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Tanni Wenger

# Revising the revision

## County, Partners eye ways to craft better plan

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY – Grant County Commissioner Boyd Britton wants the Blue Mountains Forest Partners to step in and write a new, workable alternative for the ongoing regional forest plan revision.

But while the Forest Service's proposed revision would cover three national forests, Britton's idea is to draft an alternative that applies just to the Malheur National Forest.

Presenting his proposal to the County Court Feb. 18, Britton said the two local collaborative groups – the Forest Partners and the Harney County Collaborative – would be uniquely suited to the task.

He noted they already have involved stakeholders from the community, industry, county government and the conservation community to find agreement on projects that benefit the forest and the economy.

In a written proposal to County Judge Scott Myers and Commission-

er Chris Labhart, Britton called the collaborative process “arguably the most effective method of dealing with and working with our federal land management partners to date.”

Britton said the Forest Service's proposed forest plan revision “was a wreck to begin with,” as it was developed over more than a decade while key elements changed.

Unveiled to the public in early 2014, the proposed revision drew

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Boyd Britton

# Battle looms over Zone 1 lands

Ranchers say ODF must take new approach

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY – A rebellion is simmering over the so-called Zone 1 lands, as rural landowners brace for an increase in a fire patrol assessment that's unique to Grant County.

The landowners pay fire patrol assessments – in effect, taxes that are billed along with their other property taxes – to the Oregon Department of Forestry for protection of their private lands.

In Grant County alone, landowners are assessed not just for forest and range lands, but also for the less productive but still fire-susceptible lands classified as Zone 1.

This year, Grant County landowners paid per-acre rates of 169.45 cents for timber land, 76.51 cents for grazing land, and 30 cents for Zone 1. The Grant County Court is scheduled to hear from ODF officials March 4 on a proposed Zone 1 rate increase.

Area ranchers this month appealed to the Court to challenge any rate hike, but also to press ODF to take a more proactive approach to fire management.

Mark Webb, a Mt. Vernon area landowner and former county judge, told the Court last week the basis of the problem is that ODF will request an assessment increase to cover the cost of firefighting for those lands, but “we suggest the cost does not warrant it.”

Landowners say the Zone 1 money has in effect gone to offset firefighting costs elsewhere and to bolster the state agency's budget – and that the situation amounts to a tax on Grant County landowners unlike anything elsewhere in the state.

The situation has deep roots, dating back to the 1940s when the state proposed the Zone 1 category to encourage protection for all lands, and safeguard the timber and range assets by adding protection for the more marginal adjacent private lands.

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# Three standouts honored for service



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

American Legion Auxiliary ladies JoAnn Johnson, left, Evelyn Ogilvie and Ruth Harris were honored Feb. 16 for their many years of service through the organization.

# Event notes their teamwork, contributions

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – A Feb. 16 “Sweethearts’ Dinner” honored a trio of sweethearts known for long service to their community.

Held at the Legion Hall in John Day, the event honored JoAnn Johnson, Evelyn Ogilvie and Ruth Harris, longtime members of the Ellis Tracy

Post and Unit of the American Legion and Auxiliary.

Johnson has been an auxiliary member the longest, joining in 1946. Her son, Larry, told of her devotion to her family and her work on many auxiliary projects.

Mrs. Ogilvie's daughter Tammy Ogilvie displayed the many pins her mother received in her years

serving on the local, district, state and national levels since joining in 1950.

She served many years as local auxiliary president.

Joyce Nodine noted the teamwork that has characterized the efforts of the three women, and presented each one with a Portland Trail Blazer hat as members of the “team.”

Auxiliary member Jessie Lewis and Commander Art Pereira presented certificates of appreciation to the honorees.

Music was presented by Cathy Altnow, who sang the national anthem and the song “United We Stand,” written by Harris.

The Rev. Al Altnow gave the invocation and benediction.

# The Big Mosquito Project takes shape

Forest Service rolls out more work for MNF

Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY – Forest Service officials provided maps and aired plans for the Big Mosquito Project at last week's

Grant County Court meeting.

The Feb. 18 presentation was the latest of several set to detail the next projects in the Malheur National Forest's slate of restoration efforts

that include logging, thinning, riparian enhancements and habitat improvements.

Blue Mountain Ranger District Ranger Dave Halemeier called Big Mosquito the first broad-based watershed-scale restoration effort

undertaken on the Malheur National Forest.

The project area spans 36,000 acres around Galena on the Middle Fork of the John Day River.

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# Walden talks issues with MV crowd

Blue Mountain Eagle

MT. VERNON – Nearly 50 residents turned out last week for a Grant County town hall held by U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River).

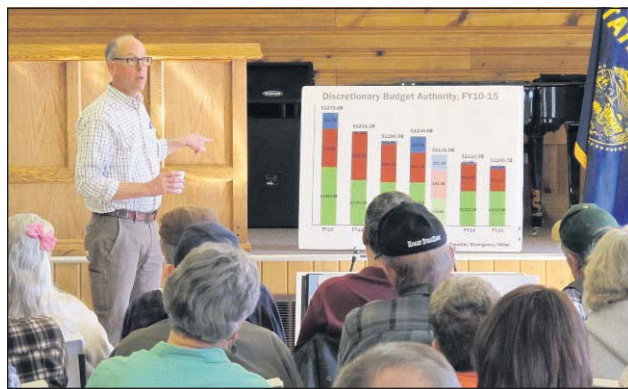
The event, held Feb. 17 at the Mt. Vernon Community Center, included an update on his efforts in Congress to grow Eastern Oregon's economy, including proposals to increase active management on national forests, improve forest health and grow jobs in

rural communities.

Walden took questions on local and national issues, ranging from problems at Veterans Administration to combating terrorist threats to curbing the national debt.

Walden said he appreciated all those who turned out for the event, his 86th town hall in three years.

“It's another way to get feedback and hear about the issues and concerns people have,” he said. “At each stop, my ‘to do’ list grows.”



Contributed photo

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden discusses federal spending at the town hall in Mt. Vernon last week.

## STUDENT ART



‘Zentangle’  
By Emilee Myers  
Fifth grade

Teacher: Georgia Boethin  
Humbolt Elementary

