

Malheur County voters voice resounding 'no' to Owyhee monument

By Amanda Peacher
Oregon Public Broadcasting

An overwhelming majority of voters in Malheur County rejected the idea Tuesday of a national monument in a corner of southeast Oregon known as the Owyhee Canyonlands.

The vast and rugged area is known for its stunning red rock geology and canyons, extreme remoteness and wild-life habitat. It's also an important area for cattle grazing and hunting.

The idea of an Owyhee National Monument is championed by Keen Footwear. The Portland-based company led a petition campaign to convince President Obama to designate the monument, using his executive authority through the Antiquities Act.

Malheur County leaders decided to put the idea to citizens with an advisory vote, and County Clerk Deborah DeLong says voter turnout was high for a special election — higher even than some primary elections. Ninety percent of voters rejected the monument proposal. In some rural precincts, 100 percent of voters voted no.

"It's amazing to me that the difference in the vote was 90 percent no and 10 percent yes," said DeLong. "That's a huge statement."

Malheur County resident Tim Davis leads the grassroots group Friends of the Owyhee in Malheur County. He voted yes on the monument proposal, because he said it's important "to have areas like this for people to explore and love."

"Now that the people of Malheur

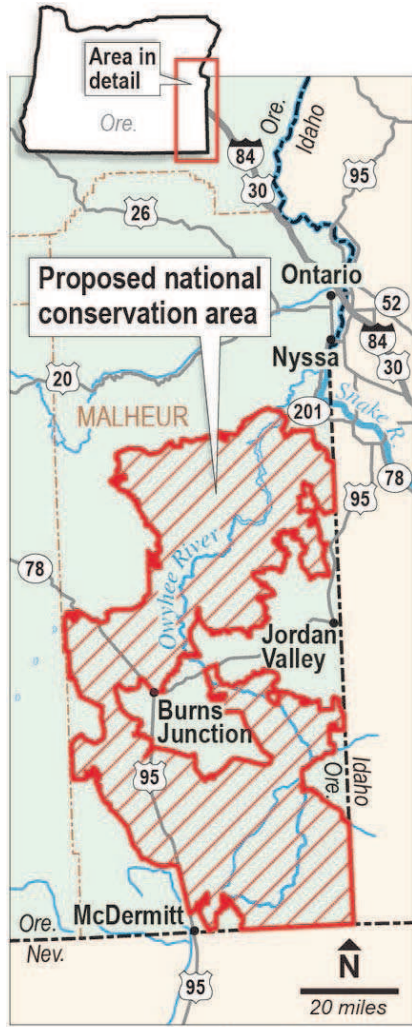
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Deborah DeLong,
Malheur County clerk

County have spoken loudly and clearly against a 2.5 million acre federal monument, it's time for Gov. (Kate) Brown and our U.S. senators to speak out against it as well," said Steve Russell, Chairman of the Owyhee Basin Stewardship Coalition, in a statement. "Oregon already has millions of acres of protected lands, rivers and oceans."

Conservation proposals for wilderness or monument designations in the Owyhee have also drawn fierce local opposition during recent public meetings. The Oregon Natural Desert Association has been talking about wilderness in the Owyhee for years, but that can only be designated through Congress.

President Obama has not given any indication that he plans to designate the Owyhee a national monument, as some conservationists propose. Obama has already created or expanded 19 national monuments. Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell said last week that she is not aware of any coordination between her office and the White House on a



Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

monument proposal. The Malheur County vote is advisory only and holds no legal weight.

Malheur County water situation may improve

By Sean Ellis
EO Media Group



Capital Press/Sean Ellis

ONTARIO — The Owyhee Reservoir could provide the 1,800 farms in Eastern Oregon and part of Idaho that depend on it for irrigation a normal water supply for the first time in four years.

The reservoir provides water for 118,000 irrigated acres in Malheur County in Eastern Oregon and around Homedale and Marsing in southwestern Idaho.

Snowpack levels in the Owyhee Basin, which feeds the Owyhee River and the reservoir, have been bleak the past four years and the Owyhee Irrigation District has only been able to provide the irrigators who depend on the reservoir a significantly reduced portion of their normal 4 acre-foot allotment the past two years.

OID patrons received 1.7 acre-feet last year and 1.6 acre-feet in 2014.

As a result, farmers have left a lot of farm ground idle and switched many fields to less water-intensive crops that are also less lucrative.

But snowpack levels were well above normal for much of this winter and the reservoir is filling fast.

"It's going to be significantly better than last year," said Oregon farmer Bruce Corn, a member of the OID's board of directors. "It certainly looks promising."

Potatoes are harvested in a field near Ontario in August. Farmers in Eastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho who get their irrigation water from the Owyhee Reservoir are looking at a much better water supply this year.

The reservoir peaked at 205,000 acre-feet of usable storage water last year but was already closing in on 300,000 acre-feet as of March 8, according to OID Manager Jay Chamberlin.

"We're feeling pretty good about the outlook," he said.

Reservoir in-flow levels have varied between 3,000 and 5,000 cubic feet per second recently, which means the reservoir is receiving between 6,000 and 10,000 acre-feet of water every day.

Chamberlin said it takes more than 400,000 acre-feet in the reservoir for every OID patron to receive their full 4 acre-foot allotment.

The OID will hold its annual meeting March 22 at the Four Rivers Cultural Center in Ontario and could announce a tentative 2016 allotment then.

Group support ban on daylight saving time falls back

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A ballot initiative to end daylight saving time in Oregon is on hold until 2017.

Medford resident David Miles launched a petition drive in November to abolish the tradition by 2018.

Miles said his force of about 20 volunteers was insufficient to gather the required 117,578 signatures to place the measure on the ballot in November. As of Sunday, the group had collected about 1,000 signatures, Miles said.

"We have our sights set on next year," Miles said. "I had to look at it realistically, as much as I would have loved to have it on the ballot this year."

Miles said he plans to start a Go Fund Me page to raise money to hire paid petitioners next year.

The community service officer with Jackson County Sheriff's Office said he started the initiative after feeling tired of complaining every year about losing sleep and adjusting clocks and deciding he should do something about it.

Adjusting the clock forward in the spring may cause spikes in workplace accidents and traffic crashes, according to multiple bodies of research, including one by the University of Colorado.

A University of California Berkeley study found that a

two-month extension of daylight saving time in Australia during the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 failed to curtail electricity demand.

Lawmakers in several states, including California, have proposed alternatives to daylight saving changes or asked that voters decide on whether to keep the practice.

"What I would really like to see the country say is enough is enough and end daylight saving nationally," Miles said.

He said, if more states opt to abolish the practice, there may be more momentum for a national change.

Oregon Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, introduced a bill in January 2015 that would have let voters to decide whether to abolish daylight saving in 2021.

Dozens of Oregonians testified in favor of the measure.

The legislation stalled in the Senate Rules Committee because some lawmakers were concerned about being



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Submitted photo

out of sync with Washington and California, according to Thatcher's office.

The country had an on-and-off-again relationship with daylight saving time until 1966 when Congress codified it to try to simplify a confusing patchwork of different time zones across the country. Individual states were allowed to opt out. Arizona, Hawaii and some U.S. territories have chosen to remain on standard time.

The No More Daylight Saving Time in Oregon ini-

tiative was the first that Miles sponsored.

"I'm not upset it didn't get on the ballot," he said. "I learned a lot. I understand that some of my goals were unrealistic. It'll give me more of an ability to be successful next time."

In the meantime, he maintains a Facebook page where he'll give supporters updates on the effort: facebook.com/nomoredstinoregon.

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