

The Blue Mountain EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1868



Grant Union's Lusco wins state wrestling title. Page A10

Grant Union, Prairie City basketball teams all advance to state. Page A10

Report: Economy does not support scheduled air flights

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant County area does not have the population, employment and income levels needed to support regularly scheduled passenger service at Grant County Regional Airport.

That's the conclusion of a recent report on rural airport services presented at the Grant County Court's Feb. 14 meeting. The Grant County area has seen declining population and household income over the past decade. It has also seen a significant drop in manufacturing sector earnings, which is positively correlated with demand for air service, the report said.

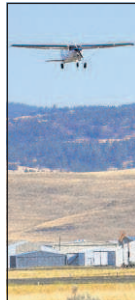
"The region has limited demand for passenger air service," ECONorthwest said in its report. "This is due to the area's relatively small population and limited economic footprint."

Airport manager Haley Walker said she contacted the Oregon Department of Aviation in fall 2016 about applying for a Critical Oregon Airport Relief grant to support a passenger air service study and was told a study was already underway.

The department had contracted with ECONorthwest to describe passenger air service distribution across Oregon using the framework of supply and demand. The study was completed in January and includes a case study for Eastern Oregon, with a section on Grant County Regional Airport and John Day.

According to Federal Aviation Administration data provided in the report, Grant County Regional Airport saw 251 enplanements in 2007 and 102 in 2009, but none were reported after that date.

See AIRPORT, Page A18



Grant County Regional Airport.

PLAN LOOKS AT AGING FOREST FACILITIES



Contributed photo/Rex Kamstra

The Aldrich Mountain Lookout on the Malheur National Forest.

Malheur National Forest goal: sustainable infrastructure

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The message in the Malheur National Forest's recently issued draft Facility Master Plan is bleak but not unique.

Insufficient funding and accumulating deterioration have created a "national junkyard" within the Forest Service's portfolio of 40,000 administrative, recreation and research buildings nationwide, according to an InBusiness Magazine article cited by Teresa Dixon, a program manager at Malheur National Forest, in her talk to the Grant County Court Feb. 14.

Deteriorating buildings pose safety risks, with rotting floorboards, collapsing foundations — even swaying lookouts. They also pose health risks, including hantavirus and mold. While much damage is environmental, some is human-caused — including vandalism, graffiti and bullet holes, Dixon noted.

Gloomy finances

Nationwide, the Forest Service has identified 3,374 buildings that it wants to decommission. These buildings need \$195 million worth of repairs, while the maintenance bill for all Forest Service buildings is estimated to be \$1.1 billion.

Locally, the Malheur National Forest owns 133 fire, administration or other (FAO) buildings and leases two more. Replacement value for these buildings, including guard stations, firefighter housing and lookouts, is estimated to be \$36.8 million, while maintenance funding needed to keep them up is \$1.1 million.

