

# Local & State

PART OF \$30 MILLION PROJECT ALONG INTERSTATE 84 IN LADD CANYON

## Creek getting a new channel

Workers need to relocate a 4,500-foot section of the stream to make it possible to build a third eastbound lane on the freeway as it climbs out of Ladd Canyon

By Dick Mason

The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — Brush Creek, located near where the Oregon Trail ran more than 150 years ago in Ladd Canyon, is getting a new 4,500-foot channel, one stronger than the oxen pioneers used to pull their wagons over this area's rugged terrain.

The channel is being installed as part of the Oregon Department of Transportation's \$30 million Ladd Canyon Freight Improvement Project, which began in April. The new channel is needed to make way for the addition of a third eastbound lane on I-84 in 2020, which will run from the west entrance of Ladd Canyon east for 1.5 miles.

Brush Creek is posing an obstacle for ODOT because a portion of it runs along the area where the new lane will be built. ODOT is thus taking steps to move the lower part of Brush Creek's channel to the north side of I-84's east-bound lanes.

Almost all of the new channel, now partially complete, will have a concrete streambed and concrete banks and weirs. The concrete structures, except for the weirs, will not be visible because it will be covered with fill dirt and gravel, said ODOT spokesman Tom Strandberg.

The channel's weirs are meant to make it easier for fish to swim up Brush Creek.

"It will look similar to a fish ladder," Strandberg said.

He said the fish ladder is needed because otherwise fish might face a current that would be too hard to swim uphill against.

The new channel's weirs will be designed so that fish can easily jump over them and spaced so that they will create small pools the fish can rest in before their next leap.

The new channel's concrete lining will also allow the lower portion of Brush Creek to retain woody debris and other natural fish habitat elements, said Chuck Longfield, a senior inspector for ODOT.

Work on the Brush Creek project is set to be completed this fall. Brush Creek will then be diverted to the new channel, which will run to Exit 270 where it will flow into Ladd Creek, Strandberg said.

The reconfiguration of Brush Creek is part of Phase I of the Ladd Canyon Freight Improvement Project. Another major portion of



Dick Mason / The (La Grande) Observer

Excavation work is being done in Ladd Canyon outside of La Grande for a new channel for Brush Creek. The channel is being installed as part of the Oregon Department of Transportation's \$30 million Ladd Canyon Freight Improvement Project, which began in April. The new channel is needed to make way for the addition of a third eastbound lane on I-84 in 2020, which will run from the west entrance of Ladd Canyon east for 1.5 miles.

*"It's been a fun project. We are involved in a lot of stuff we don't see at other projects."*

— **Chuck Longfield, senior inspector, Oregon Department of Transportation**

the phase involves removing an eastbound lane bridge near the entrance into Ladd Canyon and replacing it with a concrete box culvert. The box will be large enough to accommodate log trucks and semitrucks.

The bridge has already been removed and about half the box culvert has been completed, Strandberg said.

Moving the old bridge out will improve safety for motorists because it tended to get icy.

"It will reduce the chronic freezing problem," Strandberg said.

He said bridges usually freeze first in cold conditions because they are sandwiched between cold air. The adjacent roadway by contrast freezes later since only its top surface is exposed to frigid air and its bottom is insulated by soil. The new culvert will not get as icy as quickly because it will have ground insulation.

Phase I work that has already been completed includes repaving Exit 265 near the west entrance into Ladd Canyon and expanding the shoulders of the eastbound and westbound lanes of the 10-mile stretch of I-84 between La Grande and Ladd



Dick Mason / The (La Grande) Observer

Tom Strandberg, foreground, and Josh McCullough, both of the Oregon Department of Transportation, examine a site where fish from Brush Creek are being protected while channel work is done.

Canyon.

Expanding the shoulders is providing more space for drivers to pull over during emergencies, making it less likely they will accidentally drive off the freeway and lose control, Strandberg said. Now, when ODOT has to close an eastbound or westbound slow lane between La Grande and Ladd Canyon to do maintenance work, traffic can be diverted to the fast lane because of the extra freeway space.

All Phase I work on the Ladd Canyon Freight Improvement Project will be completed by the end of October. Phase II work, which will conclude the construction of the third eastbound lane, will start in April of 2020.

Strandberg said the expanded space the new lane will provide should reduce

the number of times Ladd Canyon has to be closed due to trucks blocking lanes. He explained that if a truck crashes in the future three-lane roadway, traffic will be able to move around it while it is being cleared. Truck drivers will be allowed to use only the inner and middle lanes while automobile drivers will be permitted to drive in all three, Strandberg said. The three-lane stretch will be similar to a westbound one near Spring Creek on I-84, which has been in place since 2015.

Longfield said being a part of the Ladd Canyon Freight Improvement Project is proving to be fulfilling and enjoyable.

"It has been a fun project," he said. "We are involved in a lot of stuff we don't see at other projects."

a family member or friend, Anderman said.

