

Local & State

PROPOSED BOARDMAN TO HEMINGWAY POWER TRANSMISSION LINE

Residents fear B2H could ruin Oregon Trail traces

By Dick Mason
The (La Grande) Observer

Construction of the Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) electric transmission line might do what Father Time's corrosive hand has not — destroy the last remaining remnants of the Oregon Trail in Union County.

This is the fear of Lanetta Paul, a passionate Oregon Trail supporter who lives in the Morgan Lake area a few miles west of La Grande.

Paul, who has led many people on tours of the Oregon Trail from the area near her home to Hilgard State Park, seven miles away, is among those working to have the proposed B2H route changed so that it is far from Union County's Oregon Trail ruts, allowing them to remain a tangible link to this region's story.

This is critical, she said, for there will be no second chances when it comes to preserving what's left of the Oregon Trail.

"Once it is gone, it is gone forever," Paul said. "It is a piece of history lost."

John Williams, who also lives near Morgan Lake Road, shares Paul's sense of urgency. He owns land with Oregon Trail ruts and said those and all ruts between the Morgan Lake area and Hilgard State Park are at risk because a portion of the B2H transmission line may run along this route under a plan proposed by PacifiCorp, the Bonneville Power Administration and Idaho Power, who would pay for and construct the B2H line, which would extend from Boardman to the Hemingway substation near Melba, Idaho.

Williams said the proposed plan calls for the transmission line and its poles to be 125 feet outside the Oregon Trail on either side, but fears this is close enough to pose a threat to the historical remnants because of the heavy equipment that would have to be brought in to construct the massive transmission line. He said if the equipment ran over the ruts, it would cause irreparable damage.

Gail Carbiener of Bend, a member of the Oregon-California Trail Association, shares Williams' concern.

"(The proposed B2H line) can't help but have an impact," Carbiener said.

The Bend resident noted the equipment brought in would be enormous, with some items such as cranes weighing close to 100,000 pounds.

"It would be huge," he said.

More than ruts are at risk by the proposed B2H line. Williams said the proposed project's plan calls for a large tower to be built in the middle of an area that was a campsite for Oregon Trail pioneers. He said numerous artifacts have been found at the site with a metal detector within the past two years during searches he assisted. Items found include oxen shoes, a bracket for a wagon and many nails. Williams said nails are commonly found along the Oregon Trail.

"It has been called the trail of nails," he said.

The La Grande resident said he fears if a tower is placed at the campsite, the Oregon Trail artifacts buried underneath it may be lost



Cherise Kaechele /The (La Grande) Observer

Lanetta Paul, who brought tours to the property where the Oregon Trail ruts are, stands in one of the ruts made by the wagon wheels near Morgan Lake.

"Once it is gone, it is gone forever."

— **Lanetta Paul, who lives near Morgan Lake and fears that a proposed power transmission line would obliterate traces of the Oregon Trail**

forever.

The B2H transmission line poles would be over 100 feet high, Carbiener said. This would be much greater than the height of most power lines in the area and a great concern to Carbiener. He said such towering poles would detract from the setting of the Oregon Trail. He also said the presence of power lines of any size would be a detriment in some portions of the Oregon Trail.

Carbiener notes today there are still passages at and near the Blue Mountain Crossing Interpretive Center 16 miles west of La Grande where the Oregon Trail can be seen in a setting where there are no power lines, buildings or roads.

"You can walk there today and see exactly what the Oregon Trail pioneers saw," Carbiener said.

He said the B2H transmission line, if installed as proposed, would rob people of this opportunity in some areas.

"It would destroy viewsheds," he said.

A statement sent to The Observer from Idaho Powder archaeologist Shane Baker said with regard to the Oregon Trail and B2H indicates that the company is sensitive to the concerns expressed by Williams, Carbiener, Paul and others.

"Idaho Power is very aware of the historic significance of the Oregon Trail, as well as other historic trails and resources in the area of the proposed project, and did everything reasonably possible to protect and consider the trail during the process of selecting a proposed route. We've spent time documenting where trail segments occur within the vicinity of the project and in planning how to avoid and protect the trail. We also met with landowners, stakeholders, including trail group representatives, to hear their concerns and solicit their input," the statement read.

Baker also noted in his statement that federal and state laws require it to take all historic resources into consideration during the planning and permitting process, and to protect them.

"There's a federal and state process that must be followed that protects historic

and other natural resources," according to the statement. "Our intent is to minimize impacts to all resources. During design and construction, we would avoid placing towers on any identified trail segments, or ruts, and site the project in a manner that reduces direct and indirect impacts. In some instances, mitigation may be an appropriate method to

offset impacts."

