HAMMONDS

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range-management purposes.

The Oregon Farm Bureau, which gathered more than 25,000 signatures online in support of the Hammonds, said the law was never intended to apply to ranchers protecting their land. President Barry Bushue said the organization will continue working "to ensure that this injustice is never repeated."

State Sen. Cliff Bentz, state Rep. Lynn Findley and the nonprofit cattle trade association R-CALF USA also applauded the decision.

Other groups said the Hammonds should not have been pardoned. Western Values Project said in a statement the Hammonds' case "inspired the armed takeover of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge."

After the resentencing, a peaceful protest was held in Burns in support of the Hammonds in 2016. Some of the protesters later took over the refuge near Burns, demanding the Hammonds not be re-imprisoned and that federal lands be transferred to local control.

The Hammonds did not participate at the refuge and turned themselves in to serve their sentences early in the occupation that ended up lasting 41 days, even after the arrest of occupation leaders Ammon and Ryan Bundy Jan. 26, 2016. Occupier LaVoy Finicum was shot and killed that day by Oregon State Police during the police action, which investigators said was justified.

After the occupation, some of the occupiers pleaded guilty to crimes related to the occupation, but most were acquitted at trial.

Western Values Project noted the Hammonds were convicted by a jury and said "other anti-government extremists took up the Hammonds' case as a rallying cry and violently occupied" the refuge.

"By pardoning the Hammonds, President Trump is telling anti-public land zealots there are no consequences for undermining every American's birthright to our shared public lands and national parks," Executive Director Chris Saeger said in a statement. "What's just as bad is that it shows Department of Interior employees who face serious threats from anti-government extremists like the Hammonds that the administration does not have their backs. This pardon is a direct threat to America's public lands and our shared national treasures."

MERKLEY

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In March, Merkley announced that the proposed Farm Bill includes $667 million in budget authority for grants and loans to expand broadband in rural areas — a $600 million increase over the previous fiscal year.

"It is anticipated that the funding level in the spending bill will leverage more than $1.8 billion in grants and loans," he said.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Merkley said he's been trying to find ways to include grants for infrastructure. Included in the proposed Interior Department's appropriations bill is $63 million for the Water Infrastructure Financing Innovation Authority Act, which Merkley wrote in 2012 to ensure funding for public drinking water and wastewater infrastructure projects.

"Combined with previous appropriations, WIFIA can now issue over $6 billion in low-interest loans for critical water infrastructure projects," Merkley said.

Timber funding

Also included in the Interior bill is $500 million for Payment in Lieu of Taxes funding for rural counties with significant federal land holdings, along with increased funding for the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to support forest health restoration and collaboration programs that reduce forest fuels.

This additional money would maintain funding for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, which includes the stewardship project on the Malheur National Forest. Provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill would double funding for the collaborative program to $80 million and extend it through 2023.

Eagle photos/Sean Hart

Malheur Lumber Managing Director John Shelk, left, gives Sen. Jeff Merkley a tour of the John Day mill Friday.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon, toured the Malheur Lumber mill Friday with Managing Director John Shelk, right.

"Collaborative forest management strategies have proven successful on many levels: thinning overgrown forests and creating better timber stands, improving ecosystems, building better fire resistance, and creating more jobs and more saw logs for mills," Merkley said.

Merkley told the Eagle that, during a visit to John Day in 2011, he told timber workers he would look for a way to provide logs to mills with a long-term contract.

"The stewardship program provided the best solution," he said.

Noting that the Farm Bill has yet to go to the White House, Merkley said this year's Farm Bill moved forward much faster than last year's, which involved significant changes and negotiations. This year's bill is more of a continuation of previous programs, he said.

Lumber mill tour

Merkley toured the Malheur Lumber Co. mill in John Day with Managing Director John Shelk and General Manager Rich Fulton.

"It's a pleasure to see the mill running and providing a market for all the fiber coming out of the forest," Merkley said.

The various parts of the plant have been working single shifts with about 150 employees altogether, Shelk said.

"We could use seven to 10 more workers but can't find them locally," he said.

The mill takes in pine logs and produces dimensional lumber for companies that produce millwork, such as door and window framing. Wood chips are turned into pellets or bricks for wood-fired stoves and furnaces, as well as shavings for animals.

Some material is shipped to Boise Cascade in Idaho to make paper, Shelk said, noting that a boom in internet shopping has increased demand for cardboard to make shipping boxes.

Bark from the mill and other woody debris is burned in the boiler, which provides steam to heat the drying kiln. Shelk said the current boiler might be replaced with a larger one that would serve both the sawmill and a new torrefaction plant.

The Forest Service's stewardship contract with Iron Triangle has been good for the forests, Shelk said — cleaning out forest fuels and improving forest health — but the small-diameter logs coming out of that work don't meet the needs of the sawmill.

