

Merry Christmas

From all of us at the

Cottage Grove Sentinel

ATTENTION: EARLY DEADLINES
 Due to a short work week because of the Christmas holiday, the deadline for all submissions for the Dec. 30 Sentinel will be Wednesday at noon.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2015 SOUTH LANE COUNTY'S MOST AWARD-WINNING NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1889 VOLUME 128 • NUMBER 26

Timber sale near recreation area draws protest

Environmental groups say BLM's 'John's Last Stand' sale must be stopped

BY JON STINNETT
 The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Environmental groups opposed to a timber sale near a popular recreation area southeast of Cottage Grove say they plan to continue their efforts to stop the cutting of timber there, even as the Bureau of Land Management moves forward with the sale.

On Thursday, the BLM reportedly accepted the low bid of \$140,775.50 for the John's Last Stand timber sale, a 49-acre mature stand of trees slated for regeneration harvest near the Hardesty Trail and Roadless Area, a popular recreation destination for hikers and mountain bikers about 25 miles southeast of Eugene.

Josh Loughlin, Executive Director of Eugene-based Cascadia Wildlands, said his organization has filed a formal protest for the sale, which has been auctioned but not yet contracted by the BLM.

"We're hoping that with the public opposition to the sale and the support for a unique roadless area, the BLM will recognize that it's not in the public interest to proceed with this reckless sale," Loughlin said. "We have a long, rich history of working to safeguard this area. This is the closest roadless area of old-growth for places like Eugene and Cottage Grove. It's a timber sale planned in the wrong place; to choose a location that's never been logged before in a roadless area is a slap in the face."

On Monday, Kristine Struck, a BLM Planning and Environmental Specialist who analyzed the implications of the sale with regard to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the BLM, and Brian Bickford, BLM Supervisory Forester, said

the sale and subsequent protest was part of a public process stretching back to December of 2014 with the scoping of the Lost Creek Environmental Assessment, which includes the John's Last Stand timber sale. The BLM released the analysis of the sale in September, which included options not to harvest, to thin certain areas or opt for regeneration harvest. Its decision was issued in November, and the BLM received two letters of protest in early December.

Struck and Bickford said that some concerns the BLM heard in response to its plan for the sale were taken into consideration. The sale is about half the size of its original plan due to wildlife concerns including the existence of red tree voles in many of the mature trees there. There will be no roads built to harvest the timber, they said, and the area will be logged by helicopters. Still, they say the land is designated for sustained harvest.

"We're required to manage the area for a sustained timber yield," Struck said.

There are no treatments planned in riparian areas of the sale, Struck said, and she pointed out that the sale is adjacent to but not actually located in the Mt. Hardesty Roadless Area.

The BLM could make changes to its plan in response to the protests it received, potentially modifying, re-analyzing or even scrapping the project. If the protests are denied, those who protested have 30 days to appeal the decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

Loughlin said that Cascadia will fight the sale for as long as is necessary.

"We'll work overtime until this sale is withdrawn," he said.

COURT REPORT



photo by Jon Stinnett

Judge Martin Fisher listens to testimony in Cottage Grove Municipal Court on Thursday morning. Fisher recently delivered his second annual report on the court.

Municipal Court works to balance justice, efficiency

BY JON STINNETT
 The Cottage Grove Sentinel

At its most recent meeting, Municipal Court Judge Martin Fisher told the Cottage Grove City Council that the Court "continues to make progress toward balancing efficiency with justice," and Fisher's annual report to the Council included both evidence of that progress and the challenges the court continues to face in its pursuit.

In the Council chambers at City Hall most Thursday mornings, the Cottage Grove Municipal Court handles cases involving traffic violations and misdemeanor crimes — crimes punishable by not more than a year in jail and a \$6250 fine. The Court handled 659 criminal citations and 1060 violations in 2015 and 705 criminal citations and 954 violations the year prior.

The Court may also assess up to five years of probation, and it treats certain crimes that are essentially Class-C felonies as misdemeanors, most often drug offenses, for which charges of attempts to commit the crime are levied against

defendants in cases where the district attorney would be unlikely to prosecute the offender.

Not always 'fine'

Fisher told the Council that Court Clerk Michelle Rounsaville has recently "spent a fair amount of her non-court time on the job sorting through old files, many of which have unpaid fines that have languished for years."

Fisher told the Council that Rounsaville has been "finding stacks of files that had fines assessed and no effort made at collection," adding that "some have sat there for six or seven years." He later said that the failure to collect those outstanding fines, amounting to a total of \$195,170.64 this year, could also have been due to "collection avenues that weren't being fully utilized" and a change in collection agencies.

"We had an agency that wasn't particularly responsive," he said.

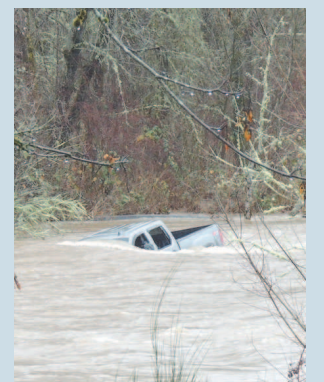
Thus, while the number of cases seen by the Court increased in 2015 and the amount of

Please see **COURT**, Page 11A

Also inside:



Letters to Santa
 Local children tell the big man what they really want



Off-road
 Police believe theft of truck from one of their own may have been 'malicious,' page 3A



New underpass is underwater, and it may be for a while

BY JON STINNETT
 The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Heavy rains have flooded an underpass built last summer to bring users of a popular trail under a nearby roadway, and it looks like the underpass may not be usable any time soon.

Lane County teamed up with the Bureau of Land Management to pursue funding and construct the underpass at the intersection of Row River Road and the Row River Trail, which was built at a cost of \$1.2 million and dedicated in July. Last week, heavy rainfall flooded the underpass, and county officials say it will stay that way until the waters recede on their own.

"The tunnel will be flooded until the waters recede," said Janet Mayer, Design Engineer with Lane County Public Works. "It's in an area that is historically flood-prone, and it's just too low to drain."

Mayer said it "would've been incredibly expensive" to design the underpass in a way that it could be drained for all flood events, so the County and BLM chose not to.

"We made the judgment call to allow the underpass to flood in heavy rains since we already had a usable at-grade crossing," she said.

For now, trail users will be utilizing that at-grade crossing until the nearby river levels drop, though Mayer pointed out that there is typically far less trail traffic this time of year. She added that the at-grade crossing, which was in part built to accommodate riders on horseback, as horses are typically wary of walking through tunnels, is now much safer than the crossing that saw two cyclist fatalities in a four-year span.

"Hopefully the flooding won't occur this way all that many times," she said. "The tunnel held up for a fair amount of time, but the water's not going to recede anytime in the near future."



courtesy photo

Heavy rains have flooded the tunnel under Row River Road that was built this summer, and the waters may not recede anytime soon.

Happy Holidays to you!
and a warm home too!
from your loyal friends and neighbors at
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