

Reinstate public in District 3's hiring processes

The Grant School District 3 School Board has made its decision, promoting Grant Union principal Curt Shelley to be the new district superintendent. We wish him well in his new post, and anticipate that he will do a good job for the district, given his track record here.

At the same time, we're chagrined by the hasty process the District 3 School Board used to reach this important decision.

We understand the appeal of hiring a known quantity — a proven administrator who is familiar with the community and the challenges of living on the frontier — but the board snubbed the patrons by jumping into the decision without adequate notice of its intent or full public examination of its options.

Members undoubtedly felt pressured by the knowledge that Shelley was a finalist for a superintendent job elsewhere, and would be facing a decision point within

days. It was a tough call, to be sure, but perhaps one that could have been left to the job-seeker, not the hiring agency.

By skipping the search process, the interviews with candidates, and public introduction of the finalists, the board rushed the process and seemed to exclude the taxpaying public.

This is not intended as a criticism of Shelley — it's entirely possible that the board might have gone through that process and reached the same selection. But without a more extensive hiring process, that remains only an assumption, one that lingers like an asterisk on this key district decision.

Chalk it up as a lesson: The means to the end are important, especially when doing the public's business. District officials are beginning the search for Shelley's successor at Grant Union, and we hope that effort will put the district patrons and taxpayers firmly back in the loop. — SC



COMMENTARY

Will Gov. Brown follow Kitzhaber's footsteps in forests?

By Tom Partin
To EO Media Group



Tom Partin

Since Gov. Kate Brown was sworn in as Oregon's 38th governor last month, many in the forest products industry have wondered whether the new chief executive would continue her predecessor's proactive efforts on forestry issues. Aside from the circumstances surrounding his departure, we appreciated the time John Kitzhaber took to understand the connection of sustainable forest management to maintaining healthy forests and healthy communities.

This attention was evident in Kitzhaber's speech at January's Oregon Leadership Summit in Portland, where he correctly described how Oregon's urban areas have recovered from the great recession of 2008-10 but our rural communities are still suffering. He highlighted one of the three goals of the 2015 Business Plan which was to "put our natural resources to work" to help combat high unemployment and poverty rates in rural Oregon.

In his three terms as governor, Kitzhaber helped put a focus on the management needs of the federal forests including Forest Service lands in eastern and southwest Oregon and the BLM lands in western Oregon. During his second term as governor in the 1990s he worked with the Forest Service to establish the Blue Mountain Demonstration area on parts of the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. This 1.5 million-acre area was to highlight new management strategies for treating forests under new federal "east-side screens" restrictions. He was determined to address a situation

where harvest levels had plummeted, many sawmills had shut down, and many Oregonians lost their jobs.

In many ways, Kitzhaber helped lay the groundwork for the collaborative forestry efforts we see today.

Our industry also bought into the ideas found in the governor's salmon plan which was a delicate balance of managing our forested lands while at the same time enhancing salmon and steelhead habitat. Many private forest landowners voluntarily put millions of dollars into enhancing riparian habitat and the end result was to create ecosystems which have allowed Coho salmon run numbers to increase to over 400,000 wild fish returning to Oregon streams in 2014.

Last year Kitzhaber created a task force to review potential management strategies for Western Oregon's O&C timberlands and to better understand the implications of competing proposals that members of our Oregon congressional delegation had crafted. While an agreement was not reached by the task force, the report included an extensive outline of the challenges and extensive modeling to better understand the implications of different management approaches.

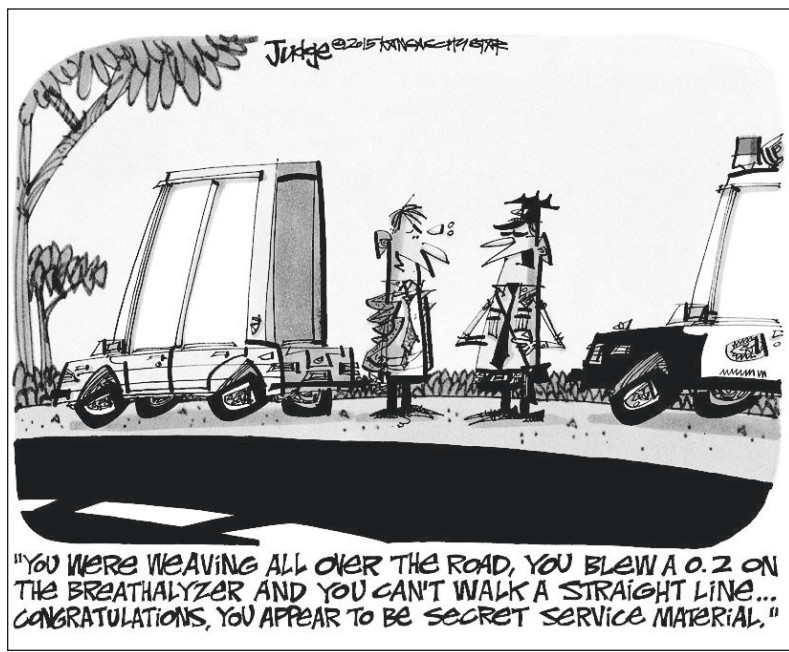
Finally, Kitzhaber was to become chair of the Western Governors Association in June, and he had a desire to bring a bipartisan group of governors together to focus on improved management of our federal forests. The governor's draft concepts "A

Case for Forest Service Renewal" were presented to the Board of Forestry in January and the subcommittee on federal forests reviewed them on Feb. 24. Predictably, far-left organizations that oppose federal timber management criticized this effort, but we hope the new administration continues this effort to work with Western governors in promoting federal forest reform in Congress.