"We need larger-diameter, merchantable logs," Shelk said. "Logs end up being about two-thirds of our cost."

Merkley expressed interest in the juniper market and was shown two pallets loaded with juniper wood milled for fence posts or landscaping timbers. Shelk explained that sand gets into the juniper trunks as they grow and damages saw blades.

"Loggers don't want to cut juniper," he said.

He noted that the mill was expecting six truckloads of juniper logs every week this spring but only saw six for the whole month of June.

BRITTON

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Advocating for collaboration has sparked some animosity locally.

"The last few years, my big concern is the divisiveness and vitriol that has come out," Britton said. "That disturbs me, and it doesn't need to be that way. We should be able to disagree without hating each other. We're becoming a community that we didn't used to be."

He said he was proud of the way the county came together against the Aryan Brotherhood, who tried to set up a headquarters in the area.

"Grant County politely let them know that there was no place for them here," he said.

The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Boyd Britton and his wife, Bonnie, stand together at their welding business in John Day.

Britton was the announcer at many local parades, including the '62 Days, Grant County Fair and Timber Truckers Light parades.

Behind the scenes, as a licensed pyrotechnician, he said he often helped Prairie City put on their fireworks display.

He said he was honored when asked to provide funeral services for Lois Hill, Dollina Humphreys and Earlene Holliday over the years.

Bonnie said Boyd has created many welding structures and signs over the years.

"Boyd's legacy for being a welder will be here forever," she said, adding he made the welcome sign for Prairie City, signs for the Forrest Conservancy and Oxbow for the Confederated Tribes and agricultural support signs (near Picture Gorge and Bear Valley), as well as private pieces of art such as elk, eagles and crosses.

He also made the rappel tower for the Forest Service in 2001. His most recent welding jobs were installing handrails for the Monument Senior Center and making head gates for the Oxbow Ranch on a property near Baker City.

Britton employed a bookkeeper, two welders and a machinist through his shop. He said he's enjoyed his customers.

"They've been great," he said. "They've been loyal. We've tried really hard to take care of our customers."

Britton said he and Bonnie enjoyed a visit to Show Low while visiting her sister nearby, and that started their interest in a move to Arizona. Boyd said he plans to work as a welder there.

"I couldn't have done what I've done as a businessman and a county commissioner without Bonnie — we're a team," he said. "We really love Grant County, but it's time for the next chapter of our lives."

The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Boyd Britton announces at the 2017 '62 Days Parade in Canyon City.

NATIONAL DAY of the COWBOY

Prairie City Park • July 28, 2018

Dog Costume & Talent Contest
Presented by Hope for Paws
Info: 541-932-2737 or 541-575-0262
followed by
Dog Agility Exhibition by Flora Steffan
Herd U Needed A Home

Stickhorse & Dog Costume Parade - 10:30 a.m.
(sign-up at 9:30 at the post office parking lot)
Bring your decorated dog or stickhorse!

Stickhorse Rodeo
Rodeo HQ: Bar WB 541-820-3675
Featuring: Bull Riding • Bronc Riding • Barrel Racing • Dummy Roping & more!

Age Groups 4 - under & 5 - 6

Fun for all ages: Stick Horse & Sack Races

FFA Chapter Challenge: Ag Olympics
Info: Cinch Anderson 541-377-2955 & Kori Jo 541-216-0122

Stickhorse Auction - Auctioneer Cinch Anderson
Proceeds to benefit Grant Union FFA

Jackpot Horseshoe Tournament

Drinks by Spitfire Cocktails

7:00 P.M.
Concert Featuring
Brenn Hill & Andy Nelson
with special guest
Kathy Moss
Sat. July 28, 7:00pm
Prairie City Community Hall, Prairie City, OR
Tickets $20 in advance at Russell's Custom Meats and Bar W B Western Wear or $25 at the door. Call 541-620-0746

5pm BBQ by the Prairie City FFA

SUPPORTED BY THE GPCCA

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HOME SCHOOL PARENTS

Home school students are required by law to be tested by a qualified neutral person following grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. [OAR581-021-0026 (5) (a) (A)] **However, students who participate in interscholastic activities are required by OSAA rules to be tested every year and must score in the 23rd percentile to be eligible to participate in interscholastic activities.**

Grant ESD will offer assessment testing for home school students finishing grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. Cost is $20.00 per student. Payment is due at the time of testing. Register your student for assessment testing by calling Grant ESD, 541-575-1349, on or before July 24, 2018.

Testing Dates: July 25, 2018 – 8:30am to 2:00pm
July 26, 2018 – 8:30am to 2:00pm

If you have any questions you may contact:
Robert Waltenburg or Jo Sproul
Grant County ESD
541-575-1349

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