



Sharon Livingston

Rancher calls for filling natural resource adviser position

County court will bring matter back March 14

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

In a personal and “from the heart” talk to the Grant County Court on Feb. 21, Long Creek rancher Sharon Livingston emphasized the need for protecting natural resources — water, timber and grazing land — and called for the court to fill the position for a natural resource adviser.

Livingston described the efforts she’s taken to maintain her ranch in a productive state and the various groups she has represented in Salem lobbying on behalf of agriculture.

She expressed her frustration over how government agencies manage natural resources in Grant County. She said the Forest Service has not properly managed the land adjacent to her ranch in 40 years, noting that she has to repair the fence between the properties to keep out cattle grazing on leased forest lands.

A natural resource adviser for the county needs to be capable of writing documents and representing Grant County in the legislature, Livingston said. She praised past Eastern Oregon legislators but noted that they often were outvoted in the state House and Senate.

County residents Jim Sproul and Sam Palmer thanked Livingston for her talk and supported her call for the court to fill the natural resource adviser position. Sproul said the person chosen by the court should be a local who makes decisions based on “good solid science.”

Commissioner Jim Hamsher asked that the matter be put on the court’s next agenda, and the court agreed. Judge Scott Myers noted that the county had received three responses to requests for proposals that it issued last year, and all three were locals.

The court approved a request from Julie Ellison,

county treasurer, to present the fiscal year 2019 cost-of-living adjustment wage increase to the county budget committee. The COLA is determined by the federal consumer price index, in accordance with a contract with the union representing the sheriff’s office, and then applied to the rest of the county’s wage earners, she said. The COLA for the next fiscal year will be 2.13 percent.

The court approved a request from Josh Wolf, corrections manager for Grant County Jail, for two external hard drives to store body camera video files, several night-vision cameras for outside the jail and several rugged heavy-duty radio microphones with an estimated total cost of \$5,224. The court also approved a request to lease a dishwasher from Ecolab at \$94 per month for one year.

Myers said he had signed a \$15,105 contract with North River Electric to update the lights inside the jail with LED fixtures. With a \$10,574 rebate from Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, the cost will be \$4,532 to be paid from the jail expansion fund.

Citing an unusual amount of juvenile delinquency cases, the court approved moving \$5,370 from the county’s all-department contingency fund to the Community Corrections fund.

The court approved creating a half-time county position for about 20 hours to assist Veanne Weddle, senior programs manager, clear a backlog on a list of inactive seniors and other office matters.

A request by Mindy Winegar, fair manager, to change the job descriptions for a secretary and a groundskeeper that would save the county about \$6,000 was approved by the court.

The court approved a funding request by Katee Hoffman, veteran services officer, so she could attend a women’s veterans conference in April.

The Grant County Court will meet again March 14.

Options presented for aging Forest Service buildings

Allowing structures to ‘melt in place’ is a viable option

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Selling aging Forest Service buildings, finding new uses for them or even letting some “melt in place” — anything but tearing them down.

That was the message a handful of residents told Malheur National Forest officials during a meeting on the forest’s recently completed draft Facilities Master Plan held at Grant County Regional Airport Feb. 20.

When told the plan was drafted by retired engineers Jerry Carlson, Dick Sawaya and Bob VinderLinden for Northstar Technology Corp. of Irvine, California, several residents said the survey work should have been performed by locals. The Forest Service also needs to “look outside the box” to find solutions, they said.

If the Forest Service is having trouble housing seasonal firefighters, then why not fix up these old buildings, Billy Jo George asked. Noting that she believed the agency didn’t try hard enough to find the money needed to address a mounting maintenance backlog for its facilities, George blamed the situation on “nothing but sheer neglect” and called the proposal to tear buildings down a “quick fix.”

Citing the case of a building ruined by a tree growing out of a foundation, Howard Gieger noted how easy it would have been for a maintenance worker to kill the tree when it was young. He also described how he and others long ago volunteered to maintain the Crane Prairie Work Center if they could use it during winter. They ended up being told no, he said.

“Overhead is eating you up,” Gieger said.

Jim Sproul suggested that people should be allowed to “adopt” a site and agree to fix it up if they were allowed to use the site for 10 years. He also suggested the Forest Service operate more along “capitalist” policies, in particular selling the land that forest buildings sit on.

Sproul also likened some restoration efforts made with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act under the Obama administration to “putting lipstick on a pig.”

He said he grew concerned when he initially heard the Forest Service might decommission buildings built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. He suggested the agency “at least let them melt down.”

