

Court takes pulse on FS roads

Objection period ending for Elk 16, Big Mosquito

By **Scotta Callister**
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY – The Grant County Court is getting ready to weigh in on road changes in the Malheur National Forest's Elk 16 and Big Mosquito projects, as the Forest Service objection period comes to a close in mid-May.

The Court last week put out a call for public comment on specific roads affected by the projects, which are detailed in draft decisions issued April 1 by Malheur Forest Supervisor Steve Beverlin.

The comments to the Court were due Tuesday.

The Forest Service earlier held its own public comment periods on the two for-

est projects. Only those who gave substantive comments at that time have standing to participate in the objection phase.

At the April 29 Court meeting, Commissioner Chris Labhart proposed the county seek comments. The Court unanimously approved a notice to that effect.

Labhart noted the Court needs to make a decision on any road issues in the projects and notify the Forest Service within the 45-day objection period.

He asked for comments that were specific to a particular road or segment of road, saying the Court would try to visit those roads and take a stand.

The process arose amid ongoing discussions focusing on the County's Ordinance 2013-01, which states that all roads shall remain open "as historically and customarily utilized consistent with Grant County plans and poli-

cies, unless otherwise authorized for closure by the Grant County Court and Grant County Sheriff."

County Judge Scott Myers asked Beverlin to clarify the Court's standing for making objections, even on topics not cited in the county's earlier comments.

Beverlin said those who commented have standing to object on any portion of the projects.

Labhart noted the Court is among 15-20 people or organizations that commented during the comment period, and thus has standing.

He said he wanted to hear from people with concerns, even if they didn't make their own comments during the set period.

In response to a question, Beverlin said the Forest Service has taken input not only in its comment period, but throughout the scoping and development of the two projects, dating back four years for Elk 16 and about two years for Big Mosquito.

Some attending the Court session objected to the county's process, and balked at any road changes.

"I don't think you can move forward with this," said Howard Gieger, who claimed it poses a conflict with the Forest Service's travel management rule.

Brooks Smith, a member of the Grant County Public Forest Commission, called

changes proposed for more than 300 roads in the two projects "major actions."

He said the road decisions were to be done under travel management but are instead being done "project by project."

He and others focused on the status of Level 1 roads, many of which are still in use regardless of their status on paper.

However, Beverlin said those roads are currently "closed" from prior decisions.

"We're not closing them," he said. "They already are."

King Williams noted a lot of the roads were built for the Phoenix timber sale and then closed afterward.

While not concerned about the previously closed roads, he said he wants to look again at any currently open roads that are proposed to be closed or those that would be decommissioned, so they are not available for future use.

Jim Sproul objected to the Court's approach, saying it is not following the ordinance to keep all roads open. The ordinance says the roads are open unless authorized otherwise by the Court and sheriff.

Myers said the ordinance gives the Court this opportunity to seek more public input, and the Court wants comments that are specific to certain roads of concern.

"Very simply – all of them," replied Sproul. "It's been put to you clearly."

Labhart noted that the projects appear to include roads closed before the county ordinance was adopted.

"If they were legally closed, we don't have a problem with them," said Sproul.

Terry George said the Forest Service created its own "trap," closing roads without showing that on the ground or on maps. To the general public in the forest, he said, those roads are open.

"We're driving on them," George said.

Myers urged people to comment, even given the short time frame to the May 5 deadline.

"From here on out, we'll try to do this earlier, so people have a reasonable amount of time to comment," he said.



Contributed photo

Greg and Marla Armstrong of John Day zip along the streets of John Day toward the Strut, Stride, Straddle and Stroll finish line at Blue Mountain Hospital.

STRUT

Continued from Page A1

Mountain Hospital.

Each adult received a tote-style backpack with snacks and a water bottle, and all the children received goodie bags.

As the oldest participant, Linda Ladd was awarded a \$25 gift card to Len's Drug, and the youngest, Marshall Collier, though only a few months old, got a bike/riding toy from King's Discount to enjoy when he gets a bit older.

And for having the largest business contingent, Chester's Thrifway won a certificate for two extra-large pizzas from Figaro's.

The top prize of four admission tickets to the Oregon Zoo in Portland went to Sierra Cates.

This is the fourth year for the fundraiser, in which all the proceeds go to Hospice.

Hospice director Sylvia Dowdy said she is grateful for the support from the community.

"I love that we have the opportunity to make Hospice not sad for a day – which is how we should look at it every day," Dowdy said. "There's such a stigma of sadness about death, and it is so fun to see everyone enjoying themselves while providing funds for Hospice."

After the event, Strawberry Wilderness Community Clinic Drs. Andrew and Andrea Janssen spoke to the crowd about their family's upcoming move to Ethiopia, to help train doctors there for the next couple of years. They welcomed people to sign up to get email alerts on the Janssens' experiences.

Dowdy said the Janssens have been a huge support of Hospice and will be missed.

For more information about Home Health and Hospice, call 541-575-1648.

Horse illness leads to cleanup at fairgrounds

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – Officials say the Grant County Fairgrounds is safe for equine activities after a horse being boarded there was found to have strangles.

Mary Weaver, fair-

grounds manager, said the horse is no longer at the fairgrounds, and the staff has cleaned the area, following instructions from the John Day Veterinary Center.

"They had us take bleach water to all the drinking troughs and remove the manure from all the pens," Weaver said. "We raked them out well so the sunshine could take care of the rest."

She said the work was done last weekend, and she wants people who use the fairgrounds for riding activity to know the problem has been addressed.

"We were in contact with the vet as soon as we were made aware of the problem," she said. "We take these concerns very seriously."

Strangles is a contagious upper-respiratory bacterial infection that afflicts horses and other equines.

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FOR THE COUNTY OF GRANT
MAY 29 2013
BRENDA PERRY, COUNTY CLERK

AN ORDINANCE PERTAINING TO PUBLIC ROAD CLOSURES)
WITHIN GRANT COUNTY, OREGON) ORDINANCE
2013-01

THIS BEING the 22nd day of May, 2013, and a day set aside for a regular meeting of the Grant County Court; and there being present County Judge Scott W. Myers, and County Commissioners Chris B. Labhart and Boyd Britton.

WHEREAS, the safety and well-being of Grant County citizens and the custom and culture of Grant County are closely tied to the public lands within the boundary of Grant County; and

WHEREAS, the roads, trails, stock driveways, and by-ways over and across these public lands have customarily been utilized unrestricted by Grant County residents for search and rescue, fire protection, firewood gathering, access for hunting and fishing, livestock management, logging activities, mining, recreational uses and general welfare.

THEREFORE, be it hereby ordained that for the safety and well-being of Grant County citizens all roads, trails, stock driveways, and by-ways over and across public lands within the boundary of Grant County, Oregon shall remain open as historically and customarily utilized consistent with the Grant County plans and policies, unless otherwise authorized for closure by the Grant County Court and the Grant County Sheriff.

THIS ORDINANCE is adopted this 22nd day of May, 2013

GRANT COUNTY COURT
Scott W. Myers, County Judge
Chris B. Labhart, Commissioner
Boyd Britton, Commissioner

GRANT COUNTY SHERIFF
Glenn E. Palmer, Sheriff

ATTEST:
Mary R. Ferrioli, Court Secretary

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