A safe-storage law "can really address a whole host of gun-related harm," she said.

A firearms storage bill was packaged with other gun-control measures during Oregon's 2019 legislative session that ended in June.

There were some vocal opponents.

"I want to be able to defend myself and family without asking the perpetrator to stop until I unlock my gun," Jeffrey Slaughter, of Woodburn, told lawmakers. Others spoke of infringement on gun rights.

The gun-control effort was scrapped by Democrats in order to lure back Republican senators who had staged a walkout over a school funding tax.

After the news conference Wednesday, supporters delivered the signatures to the elections office. To win a place on the 2020 ballot, 112,020 valid signatures of voters must be turned in by July 2.

## Brown won't call special session to change death penalty bill

Governor says there wasn't enough support for changes to the measure; GOP leaders say it's a 'lost opportunity' for victims

By Claire Withycombe

Oregon Capital Bureau

Gov. Kate Brown will not call a special session to change a controversial bill limiting the state's death penalty before the law takes effect on Sept. 29.

Senate Bill 1013, which lawmakers approved this year, changed when prosecutors can charge someone with aggravated murder — the only charge in Oregon for which the death penalty can be sought. During legislative hearings, lawmakers supporting the bill said it wouldn't apply to old cases where defendants had already been sentenced. But, after the legislative session ended, the Oregon Department of Justice said the law could apply to people on Oregon's death row who have been granted a new trial on appeal.

Brown said in late August that she would call a special session if lawmakers could round up support for a change to clarify the law. But by Wednesday evening, Sept. 18, it was apparent that there wasn't enough support for that change, she said.

"While it is clear there is a misunderstanding regarding the intent of the words in Senate Bill 1013, it is also clear there is not sufficient support for a special session to pass a fix," Brown said in a Sept. 18 statement, as lawmakers wrapped up three days of interim committee meetings at the Capitol. "When announcing my support for a special session, I said that it was conditional on stakeholders and legislators crafting bill language that had the votes to pass. That has not been achieved.

"I cannot justify the additional cost and time a special session requires without that support, and I will not be calling the Legislature into a special session this month before the law goes into effect," Brown said.

### A 'lost opportunity'

Late last month, Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, said he sought a change to the law to have it apply only to offenses committed on or after Sept. 29, 2019, when the law takes effect. Reached after the governor's announcement, Prozanski said that a special session to pass the tweak had support in the Senate, but not in the House.

"When we are faced with these type of situations, we look at it, we measure it, and then if we determine that something needs to be done, that we are willing to put politics to the side and actually finish and make certain that the policy we actually passed is actually interpreted the way we intended it to be," Prozanski said of his colleagues in the Senate. "We were not willing to play the politics that apparently is being played in the House."

Brown's announcement was met with criticism from Republicans. "I am disappointed the governor did not take the opportunity to call lawmakers into session to fix the bungled death penalty bill," tweeted new House Republican Leader Christine Drazan. "This was a lost opportunity to protect victims' families, achieve a bipartisan solution and uphold the will of the voters."

### New At The Baker Library

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#### FICTION

- "Killer Instinct," James Patterson
- "A Better Man," Louise Penny
- "The Oysterville Sewing Circle," Susan Wiggs
- "The Titanic Secret," Clive Cussler
- "The Institute," Stephen King

#### NONFICTION

- "How to be an Antiracist," Ibram Kendi
- "Ball of Collusion," Andrew McCarthy
- "Kochland," Christopher Leonard
- "A Republic, if You Can Keep It," Neil Gorsuch
- "Chase Darkness with Me," Billy Jensen

#### DVDS

- "The dead Don't Die" (Horror)
- "Echo in the Canyon" (Documentary)
- "John Wick 3" (Action)
- "Miseducation of Cameron Post" (Drama)
- "X-men: Dark Phoenix" (Sci-Fi)

## GUNS

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"In the case of my son Will, it was a decision that we'll never be able to take back," Manstrom said at a news conference in the state capitol. "If a loaded gun was not easily accessible to him that night, I believe he would be with us today."

Kemp's brother-in-law was killed by a gunman who had stolen an AR-15 from an acquaintance. The gunman also killed a woman and seriously wounded a third person at the Clackamas Town Center near Portland before killing himself.

"The legal gun owner didn't tell police his guns were missing until (the mall attack) was national news," Kemp said.

Three state lawmakers, also appearing at the news

conference, vowed to push a bill in next year's legislative session that would enact the same storage requirements. If it passes, it would render any ballot initiative moot. But if the bill fails, the measure would have a second chance by going directly to voters in November.

Anderman said putting anything between a person's impulse to take their own life and a gun could give the person a moment to reconsider. Suicides account for 85% of gun deaths in Oregon, said one of the lawmakers, Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, a Portland Democrat. The national rate is around 66%, Anderman said.

Safe storage could also reduce the number of school shootings because most minors who commit those attacks obtain the gun from their home or the home of

New message — ✕

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