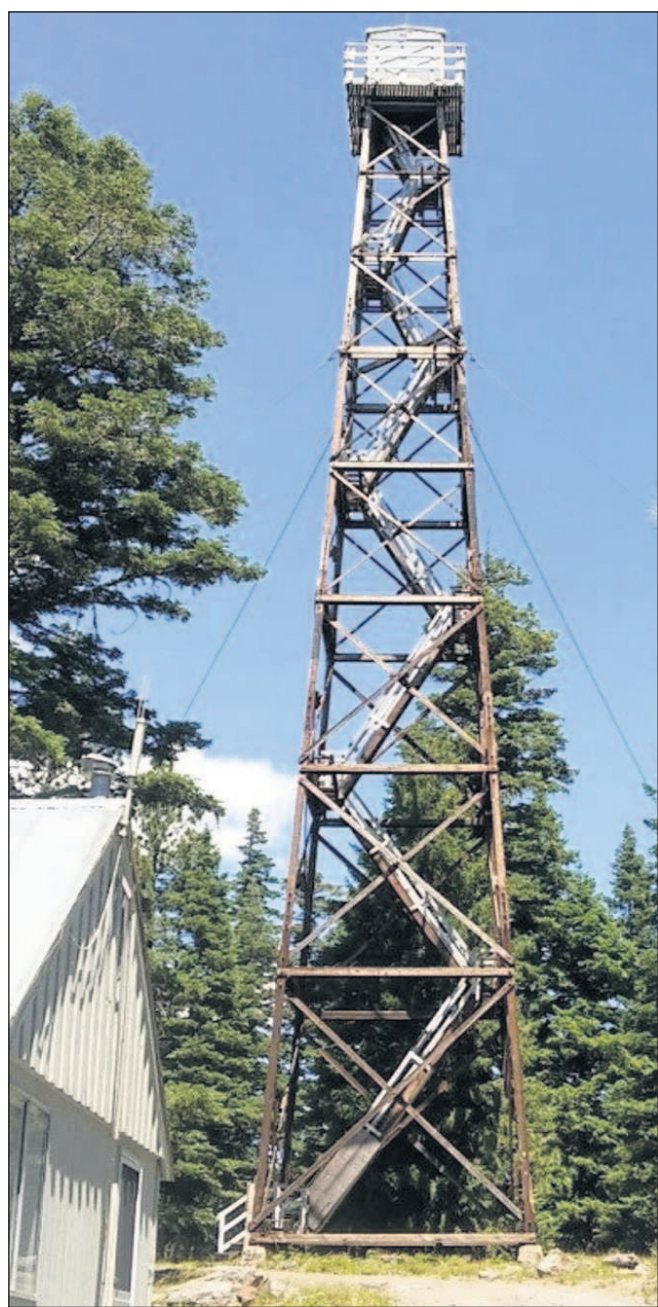
The forest also has 45 developed recreation sites with 94 associated buildings — mostly toilets. The forest has 31 developed campgrounds, including 21 that charge fees, as well as five recreational rentals, four snow parks and five miscellaneous sites. Replacement value for these

See FOREST, Page A18



Contributed photo/U.S. Forest Service

The Raddue Guard Station on the Malheur National Forest was abandoned about 15 years ago.



Contributed photo/U.S. Forest Service

The Frazier Lookout on the Malheur National Forest.

Blueprint presented for new housing stimulus plan

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

The city of John Day is getting closer to establishing an urban renewal area intended to encourage new home building in the community, the John Day City Council learned Feb. 13.

City staff presented preliminary boundaries for the program to the Project Advisory Committee during its Jan. 29 meeting. City Manager Nick Green told the council.

State law limits urban renewal areas to 25 percent of a city's land area and 25 percent of its assessed value. John Day's 1,376 total acres



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

This empty lot in the Valley View/Ironwood Estates neighborhood could be included in John Day's proposed urban renewal area and be eligible for subsidies.

are assessed at about \$100 million. The city's consultants at Elaine Howard Consulting recommended including up to 286 acres in order to leave room for future amendments.

Under the city's current proposal, new home construction would be encouraged by offering a 7 percent cash re-

See PLAN, Page A18

City to support new housing project

Four duplexes planned along John Day River

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

A spurt in new home construction could be seen as early as this summer, with four duplexes planned along the John Day River at the end of Canton Street in John Day.

Only three new homes have been built in John Day over the past decade, City Manager Nick Green told the city's Planning Commission Feb. 13 as they

took a first look at Sally Knowles' eight-unit project. The project fits in well with the city's goal of encouraging new home construction, Green said.

According to plans submitted by Knowles, two 1,371-square-foot, two-story duplexes, each unit with three bedrooms and 2 1/2 bathrooms, will be built on the north side of the property along the river, and two 1,265-square-foot, single-story duplexes, each unit with three bedrooms and 1 1/2 bathrooms, will be built on the south side.

Knowles told the planning commission that she

See PROJECT, Page A18

