

Federal

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“Congress has mandated that every federal agency engage in the coordination process” and that “Congress also recognized that local government must have a position in planning and policy making that is superior to that of the general public.”

Supporters of coordination note that public land planning should take into account the economic needs of local communities as well as protect local customs and culture.

The Grant County Court adopted a Document of Custom and Culture as a resolution in May 1999. The resolution underwent two public hearings and substantial changes were made to the original document, which gave the resolution the process protection of an ordinance.

According to the document, the customs and culture of Grant County were formed by the people who settled here when Oregon was a territory and were passed down from generation to generation.

A common base of values were established, the document states, that includes self-reliance, independence, personal freedoms, unalienable rights and “common sense education system that instills in our children the love of God, family and country, which is the custom of patriotism.”

Customs cited in the document include mining, ranching, logging, hunting, trapping, fishing, firewood gathering and the harvesting of berries, mushrooms and other plant life.

Government view

Forest Service officials



The Eagle/Richard Hanners
Eva Harris addresses the Grant County Court during a discussion about invoking coordination for planning with federal and state agencies on Jan. 23.

have a different interpretation of the meaning of coordination. In May 2017, Steve Beverlin, the Malheur National Forest Supervisor at the time, explained that the agency engaged the public simultaneously through collaboration, coordination and cooperation according to their legal definitions and frameworks.

Coordination requires the Forest Service to work with requesting agencies, such as the Grant County Court, to address discrepancies between federal and local planning documents, such as cultural or natural resource plans, Beverlin said.

The Forest Service must respond to the discrepancies but is not bound to follow the local plans, Beverlin said.

John Hagengruber, the state liaison for the Forest Service’s Region 1 office, explained the role of coordination between the Forest Service and county governments in a March 2014 memo to the Montana Environmental Quality Council.

“Based on recent local government resolutions or

ordinances and letters to some national forests, it appears that some local government officials believe the (National Forest Management Act) coordination requirement means the Forest Service must incorporate specific provisions of county ordinances into forest plans or that the Forest Service must obtain local government approval before making planning decisions,” Hagengruber said.

“This position overstates the NFMA obligation of the Forest Service,” he continued. “The statute does not specify what actions are required to coordinate Forest Service planning with local government planning, and it does not in any way subordinate federal authority to counties.”

“Rather,” he continued, “the Forest Service must consider the objectives of state and local governments and Indian tribes as expressed in their plans and policies, assess the interrelated impacts of these plans and policies, and determine how the forest plan should deal with the impacts identified.”

County

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Myers said he appreciated Palmer’s work. Myers said the current planning process forces the county to object to project proposals during the comment period rather than allow the county to participate in project planning.

Myers also noted that the idea of “invoking coordination” doesn’t need to be a “scary proposition.” He said it should be good for both the county and the government agencies, but Palmer’s proposal should be carefully scrutinized by an attorney familiar with natural resource issues.

Hamsher motioned to move forward with Palmer’s proposal. Myers seconded the motion, noting that this was something the county had not done in the past. Myers said he wasn’t sure how it would be done, but an ordinance or resolution was needed.

Sample documents

The packet that Palmer provided to Myers and Hamsher included a sample ordinance establishing a coordination policy for the county, a sample resolution establishing coordination between the county and federal agencies, a sample court agenda for a meeting between the court and the Forest Service and a sample letter from the court to the Forest Service invoking coordination.

Palmer told the Eagle he wrote the sample documents based on research he had conducted.

The sample ordinance lists eight objectives and provides several pages of actions that all state and federal plans, projects and programs that could affect land or natural resources in Grant County must take into account.

The county must be notified “of any proposed action prior to the initial planning phase of the proposed action,” the sample ordinance states. State and federal agencies must also “coordinate procedures with Grant County as equals” and “consider alternatives which would reconcile proposed action with the county’s laws, policies and plans and take all practical measures to resolve any conflict,” the sample ordinance states.

State and federal agencies must “comply with all laws, case law, statutes, regulations, rules and guidelines concerning protection of private property rights in Grant County,” the sample ordinance states.

To enforce this policy, the county court may request the district attorney to bring an action seeking criminal or civil penalties, the sample ordinance states. Anyone found to have deprived a person in Grant County of property rights secured by the sample ordinance “shall be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by not more than 30 days in jail, a \$500 fine, or both,” the sample ordinance states.

The sample ordinance also calls for establishing an oversight committee to assure that the intent and purposes of the ordinance are maintained.

“The basic function of the committee shall be to monitor federal and state actions and advise the (court) regarding compliance by such agencies with this ordinance,” the sample ordinance states.

