

HAMSHER

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cost estimates and a market analysis conducted ahead of time.

He is particularly concerned that the county, John Day and Seneca each have one vote on the coalition board, but the county is responsible for 60 percent of the network's operating costs.

"It needed more discussion," he said.

Hamsher said the problem with outsourcing emergency dispatch to Frontier Regional 911 is that Grant County would not have a vote on the board.

He was willing to look at keeping 911 dispatch local under a special district to avoid high payments to the state retirement system. He also was "optimistic" the 911 dispatch problem will be solved and that the 911 phone tax will be increased to support local dispatch.

Hamsher said he supports creation of a natural resource adviser position to research issues, communicate with state and federal agencies and advise the county court. He said it wouldn't be hard to bring \$50,000 in benefits to the county to offset the cost of the position, which he noted would be hourly, not salaried.

"The court could use the

adviser as much as it wanted or needed," he said. "There are lots of complex issues coming down the pike — water, fish, timber and grazing."

Hamsher said he offers years of experience in government as a lifelong resident and "a good dose of common sense not seen elsewhere in government." He also wants to mend the divide in Grant County.

"Regardless of where you are on the political spectrum, we can all agree that we love this county," Hamsher said. "If we can set aside our differences, we can solve our problems — I saw that immediately after the Canyon Creek Complex fire."

MYERS

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— including outsourcing the service to Frontier Regional 911 in Condon. Myers said he would support the decision of the 911 User Board.

"If it's not Frontier, then I'd like to see the hybrid cost-sharing formula used to pay for a local dispatch," he said. "It would be nice to retain payroll in Grant County."

Myers has concerns about establishing a new natural resource adviser position for the county —

including its role and funding.

"We have a lot of eyes looking at natural resources for us already," he said, citing the Eastern Oregon Counties Association and the Association of Oregon Counties.

He said the new position was not sustainable for more than a year, and if the county turned to federal Secure Rural Schools or payment-in-lieu of taxes funding, that might not be available two years from now.

Myers has a straightforward vision for the area's economy.

"We need to sustain jobs that we have while attempting to attract new ones," he said. "Tourism does not bring family-wage jobs — industry does."

Bringing broadband access to the county could help by encouraging home businesses that the area doesn't have now, he noted.

In addition to common sense and patience, Myers said he's bringing legacy knowledge to the job.

"I have experience — there's no substitute for institutional experience," he said. "I've been here a long time."

POND

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By 2009, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board had invested more than \$6 million in fisheries projects over 10 years in Grant County. Much of that money had been spent on the Middle Fork of the John Day River, which flows past Bates.

The concern was protection for two native fish — spring chinook salmon and summer steelhead. The latter are listed under the Endangered Species Act. The Molalla-based Native Fish Society sought funding in 2009 to conduct a comprehensive and independent review of the benefits of removing the Bates dam as opposed to OPRD's approach of saving the dam and mitigating damage to fish and the watershed.

Collaborative meetings

By June 2011, construction of the park was underway, which included planting 4,000 trees and shrubs and restoring a riparian area with a meandering stream where Bridge Creek enters the Middle Fork. The park opened three months later and was soon seeing 20,000 day visitors a year.

But the issue of the dam and pond was not settled. The



Contributed photo

The community of Bates, the Oregon Lumber Co. mill and the mill pond are shown in this historic aerial photo taken before the buildings were removed. Located at the terminus of the Sumpter Valley Railroad, the mill operated from 1917 to 1975. The Edward Hines Lumber Co. operated the mill from 1960 to 1975.

dam was constructed in the late 1940s, and a fish ladder was built with public money in 2001 — a quarter century after the mill shut down for good.

Water flowing from Bridge Creek warmed up several degrees while stored behind the dam before discharging into the Middle Fork, a violation

of state water quality standards. In addition, the fish ladder did not meet current fish-passage standards.

A collaborative meeting led by a hired facilitator met for the first time in July 2016 to review options for the site. Lined up in support of fish and water quality were the Native Fish Society, the North Fork John Day Watershed Council, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Warm Springs Tribe, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Grant County Judge Scott Myers said in advance of the meeting that he didn't believe removing the dam was in the county's best interest.

"It has recreational potential for kayakers, boaters, swimmers, fishermen," he said at the time. "It has a very strong sense of place for past generations and future generations of families from Bates and Austin."



The Eagle/Sean Hart

Grant County Judge Scott Myers describes a plan to retain Bates Pond while improving fish passage.

Myers said creating a diversion around the pond, deepening the pond and improving the fish ladder were on the table.

"I don't see a win-win if we have to compromise and allow the pond to be permanently drained," he said at the time. "I think we will fight that option."

Breaking the deadlock

The group met in September 2016 for what was expected to be the third and final meeting, but the group failed to reach a consensus. Myers said all but one member had agreed to not challenge one of the six proposed options.

A fourth meeting was held in March. During the intervening year and a half, a stronger consensus developed and sideboards were established for the meeting.

"For purposes of discussing the options and developing a path forward, doing nothing was not an option," Nebeker told the Eagle. "Neither was dam removal."

In the end, consensus was reached to allow OPRD to move forward in developing Option A into a more detailed design. Option A calls for constructing a bypass channel on the west side of the pond so most of the streamflow from Bridge Creek can flow

to the Middle Fork without warming up.

Option A also calls for shrinking the pond's footprint while deepening the pond by dredging as much as six feet of silt — and any remaining logs called "sinkers" that might be buried in the silt. The dredged material would be used to erect a berm to form the bypass channel.

In addition, Option A calls for improving fish passage around the dam by either fixing the existing fish ladder or replacing it with one that could include natural features in its design.

"Some fish passage is occurring now," Nebeker said.

OPRD has lined up \$200,000 of its own funding to work on planning, preliminary design and permitting for the project. A dam integrity study will be conducted in the next year, which "could potentially affect Option A depending on study results," Nebeker said.

OPRD will hold a public informational meeting on the plans this summer and then present the complete design to the public in spring 2019. The construction contract would be awarded in summer or fall 2019, with construction starting in spring or summer 2020. Nebeker said this timeline was optimistic, and he expected everything could be pushed back a year.

the corner's
HOT SHOT
OF THE WEEK

SYDNEY BROCKWAY

School: Grant Union
Grade: 11
Parent: Jodi & Kyle Myers
Sport: Track and Field
Position: 100-meter hurdles, long jump, triple jump, 4x100 relay

What I like best about my sport: "I like the individual competition — you're working against yourself to improve for the season."
Coach's Comment: "Sydney is a hard worker and does everything she is asked. In her first two meets, she has shown she is picking up right where she left off last year. I expect her to be a major contributor to our team all season long."
-Coach Sonna Smith

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