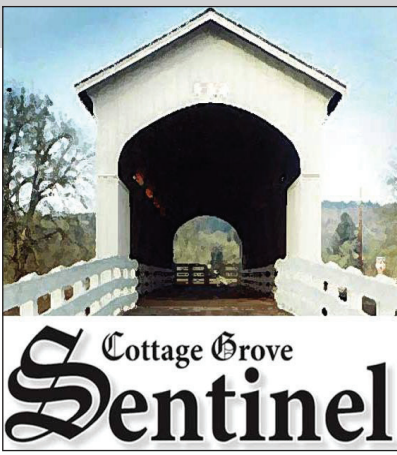




Umpqua National Forest announces phased reopening of recreation areas

The Umpqua National Forest (UNF) is announcing the first phase of reopening the forest to recreational users. Beginning Saturday, May 9 some boat ramps and most trail heads on the forest will be re-opened to the general public for use.

The boat ramps that are remaining closed have not been cleared from winter debris or are located within areas designated as closed under the current Regional Closure Order. The trailhead to the Umpqua Hot Springs will remain closed. For a complete list of boat ramps, both open and closed, please check the Umpqua National Forest’s website at: <https://bit.ly/3chpx1H>.

Reservations for campsites, fire lookouts, cabins, and picnic sites will remain unavailable through Recreation.gov. Existing reservation holders will be notified if there are any changes affecting their reservation. Refunds will be issued for all cancelled reservations.

To align with Governor Brown’s executive order directing people to stay home to save lives, the Umpqua National Forest will continue the closure of all other developed recreation sites, to include campgrounds, cabins and fire lookouts. This closure order is still in effect through September 30, 2020 unless rescinded earlier.

The remaining recreation closures are necessary to address social distancing guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control, align with Oregon State Governor Kate Brown’s Executive Order and to help reduce pressure on emergency services in already stressed local communities. To this end, we strongly encourage the public to be cautious while recreating outdoors and not take any undue risks. As always, tell someone of your plan, where you intend to go, what time you plan to be back and any specialized information in the event emergency crews may need it.

“While we are happy to begin the process to reopen previously closed areas of the forest, the health and safety of the public and employees remains our number one concern,” said Alice Carlton, Umpqua National Forest Supervisor. “This is foremost in our mind as we continue our coordination with our local Counties and State leadership through this crisis.”

Some facilities, such as vault bathrooms, will remain open for public use but will not be maintained as UNF does not have the proper personal protective equipment necessary to ensure the safety of their employees. Members of the public wishing to utilize these facilities are doing so at their own discretion and must take all necessary precautions to ensure for their own personal health and safety. UNF cannot guarantee a COVID-free facility. It is suggested that as you plan to recreate you make preparations to provide your own sanitation and be as self-contained as possible on your outing.

Please remember to review current recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and focus on protecting yourself, your family, and your community.

Challenges, changes abound for SLSD board

By Nick Snyder
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Cottage Grove — and the world at large — has been rife with changes both big and small over the past two months and another is coming to the South Lane School District (SLSD) board.

On Monday, May 4, board vice chair Alan Baas stepped down from his position while remaining a member of the board, allowing first-year board member Dustin Bengtson to step into a leadership role.

Sherry Duerst-Higgins will continue on as the board’s chair.

While there were multiple reasons for the decision, Baas said recent health concerns are the primary catalyst for his decision.

“My health has been getting me down

for a couple years,” said Baas, who resigned from his position as board chair last year. “And then, my health got messy months back and I kept trying to resign.”

The board has been exceptionally busy the last couple of years with its normal month-to-month work as well as multiple superintendent searches and, now, a global pandemic to consider.

For Baas, just getting his resignation as vice chair on the board agenda took some time, but now that it’s complete, he’s more than happy handing the reins over to Bengtson.

“The board is very comfortable with Dustin coming on,” Baas said. “He’s coming with a lot of experience in doing management thinking and we’re at a time where the kind of thinking that Dustin’s trained in is

good for us.”

On top of health issues, Baas — who takes board members’ roles as community representatives seriously — also felt it was time for a new perspective in the vice chair position with his prior work experience having fulfilled its usefulness leading up to the current viral crisis.

