

Rebuilding after the Canyon Creek fire

Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — The Grant County Planning Department is available to assist those whose homes were destroyed or damaged by the Canyon Creek Complex fire and who are ready to begin rebuilding.

Planning department staff share several items to consider and steps required in the process.

For land use application:

- The application needs to be completed within one year from fire.

- Applications will be for replacement dwelling; accessory buildings/outbuildings; pre-existing non-conforming use/structure.

- Multiple structures can be requested on one application. New structures that did not exist before, may be authorized on the same application.

- Deed copies necessary for application are provided by the clerk's office free of charge.

- ORMAP.net is a website resource for getting tax lot maps of your property

For Department of Environmental Quality:

- Property owners must have land use approval first.

Planning fees waived for wildfire victims

CANYON CITY — The Grant County Court voted unanimously Sept. 2 to authorize the Grant County Planning Department to waive planning fees for anyone rebuilding a structure destroyed by the Canyon Creek Complex fire.

- Applicants will need property identification information for the DEQ process, for the township, range, section and tax lots. That information is available at the assessor's office, or the planning department.

For building permits:

- Property owners must have land use and DEQ approval before a building permit can be issued.

- Permit fees are based on size, use and type of construction.

- Be sure that anyone doing work for you is properly licensed.

- Property owners may work on their own homes, but still need a permit.

- Two sets of plans are generally required, unless they are on 11X17-inch paper or smaller.

Address marker stake:

- Those who need a new

address stake, should call the planning department.

Other helpful resources:

- Rapid Response team of Oregon for clean-up assistance. 330-473-9659.

- Army National Guard for clean up and/or restoration. Call the Grant County Fairgrounds office, 541-575-1900.

- Natural Resource Conservation Service for reseed recommendations. 541-575-0135, ext. 3.

- Farm Service Agency, for forage or livestock loss. 541-523-7121.

- Department of State Lands, for permits for in-stream and bridge work. 541-388-6112.

To contact the DEQ at the Pendleton office, call 541-276-4063. For all other inquiries, call the Grant County Planning Department at 541-575-1519.

OTEC rates are going up

BAKER CITY — Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative rates are going up.

OTEC's 23,000-plus residential members in Baker, Harney, Grant and Union counties will notice an increase in their monthly delivery charge, from \$21.56 to \$25.50. The residential kilowatt-hour rate will remain the same.

The increase will be effective in electric bills mailed after Oct. 1.

In July, the Bonneville Power Administration announced a rate increase of 7.1 percent average for wholesale power and 4.4 percent average for transmission scheduled to take effect October 1.

At their Aug. 25 meeting, OTEC's board of directors approved an average rate increase of 5.8 percent for all members — 4.34 percent for residential members.

"For the past eight years we have been extremely frugal in our costs unrelated to BPA power purchases," said George Galloway, OTEC's board president. "This is the first time in four years that a percentage of the increase — 2 percent — will be allocated to OTEC's operating expenses."

Increases, relative to OTEC's operating expenses, have been passed through to its membership at a rate of one-half of a percent per year, far

below the rate of inflation, according to Galloway.

With BPA's announcement, soft natural gas prices, and an estimated wildfire tab for damages of approximately \$1.5 million — and with little FEMA disaster assistance on the horizon — OTEC needs to cover its expenses to operate, he said.

"We do not raise rates to generate profit," said general manager Werner Buehler. "But, at the end of the day when OTEC experiences an increase in power costs, we need to cover the cost of doing business and pass the increase along to the members who own the cooperative."

Advisory committee member sought

The Northeast Oregon Forests Resource Advisory Committee is seeking nominees to serve on a 15-member Resource Advisory Committee.

The committee's duties include recommending projects and funding to improve forest health, watersheds, roads and facilities on or adjacent to the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests.

Past projects include: noxious weed control, trail construction, thinning and improvement of fish passage to restore native species.

Advisory committee members will be officially appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture for a term of two years. They will not receive compensation, but a per diem allocation will be made to compensate for expenses associated with attending meetings.

Members must be able to attend one or two full-day meetings each year.

To the extent possible, mem-

bers should reside within Grant, Baker, Crook, Harney, Malheur,

Morrow, Union, Wallowa or Wheeler counties.

