

Multiple interests represented at Forest Plan discussion

By George Plaven
EO Media Group

An overflow crowd of about 100 people gathered Wednesday evening at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton — coming from as far as Baker City, Joseph and even Bend — looking for answers to the same basic question.

Who should be allowed to do what, and where, on the Blue Mountains national forests?

Those decisions are ultimately guided by the Blue Mountains Forest Plan, which is undergoing its first revision since 1990. It has been a slow, laborious process as the Forest Service attempts to balance all manner of public interests, from access and recreation to logging and conservation.

The stakes were laid out during Wednesday's discussion of the forest plan, which was recorded and aired Thursday on "Think Out Loud" on Oregon Public Broadcasting. Host Dave Miller moderated a panel of guests that included Malheur National Forest Supervisor Steve Beverlin; Darilyn Parry Brown, executive director of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council; King Williams, a natural resources consultant based in John Day; Eric Quaempts, natural resources director for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; and James Nash, a fly fishing outfitter and fifth-generation rancher from Enterprise.

The Blue Mountains Forest Plan comprises 4.9 million acres of public lands on the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur national forests in Eastern Oregon. Each for-



OPB producer Phoebe Flanigan holds a microphone for former Joseph mayor Peggy Kite-Martin as she makes a statement about the Blue Mountains Forest Plan during a taping of 'Think Out Loud' April 6 at BMCC in Pendleton.

est gets its own individual plan, with the documents adding up to thousands of pages of desired conditions for the landscape.

Beverlin described the forests like a quilt, patched together in various shades of green, brown and black. It's up to the Forest Service to make sure tree stands are healthy, that access is maintained and habitat preserved. The challenge, Beverlin said, is striking an appropriate balance.

"I think some people believe that every acre can provide every use for everyone. It can't," Beverlin said. "It's going to take compromise from everyone."

Finding that compromise has been an ongoing effort. When the Forest Service released its draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest Plan in 2014, the reaction was "less than stellar," as Beverlin put it. That prompted another round of public meet-



The host of OPB's "Think Out Loud" Dave Miller asks a question about the tribal perspective on the Forest Plan.

ings in 2015, which has led to two new alternatives that will be included in the final EIS later this fall.

Former Joseph mayor Peggy Kite-Martin spoke during the show, saying that the forests are part of Eastern Or-

gon's culture. She said the politics of the debate have left forest users in a difficult situation as the pendulum swings back and forth between industry and conservation.

"Our culture is in danger of dying because people can't get out into the woods," Kite-Martin said.

Public access was a common concern among members of the crowd, who vented their frustrations over road closures. However, environmental issues were also brought to the forefront by Brown, who directs the Hells Canyon Preservation Council. She said the forests already have too many roads, which has caused heavy erosion in wild habitat.

"I do believe there is a place for ATV riding on our public lands. I really do," Brown said. "They have to be at the right place, at the right time."

Williams, who owns his own consulting company, said



Steve Beverlin, supervisor of the Malheur National Forest, gestures to the audience while answering a question sitting on a panel of experts during a taping of OPB's "Think Out Loud" April 6 at BMCC in Pendleton. The topic of the show was the controversial Blue Mountains Forest Plan.

a lack of active management — such as tree thinning and cattle grazing — is causing a whole other set of concerns, leaving the forests to become overstocked and prone to disease or fire. Meanwhile, the region's timber industry has shriveled. Williams said the forests grow about 800 million board feet of wood every year, of which 500 million board feet is left to waste.

Beverlin said the two new forest plan alternatives take that feedback into account, and will focus on increasing both the pace and scale of restoration. That could help provide more logs to the mill, he said, while lowering the risk of destructive wildfires.

Quaempts said the tribes are working where they can with the Forest Service on restoration projects to protect traditional First Foods. The key, Quaempts said, is to be mindful of what the forests are capable of providing. He believes the forests are big enough to accommodate ev-

eryone's interests.

Others, like Nash, were less optimistic. Nash said he is not happy with the current state of the forests, and worries that even after a plan is finalized, lawsuits will inevitably keep the whole thing tangled up in court.

"There will be groups that file lawsuits that stop any progress of using the forests," Nash said. "There are a lot of people out there who don't think people should use the woods."

A majority of the crowd raised their hands when asked if they felt the Forest Service just planned to do whatever it wanted, regardless of the outcome. Beverlin sharply disagreed.

"I don't believe that's true," he said. "Otherwise, why are we here listening again?"

Full audio from the show can be found at www.opb.org/radio/programs/thinkoutloud/segment/blue-mountains-forest-plan.



Contributed photo
Grant Union science students, from left, Duane Stokes, Elijah Humbird, Zack Dieter, Dante Valentine and Cauly Weaver, work on a science experiment. A microgravity experiment they designed was sent into space Friday and has reached the International Space Station.

Local students' experiment reaches space station

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Five Grant Union science students' experiment has reached the International Space Station.

Sophomores Zack Dieter, Elijah Humbird, Duane Stokes, Dante Valentine and Cauly Weaver were ninth-graders when they competed in a fall of 2014 microgravity experiment contest that would send their project on a space rocket into low Earth orbit.

Their project and 24 other student experiments were originally aboard the SpaceX CRS-7 as part of the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP) Odyssey II, but the craft exploded 2.5 minutes after launch June 28, 2015.

This time, the launch into space was a success. The Student Spaceflight Experiments Program projects on Mission 7 arrived safely Sunday afternoon.

"Early this morning Astronauts Kopra and Peake maneuvered the grappling arm to reach out and capture

the Dragon — capture was confirmed at 7:23 EDT," announced Stacy Hamel, the education program manager of the project.

The Grant Union team's entry focuses on how microgravity might affect variation of protein structures. The experiment looks at the structure of a protein in E. coli, and factors that could encourage "misfolded proteins" — a possible cause of slow-developing diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's diseases, among others.

Science teacher Sonna Smith had planned for the five students to conduct a duplicate of the experiment in four to five weeks, at the same time the astronauts would conduct the experiment in space. A wrinkle got in the way of their plans when the astronauts opened the experiment earlier than instructed.

"The idea was to keep the bacteria in stasis (until the latter part of the trip), so the protein they produced would not degrade," she said. "I am hoping that some of the protein produced will survive."

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