“I will claim that the training I had in my work experience was good for where we were at,” Baas said. “I was a research analyst and a magazine editor, so I came on when it was time to pay attention to a whole lot of different kinds of details and be ready to listen to everybody and not make judgments. That’s sort of what I did for all these years.”

At a time when institutions both public

See SLSD 2B

Big turnout for turning 99



PHOTOS BY NICK SNYDER/CG SENTINEL

Long-time Cottage Grove resident Mickey Partney turned 99 years old last Friday, May 8 and family, friends and a couple first responders turned out to give their well-wishes with flowers, signs and socially-distant waves from their vehicles.

Partney, born in South Dakota, has lived in Cottage Grove since she was a teenager, but made her way here via Boulder City, Nev. where she lived for a number of years as her father helped build the Hoover Dam during the Great Depression. Partney’s four daughters all grew up in Cottage Grove and joined her — along with a host of grandchildren and great-grandchildren — to celebrate her birthday.



Top causes of wildfires can be prevented

For many, the term “wildfires” conjures up large forest fires in remote, unpopulated areas. And, in many cases, these “wildfires” are believed to be the result of lightning. The truth, however, is just the opposite. People, and things created by people, are actually responsible for 70 percent of wildfires in Oregon. And the majority of these fires start near homes and communities. The top three human-caused wildfires are escaped, or rekindled, debris burns; sparks or exhaust from power equipment, and escaped campfires; all of which can be prevented.

Escaped debris burns is, and has consistently been, the number one cause of wildfires in Oregon for decades. While the general cause falls under debris burning, the specific cause may result from a number of reasons. Burning during windy conditions; not having adequate clearing around the burn pile; leaving the burn site unattended; rekindling days or weeks after the initial burn due to increased wind and/or heat; or not having water and tools immediately available to manage the burn site. Whatever the reason, all of these fires can be prevented by following this simple checklist.

- Call before you burn. Local regulations may restrict or prohibit burning altogether.
- Place yard debris in an open area away from structures, trees and power lines.
- Create small piles (4’ x 4’) to better manage the burn.
- Cover portions of piles with

- polyethylene plastic (landscape material) to keep a portion dry for lighting later.
- When conditions improve, check with your local fire agency for any regulations in place.
- Never burn under windy conditions.
- To maintain containment, create a perimeter around the pile at a minimum of 3 feet, scraped clear to bare mineral soil.
- Keep a shovel and charged hose nearby to manage the burn.
- Make sure the pile is dead out before leaving.
- Return periodically over several weeks to make sure the pile is still out: No heat, no smoke.

Wildfires sparked from power equipment can happen when, in many cases, property owners are trying to reduce fire hazards around the home. The leading culprit in recent years has been mowing dry, cured grass during periods of high or extreme fire danger. While hot exhaust coming into contact with dry grass could start a fire, the most common ignition source is the lawn mower blade striking a rock or other spark emitting surface. Other equipment known to start fires are power saws, weed eaters, motor vehicle exhaust (including motorcycles and ATV’s), cutting and welding, and power lines. Keep these things in mind when working with or using power equipment.

- Check local regulations. Some activities may be restricted or prohibited due to fire danger.
- When allowed, mow grass



COURTESY PHOTO

early in the morning when moisture is present.

- Keep vehicles and other equipment in good working condition, including exhaust systems.
- Create defensible space early in the spring before the onslaught of fire danger.

While escaped campfires ranks third on our list, it does not account for the hundreds of abandoned campfires firefighters extinguish during their routine patrols. Campfires lead to wildfires when people build them in unsafe areas, leave the site without properly putting them out, or don’t carry the proper tools to care for and fully extinguish the fire. Follow these simple guidelines when having a campfire.

- Call before you go. Campfires may not be allowed due to fire danger.
- Carry a bucket for water and a shovel.

- Campgrounds are the safest place to have a campfire, complete with open areas and established fire pits.
- Where dispersed camping is allowed, build campfires in open areas away from grass, brush and overhanging trees.
- Keep fires small and manageable.
- Put the campfire completely out before leaving or going to bed. To do so, drown the fire with lots of water from your bucket, stir the coals and drown again. Using the back of your hand, determine that the ashes are cool to the touch and won’t rekindle under warm, windy conditions.

Finally, May is Wildfire Awareness Month and fire officials from multiple protection agencies are encouraging everyone to do their part to Keep Oregon Green. Log on to keeporegongreen.org for more information.