Baker also said the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center just outside Baker City and the Birch Creek area in Malheur County are examples where several steps were taken in its route proposal to protect the Oregon Trail. The company said it is committed to minimizing visual impacts by using lower tower designs that are more consistent with existing transmission towers.

See **Trail** / Page 5A

Thefts, vandalism at Blue Mt. Park

During this summer people have repeatedly broken into the Forest Service's Blue Mountain Crossing Interpretive Park near Meacham, breaking fences, riding ATVs through the park and stealing historic artifacts, according to a Forest Service press release.

The Park, which is near Interstate 84, includes a trail that passes by

remnants of the Oregon Trail.

Among the items missing from living history displays at the Park are a spider leg dutch oven, one spider leg cast iron pot, one large brass cooking pot, a large brown crockery jug, a wooden wheelbarrow and a wooden bowl and spoon.

See **Thefts** / Page 5A

BURNT RIVER

Continued from Page 1A

One unique aspect of the school that Lyon has embraced is the foreign exchange students, who make up 16 of Burnt River's 20 high school students.

"I'm trying to learn 'good morning' in all the languages of the exchange students," she said. "It's been fabulous. They're all quite interesting."

Although Lyon said each of the international students comes to Unity with English proficiency for their grade level, "it's always fun to learn pleasantries in other languages."

Lyon hopes to continue to grow Burnt River's agriscience program, which earned several students honors last school year and is a draw for the exchange students. She said the four students who won first place in a state competition for their projects qualified for nationals in October.

Due to the size of the school, Lyon is not only the superintendent but also the principal.

"It means at any given time I'm also juggling 15 different balls," she said. "It's a jack-of-all-trades type of job. I love it."

She said that of her daily duties, she arrives early to get paperwork done before school, greets students and parents as they arrive in the mornings, and is a presence in the halls and in classrooms throughout the days.

Lyon also highlighted Burnt River's sports programs, saying, "one of the nice things about small schools is, for sports, everyone plays."

Lyon also hopes to use her experience gained in La Grande to develop the school's online program as well.

"They can't fail because we won't allow them to," she said.

Lyon also hopes to take some time to enjoy Unity after school through some of her hobbies like hiking and horseback riding.

"Unity is a wonderful community" she said. "I feel privileged to be here."

Don't text and drive... you won't have to come see us!



Joe Scott's Premier Auto Body, Inc.
2390 Broadway, Baker City
541-523-5223

Tires LES SCHWAB

BATTERIES 50 MONTHS



WE INSTALL

\$78²⁵

RV, Boat, 24 Month Deep Cycle



Starting at **\$100.19**

We gladly make appointments

LEW BROS
210 Bridge
541-523-3679
AFTER HOURS:
541-518-7100



2018 Baker County Fair & Panhandle Rodeo

Welcome to the 97th Baker County Fair & Rodeo in Halfway, OR

September 1, 2 & 3, 2018

Tickets \$10, 6-12 \$6, 5 & under FREE • Free Fairground Entrance

Bring your exhibits to the Exhibit Hall 7:30-10 a.m. Saturday

ICA & Pro West Rodeo Sat & Sun Pre Rodeo starts 6:30 PM

Mon Pre Rodeo 1:30 PM

Enter Jackpot events open Aug. 22

Call: 541-540-6114

Mule Races during each rodeo performance

Faith Riders perform all 3 days

Saturday 10 a.m. Ride In Team Roping

"Pack Horse Race" enters fairgrounds along with Little Muttin Busters before Saturday Night Rodeo performance

Entertainment on the midway:

Saturday Fair & Rodeo & Hells Canyon Court Tryouts 3 p.m.

Safeway sponsored Breakfast FREE to all 7-10 a.m.

Pie Auction Saturday 3:30 p.m.

Monday Wild Cow Milking, Ribbon & Team Roping (call 541-540-6144 to enter)

Sunday Music by Frank Carlson 3-6 p.m.

Entertainment on stage Sunday 5 p.m.

Dog Show on leash Sunday 3 p.m.

Cowboy Church Sunday 10 a.m. on the stage

Downtown Halfway Parade Monday at 12:30 p.m.

Line up starts at noon

Grand Marshals Jim Myers & Agnes Bird

Grand Champion Round Robin Sunday 5 p.m. in the pavilion

Youth Livestock Auction starts Monday 9 a.m.

Special \$25 Monday entrance to the Rodeo

Purchase 5 tickets for \$25

Baker County Fair & Panhandle Rodeo in Halfway

"A small town celebration in a big way"

www.halfwayfairandrodeo.com

Cheers, Steers & Volunteers