Frances Preston said she opposed decommissioning any buildings on the Malheur National Forest and asked why there was an effort to step up decommissioning. She suggested the agency should first offer buildings it didn’t want to the county.

Teresa Dixon, the for-



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Grant County resident Jim Sproul speaks to Malheur National Forest staff following a meeting on the recently completed draft Facilities Master Plan at Grant County Regional Airport on Feb. 20. From left, roads engineer Zeke Langum; Sproul; forest facilities manager Keith Nickerson; recreation, lands and minerals program manager Teresa Dixon; and recreation, engineering, lands and minerals staff officer Mike Montgomery.



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Teresa Dixon talks about the recently completed draft Facilities Master Plan at Grant County Regional Airport on Feb. 20. Attendees said allowing old buildings to ‘melt in place’ would be better than tearing them down.

est’s recreation, lands and minerals project manager, explained that the Forest Service is not allowed to set up long-term recreation leases or to sell the land where a building sits. Congress sets those rules, and the Forest Service can’t lobby for itself in Washington, D.C., she said.

Zeke Langum, a forest roads engineer, defended the contractors who drafted the facilities plan. He also noted that the plan was advisory, and any proposal for decommissioning would undergo further review.

Mike Montgomery, a recreation, engineering, lands and minerals staff officer for the Malheur National Forest, agreed that forest staff would take a second look before decommissioning a building.

Montgomery explained that a national study of the



Contributed photo

The Raddue Guard Station on the Malheur National Forest was abandoned about 15 years ago. Photo by U.S. Forest Service.

Forest Service’s multimillion-dollar maintenance backlog was based on a national database, but the Malheur’s draft Facilities Master Plan used information gathered from on-site reviews.

The plan will enable the forest to make good deci-



Contributed photo

The Flagtail Lookout on the Malheur National Forest. Photo by Rex Kamstra.

sions on what to do with its aging buildings, he said. In some cases, letting a building “melt in place” is a viable option, he said.

The draft plan and comment form are available at the Malheur National Forest website, fs.usda.gov/malheur. Comments on the plan will be accepted through March 23. For information, Teresa Dixon can be contacted at teresaldixon@fs.fed.us.

Robbins Farm Equipment

3850 10th St.
Baker City
541-523-6377

62302 Pierce Rd.
La Grande
541-963-6577

1160 S Egan
Burns
541-573-6377

86812 Christmas Valley Hwy.
Christmas Valley
541-576-2160

38712

ENTER TO WIN AT THE

FREE PARKING

19TH ANNUAL HEAD & HORNS COMPETITION

FEDERAL PREMIUM AMMUNITION

Bushnell

Danner

FORT KNOX VAULTS

GERBER

RUGER

GRAB THAT TROPHY from your wall, garage or attic and bring it to the Central Oregon Sportsmen’s Show at the First Interstate Bank Center and Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center. Official Record Book scorers will measure it and prizes will be awarded.

YOU COULD WIN GREAT PRIZES
including a brand new Fort Knox Defender Safe, Model 6031.
Valuable prizes are awarded and provided by Federal Premium Ammunition, Bushnell, Fort Knox, Danner, Final Approach, Gerber and Ruger!

CENTRAL OREGON SPORTSMEN’S SHOW

® & BOAT/RV SALE IN REDMOND

MARCH 1-4, 2018

First Interstate Bank Center and Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center • Redmond

TROPHY CATEGORIES:
Black Bear • Mule Deer (Typical & Non-Typical) • Blacktail Deer (Typical & Non-Typical) • Whitetail Deer (Typical & Non-Typical) • Mt. Goat • Rocky Mt. Elk (Typical & Non-Typical) • Roosevelt Elk (Typical & Non-Typical) • Pronghorn • Cougar • Bighorn Sheep • Moose

SHOW HOURS
Thurs - Fri12 noon – 8 p.m.
Sat.10 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Sun.10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

FREE PARKING
**Credit cards welcome. \$1 fee will be charged per transaction.*

ADMISSION*
Adults..... \$12
2-day pass..... \$18
After 4 p.m..... \$6
Military **2 for 1
Juniors (6-16) \$5
Children 5 & under..... FREE
*Proof of military ID. Good all days.

WEEKDAY DISCOUNT COUPONS available at participating Les Schwab Tire Centers and Bi-Mart stores. Discounts may not be combined.

For more information about Head & Horns, call 541-530-2749.
For complete contest rules and prize packages, show info, coupons, directions, and daily seminar schedules, visit: www.thesportshows.com