Palmer’s sample letter to the Forest Service invoking coordination states, “Notice must be given to the county of any intent to prepare a land and resource management plan, along with a general schedule of anticipated activities to the governing body of the county.”

A coordination meeting “must take place after public issues have been identified and it must take place before recommendation of a preferred alternative is made,” the sample letter states.

Court discussion

Following Palmer’s proposal at the Jan. 23 court meeting, Eva Harris raised several questions about invoking coordination. She said she didn’t believe Grant County could get “equal footing” under the National Forest Management Act, and the act did not refer to “invoking coordination.” She also said the county’s custom and culture resolution needs to be updated.

Myers responded by noting that her points needed to be addressed by county counsel, but the county needed to be involved in public land planning at an earlier stage. He also noted that the custom and culture resolution had not been challenged in court.

John Morris said coordination is included in the National Environmental Policy Act, which means that it applies to state as well as federal planning. Dave Traylor advised the court to confer with legal counsel to understand the true meaning of coordination instead of relying on personal interpretation.

Jim Sproul noted that, in order to invoke coordination, a county needs to have a natural resources plan in place. He proposed the court use the plan developed by a committee several years ago. He also suggested the court invite a representative from a county that had invoked coordination to speak at a public forum here.

Sheriff Glenn Palmer suggested that the six-member committee proposed by Commissioner Palmer include residents dependent on natural resources and not just elected officials.

Schools

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toddlers at risk of abuse to technical training for high school seniors who aren’t college bound.

The lawmakers emphasized bolstering services for low-income families with young children, starting the help at infancy.

“Kids in crisis can’t learn,” Smith Warner said. “We have students all across the state, urban, rural, from the biggest schools to the smallest, that have had significant trauma.”

In that vein, legislators

want to expand Early Head Start. It provides full-day programs for infants and toddlers from low-income families but is only available to 2,064 kids of the 25,000 eligible.

The group found the state wasn’t adequately funding early intervention and early childhood special education. Full funding would cost an additional \$37.5 million per year.

The legislators also propose propping up Oregon’s most needy families. Committee members found state programs provide home visits to only 10 percent of 30,000 at-risk families who

need such services.

The 84-page report stops short of outlining how to pay for all of these ideas. They have punted those questions to three smaller groups of lawmakers who on Thursday will sort out the details, including how to pay for these changes.

Lengthening the school year and limiting class sizes are among the most expensive recommendations.

Committee members found Oregon’s school year, which ranges from 150 days to 170 days, isn’t enough. They would like to reach the national average of 180 days. But adding those days

would cost an estimated \$258 million per year.

And caps on class sizes — which would range from 20 in kindergarten and first grade to 29 for core academic classes in grades 6 through 12 — would cost about \$185 million per year.

Other goals reach higher, aspiring not to just fall in line with national averages but exceed them.

The legislators want state-subsidized education for teachers, with an emphasis on those going on to instruct career and technical education.

A state-organized mentorship system would bump

up salaries for teachers who agree to mentor others and create an advancement council inside the state education department to help teachers succeed. Legislative budget analysts say the mentorship program could cost \$234 million a year.

They also propose hiring more specialists like music teachers, librarians and school counselors.

Ideally, the state’s teachers should reflect the state’s demographic makeup, legislators said. Some money would be dedicated to helping local school districts “grow their own” future workforce with scholarships

for students from “racially and linguistically diverse” backgrounds who want to become teachers.

Smith said he supports the committee’s requests — but it’s not clear if his fellow Republicans agree.

In an interview this week, Senate Republican Leader Herman Baertschiger, R-Grants Pass, dismissed the notion that more funding means better education.

“I see private schools having less money but having better results,” Baertschiger said.

To make it more palatable and not a shock to the economy, legislators would have to trim the package.

“We need to prioritize,” House Speaker Tina Kotek said.

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Cemetery

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About 10 years ago, a dozen men and women dressed in Confederate uniforms and antebellum Southern costume appeared in Prairie City to honor the fallen soldiers with new headstones, Wright and Woodley said.

Several of Sullens’ ancestors are buried in the older section of the cemetery, including Capt. Wiley Howell, a decorated World War II aviator. When Howell was a child, he checked out a book at the Prairie City School library and never returned it. Years later when he returned home a war hero, he donated thousands of dollars to the library, Wright said.

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SUNDAY (3-4:5) 6:45

MON-THURS 6:45

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FRI & SAT (4:00) 7:00 9:35
SUNDAY (4:00) 7:00
MON-THURS 7:00

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SUNDAY (4:05) 7:05
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