

PLAN

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“We’ve got to get out of this pattern where we do nothing with these lands,” Davidson said.

The Blue Mountains Forest Plan deals with three national forests in northeast Oregon: the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur. It does not approve any specific projects, but sets overall goals and desired conditions for land management.

Forest plans should be

updated every 10-15 years to account for the latest science and conditions on the ground. The plan’s goals are to promote ecological integrity, economic and social well-being.

It’s taken more than a decade to get to this point in the latest revision. In 2014, the Forest Service released its draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed revised Forest Plan, which received mostly negative feedback in more than 1,100 written public comments.

In response, the Forest Service took a step back in 2015 and held a series of public

meetings around the region to gain additional input. The last of those meetings was held in December.

The agency’s preferred alternative fails to meet the management needs of the forests, Smith said. He provided estimates that show 73 percent of the forests are at moderate to high risk for severe wildfires. Yet, the plan as written would limit mechanical thinning to just 2.1 percent of the forests annually, he said.

“It could take decades for the Forest Service to restore or treat these forests back to health,” Smith said.

Timber harvests have already dropped 90 percent in the region since the mid-1980s, and Warness said more than 17 mills have closed over the past 25 years. The 1,200 jobs lost are equivalent to 106,000 jobs in the Portland metro area, she added.

As it stands, Boise Cascade is trucking in logs from nearly 300 miles away just to maintain what few mills they have left in Eastern Oregon, Warness said. Local timber harvests must increase if that infrastructure is to survive, much less expand.

“The way this plan is written, their standards and guide-

lines don’t meet the needs of the national forests,” Warness said. “It seems fairly abstract, but it will affect all future projects.”

Sabrina Stadler, team leader for the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision, said they are working now to assess all comments and decide how to shape new alternatives. She said there haven’t been any decisions yet, but that there will “definitely be changes.”

The team is also still meeting with cooperating agencies, including the state, tribes and counties, to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Stadler said she understands why people are frustrated with the process, but it’s important to remember meetings only wrapped up a month ago.

“It’s just a big effort,” she said. “It’s a lot to make sure we’re treating everyone equitably, and nobody is getting shortchanged.”

Pace and scale of restoration were identified as a top concern throughout the process, Stadler said, along with access and wilderness issues.

“We’ve been doing our best to reach out to as many people as we can. That just takes time,” she said.

WAGE

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create more family wage jobs through his business development company, so helping Oregonians support their families is a high priority for him. At the same time, however, he sees Eastern Oregon businesses’ tax returns while helping them obtain financing. He knows that many of them would have to lay people off in order to afford a wage hike.

“I think it’s very reasonable for there to be a modest increase in minimum wage,” he said. “I want people to be able to take care of their families. But raising to \$13.50 an hour, that’s a huge jump and I think it is going to have a negative im-

pact on the economy.”

He said the Republican caucus believes there needs to be a “long and thoughtful discussion” on the issue. But he also said that postponing a vote until the 2017 session may not be realistic, given the ballot measures planned for November.

Rep. Greg Baretto (R-Cove) spent three and a half hours Thursday at a public legislative hearing on minimum wage that he described as “rural Oregon versus metro.”

Many Portland-area residents gave testimony about how difficult it was for them to live on minimum wage, he said, but Eastern Oregon residents who came on a bus organized by Rep. Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario) did a “tremendous job” of explaining who the wage hike would hurt.

Seniors living on Social Security would have difficulty making ends meet as the cost of living inevitably rose, he said. Teenagers and college students would have difficulty finding work as entry-level jobs were cut. Farms, restaurants and hotels would take a significant financial hit. Communities hoping to bring in new industries would watch as corporations chose to locate across the Idaho border, where wages are \$7.25 an hour.

At the beginning of the hearing, Baretto asked the governor how much research had been done into how the proposal would affect the economy, job creation and unemployment. Brown answered the question by saying she knew there were “ions” of studies about minimum wage. She then stated that her major concern was helping struggling families.

Baretto said it seemed that those spearheading the minimum wage hike were going into the decision based on emotional testimony instead of data.

“That, to me, is not wise leadership,” he said.

The way to help Oregonians support their families, he said, is to create a business-friendly “Petri dish” ripe for job creation and recruiting businesses to the state.

Robert Burns Supper on tap in Condon

Blue Mountain Eagle

CONDON — The 19th annual Robert Burns Supper is coming up from 2-5 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 23, at the Condon Elks Lodge.

The event honors the Condon area’s Scottish heritage, which was marked as far back as the 1950s when weekend-long celebrations were held. The tradition, which was revived about 20 years ago, is held on the Saturday nearest to Jan. 25, the birth date of Scotland’s beloved poet, Robert Burns.



Contributed photo

Activities include readings of Burns’ poetry; pipers, drummers and other participants from Pendleton, Arlington, Redmond, Portland, Vancouver and the Carson, Washington, area; Scottish music and food; and anecdotes from Scottish families who settled in the area.

Local families of Scottish heritage are encouraged to share memorabilia, diaries and

Condon Highland Guard Pipers, from left, Bill Shelton, Carson, Washington, and Rick McCaul, Portland, perform at a past Robert Burns Celebration in Condon. The celebration will take place from 2-5 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 23, at the Condon Elks Lodge this year.

photographs. The Chase-Couture-Fatland families will be featured this year. A shortbread contest has become a popular favorite. For details on the contest, call 541-571-9507.

A limited meal of soup,

sandwiches and salad bar will be available in the Elks Lodge dining room through the evening. Admission is \$17 a person or \$30 a couple.

For more information, call 541-384-2421.

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Committee vacancies open for May primary

Blue Mountain Eagle

A variety of Grant County committee vacancies will be filled during the May 17 primary election.

According to Grant County Clerk Brenda Percy,

positions on the ballot will include Grant County assessor; commissioner No. 2; Public Forest Commission Nos. 1, 3, 5 and 7, and alternates Nos. 1 and 2; sheriff; surveyor; and treasurer. No candidates have filed for

many of the positions. Candidates who have filed are Tonya Cates, assessor; Chris Labhart, commissioner No. 2; Glenn Palmer, sheriff; and Mike Springer, surveyor. The deadline to file is Tuesday, March 8.

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Netflix: Offer expires on April 4, 2016. Valid for bundles (12 months of Netflix Service on the \$9.99 (per month) "Two Screens at a Time Streaming Plan" (for total value of \$119.99). Hopper w/3ling or other Netflix compatible device and internet required. Not available with dishNET satellite internet. Hopper w/3ling or other Netflix compatible device and internet required. Not available with dishNET satellite internet. *Joining Netflix customers will return to normal billing after \$119.99 credit is exhausted. Offer is not redeemable or refundable for cash, subject to applicable law, and cannot be exchanged for Netflix Gift Subscriptions. You may apply the value of the offer to a different plan, or other services offered by Netflix. Exchanges in this manner may alter the duration of the offer. Netflix service price plans subject to change. Limit one promotion toward each monthly membership fee for your Netflix account. For details, please visit www.netflix.com/termsand.


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