Our membership hopes that Gov. Brown will carry forward many of the important forestry efforts that were started under the Kitzhaber administration and build on those concepts in the coming months and years. We have some very important issues facing Oregon on our private, state and federal forested lands. We need a governor willing to look closely and weigh in wisely on critical issues such as potential changes to the Oregon Forest Practices Act, management plans for the Tillamook and Clatsop state forests, the use of herbicides and pesticides on our forests and restoring balance to the management of our federal forests.

AFRC, our members and partners in the industry stand ready to work with Gov. Brown as she forms her new team and works on these critical issues to rural Oregon. Promoting active management is key to fulfilling Gov. Brown's pledge, as stated in her inauguration, to "create more living-wage jobs in every single corner of the state."

Tom Partin is president of American Forest Resource Council, an organization of manufacturers and companies that work directly in or represent the forest products industry.



WHERE TO WRITE

Washington, D.C.

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone-comments: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D — 516 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. Email: wayne_kinney@wyden.senate.gov Website: http://wyden.senate.gov Fax: 202-228-2717.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D — 313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-

3753. Email: senator@merkley.senate.gov. Fax: 202-228-3997. Oregon offices include One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St., Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; and 310 S.E. Second St., Suite 105, Pendleton, OR 97801. Phone: 503-326-3386; 541-278-1129. Fax: 503-326-2990.

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R — (Second District) 1404 Longworth Building, Washington D.C. 20515. Phone: 202-225-6730. No direct e-mail because of spam. Website: www.walden.house.gov Fax: 202-225-5774.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

It ain't broke

To the Editor:

I about fell out of my chair when I read Judy Kerr's letter regarding our Veteran Services Officer. No offense, but I don't know who she's talking about or even what she's talking about. Is he leaving? All I know is 'Munch' has been doing a wonderful job and has helped me in many ways, even helping me track down medical reports for my Purple Heart. If she's looking for someone with degrees and alphabet soup behind his name, I say if it ain't broke don't fix it; Bob's the best.

Richie Colbeth
John Day

Editor's Note: Grant County is in the process of hiring a new veterans officer due to the retirement of the current officer, Bob Muenchausen.

do we stop to think about the value that is added to our daily life by the hard working people at Patterson Bridge Road? I would like to share the many ways in which our forest service neighbors contribute to community life, but there is not room in a few column inches, so I will share a couple of the contributions they have made to our work at the North Fork John Day Watershed Council.

First, let's consider youth development. Do you know a teen who has had a summer job with the Watershed Councils, Summer Youth Programs? Each summer 20 or more young people in Grant County are employed through our program, and many of those projects take place on the Malheur National Forest. There would be no forestland youth crews without the dedicated planning of U.S. Forest Service staff.

Joe Rausch, Shannon Winegar, Roy Walker, Whitney Rapp, Ernie Gipson, Colleen Malaney and many others are contributing time above and beyond their daily workloads to help provide relevant projects for teens of Grant County. I wish I had room to name

everyone, but I imagine that most Forest employees have helped to make the youth program fly. It is appreciated.

The staff of the Malheur National Forest is central to success with many Watershed projects. Bob Hassmiller and Allen Taylor heartily share their extensive knowledge. Susan Garner encourages partnerships and reaches out with new opportunities. Shawna Clark and Joan Trosclair never fail to smile when we walk through the glass, front entry doors.

Betty Wilt keeps contracts coming to the community. So very many Malheur employees volunteer, contribute, and simply help to make John Day and the Forest a cheery and sustainable place to live and play.


Let's all extend our appreciation — life in Grant County goes well beyond the daily headlines, controversies, and harvests. It's the steady, good work being accomplished by our neighbors that puts the pulse in our county. Kudos to everyone at the Malheur National Forest!

Elaine Eisenbraun
Long Creek

FS benefits us all

To the Editor:

The Malheur National Forest is providing incredible benefits to Grant County. The services and amenities extend well beyond what we view as the standard task of the Forest Service. How often



Blue Mountain EAGLE

195 N. Canyon Blvd. • John Day, OR 97845
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MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHER	Marissa Williams, marissa@bmeagle.com
EDITOR	Scotta Callister, editor@bmeagle.com
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	Kristina Kreger, kristina@bmeagle.com
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT	Cheryl Hoefler, cheryl@bmeagle.com
COMMUNITY NEWS	Angel Carpenter, angel@bmeagle.com
SPORTS	Angel Carpenter, angel@bmeagle.com
MARKETING REP	Kim Kell, ads@bmeagle.com
CUSTOMER SERVICE REP	Lindsay Bullock office@bmeagle.com


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