To all our customers,
friends and church brothers
& sisters:

Thank you for your support
and patronage these past 25
years. We will be retiring
and our last day is Tuesday,
September 15th.
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Golden Dragon
Stephen & Janet Pang

02645

Mitchell improves cellphone service with extenders

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

MITCHELL — Cellphone service is getting a boost from willing residents in the tiny Eastern Oregon city of Mitchell using in-home devices called "network extenders" to increase local coverage.

Sold by Verizon Wireless, Network extenders act as mini cell towers with enough signal strength to reach several blocks. Wheeler County officials recently bought four network extenders for Mitchell — population 130 — which were installed at strategic locations around town.

Volunteers agreed to have the equipment put in their own homes and businesses, creating a makeshift wireless network that now covers most of the old pioneer settlement.

Though AT&T has an existing cellular tower east of Mitchell, it faces the wrong way to carry reception into the community. That's led to public safety concerns for locals and tourists alike, especially after the nearby Painted Hills National Monument was named one of the "Seven Wonders of Oregon."

Mitchell is considered the gateway to the Painted Hills on Highway 26, which logged 70,000 visitors in 2014. U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, asked the federal First Responder Network Authority to help upgrade the area's cell service to reduce emergency response times.

"As the situation now stands, in the event of a traffic accident or fire, one would need to visit a ranch, store or find the payphone on Main Street in order to call 9-1-1," Wyden said in a letter sent June 10 to FirstNet Board Chairwoman Susan Swenson.

Greg Castleberry, Mitchell's fire chief and emergency manager, said cellphone service has become absolutely necessary from a public

safety perspective. Network extenders won't solve the problem entirely, he said, but do at least provide a temporary fix in town.

"It's very critical to get (victims) to medical services within that first golden hour," Castleberry said. "If someone uses their cellphone to place a 9-1-1 call, we can respond that much faster."

The idea started with Glenn Raber, who manages the city's wireless Internet service. Raber bought his own Verizon Network Extender in April, and immediately saw its potential for the community.

"They actually do quite well for what they are," Raber said. "As soon as I saw how well it worked, I thought it might be a temporary fix for the city here."

Network extenders look like an ordinary wireless router and work by communicating with the user's mobile network through a high-speed Internet connection. Raber said he could get service up to three blocks away after installing the technology in his home.

The Wheeler County Court agreed to purchase four more units at \$250 each for the rest of Mitchell. So far, Raber said they have been well received.

"This is the greatest thing here since sliced bread," he said with a laugh.

Trevor Humphreys, Wheeler County economic development director, said having cellphone service in Mitchell might also encourage visitors to stop and stay longer in town.

"It encourages people to come in, have a bite to eat or go by the store," Humphreys said. "I think this is something that could be emulated across a lot of small towns." Humphreys said Verizon has looked at sites for a Mitchell cell tower in the past, but it hasn't come to fruition. Wheeler County's two other cities, Fossil and Spray, both have cell service.

"It's been so hard to get an actual carrier to put in a cell tower," Humphreys said. "This is kind of a Band-Aid that can at least provide service to folks coming through."

We, that live on Corral Gulch Rd., want to especially say a big THANK YOU to the two ODF crew members, Dave Myers and Kyle Reed, that worked so hard to save our homes. We are among the fortunate few that still have our homes. We are also very thankful that no lives have been lost in the fire. We also want to say thank you, with great appreciation, to OTEC, CenturyLink, ODOT and all those workmen helping to get the power on, the telephones working and clearing/cleaning up along highway 395.

Our thoughts are with all our neighbors in the Canyon and Prairie City areas who have lost so much.

We are Grant County strong and wouldn't trade it for anywhere else.

*Gerald & Jean Sagert
Neil & Nita Miller
Dennis & Linda Dickenson
Marian Greendale*

02604



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Are you part of a **NON-PROFIT** in Grant County?

We need your help!

The Blue Mountain Eagle is working to create a master list of non-profits in Grant County. We are looking for the **NAME** of the non-profit, **CONTACT PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL ADDRESS, and WEB SITE** if available to be added to, or updated on the list for this year's Grant County Giving Back section, coming out in October.

Either call the information into the Eagle Office at 541-575-0710 or email kristina@bmeagle.com

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