fiddle, Reber said, though the next phase of restoration efforts will involve "solidifying partnerships" between the major agencies and landowners in the region that can bring about major change.

"It's going to take real investments on the ground, and I'm very optimistic that it can happen," she said.

For her part, Wilson said her previous stint as director of the McKenzie Watershed Council included a "strong education program" for youth aimed at "getting kids out in the field."

"Not all kids get those kinds of experiences, to get out and learn what's around them," she said. "I'm excited to see what we can get for area schools here."

Motorcycle/truck crash seriously injures cyclist

Driver of pickup cited for making an unsafe left turn

Oregon State Police say a crash involving a truck and motorcycle in Saginaw on Thursday was caused by an improper left turn.

Lt. Vonn Schleicher of the Springfield Area Command said that a motorcycle ridden by 56-year old Robert J. Drew was traveling southbound on Highway 99 at about 1:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 29 when a pickup truck traveling northbound attempted to make a left turn into a private residence. Schleicher said the driver of the pickup, identified as 64-year old Jerry Kraft, reportedly did not see the motorcycle in time to avoid a collision. He said Drew attempted to avoid the truck and laid the bike

down on the pavement, then slid into the path of and under the pickup. Kraft stopped his vehicle, and Drew was reportedly pinned underneath.

South Lane County Fire and Rescue personnel responded to the scene of the crash with the report that Drew was pinned under the truck, but Division Chief Joe Raade said he was no longer trapped when crews arrived. Drew was flown via Life-Flight to RiverBend Hospital in Springfield with serious injuries, and an update on his condition could not be confirmed by Sentinel press time Monday.

Kraft received a citation for making an unsafe left turn, according to Schleicher.

Sign-up for heating assistance began Monday

Local seniors can sign up at Senior Connections; others can apply at Community Sharing

The federal office of Health and Human Services has released funding to the states for this winter's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The LIHEAP program helps income-qualified households with their home energy

costs in the winter.

On Monday, non-profit and senior agencies that administer the program throughout Lane County began placing households on LIHEAP appointment waiting lists. Interested households may place themselves on a waiting list by calling one of the agencies that operate the program. Seniors over age 60 in Cottage Grove can contact Cottage Grove Senior Connections at 541-682-7810. Those under 60, or households with a resident who is disabled, can contact Cottage Grove Community Sharing at 541-942-6492.

Lane County said that it has not received its LIHEAP allocation yet from the State but is anticipating a similar LIHEAP funding level as last year.

Jason Davis of Lane County Health and Human Services stated that if a household doesn't get on the LIHEAP waiting list in early November, the household is urged to try again the first working day of the next month during the winter and spring heating season. LIHEAP agencies do re-open their lists at least once each year.

To qualify for LIHEAP, a household's current gross monthly income must be at or below 60 percent of Oregon's median income level. A household of one person can have a gross monthly income as high as \$1,827 and qualify. A household of four people can have a gross monthly income of \$3,514 and qualify.

The amount of assistance a household receives depends on a number of factors. The program pays the assistance directly into a household's utility account as a one-time payment that can range from \$150-\$550.



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COTTAGE GROVE

Cottage Grove City Hall
400 E. Main St., Cottage Grove
November 4 • 10:30 AM
November 16 • 10:30 AM
December 4 • 10:30 AM
December 21 • 10:30 AM

CRESWELL

City of Creswell
Community Center
99 S. 1st St., Creswell
November 4 • 2:30 PM
November 16 • 2:30 PM
December 4 • 2:30 PM
December 21 • 2:30 PM

FLORENCE

Florence Events Center
715 Quince St., Florence
November 9 • 11:00 AM
November 23 • 11:00 AM
December 2 • 11:00 AM

EUGENE

Campbell Senior Center
Elsie's Room
155 High St., Eugene
November 5 • 10:00 AM
November 30 • 2:30 PM
December 3 • 10:00 AM

Petersen Barn
870 Berntzen Rd., Eugene
November 13 • 1:30 PM

Veterans Memorial Assn.
1626 Willamette St., Eugene
November 19 • 10:30 AM
December 7 • 2:30 PM

Countryside Pizza & Grill
645 River Road, Eugene
November 30 • 10:30 AM

Papa's Pizza
1577 Coburg Rd., Eugene
December 1 • 2:30 PM

JUNCTION CITY

Junction City
Community Center
175 W. 7th Ave., Junction City
November 18 • 10:30 AM
December 7 • 10:30 AM

SPRINGFIELD

Papa's Pizza
4011 Main St., Springfield
November 6 • 2:30 PM
November 20 • 2:30 PM
December 3 • 2:30 PM

Willamalane Community
Recreation Center
250 S. 32nd St., Springfield
November 12 • 2:30 PM

OAKRIDGE

City of Oakridge
47674 School St., Oakridge
November 25 • 10:30 AM
December 23 • 10:30 AM

VENETA

City of Veneta
Community Center
25192 E. Broadway, Veneta
November 11 • 11:00 AM
November 24 • 2:30 PM
December 2 • 2:30 PM
December 9 • 11:00 AM

EVENING SEMINARS

Trillium Community
Health Plan
Cascade Rm.
1800 Millrace Dr., Eugene

November 5 • 5:45 PM
November 12 • 5:45 PM
November 19 • 5:45 PM
December 3 • 5:45 PM
December 10 • 5:45 PM
December 17 • 5:45 PM

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