

Forest

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resolutions passed over the years by counties in rural western states that called for federal agencies to abide by their prescriptive ordinances.

“While I understand some of that, it’s really all about the federal estate having laws and regulations that we have to adhere to, and if it goes counter to the ordinance or resolutions, we’re put in a position that we can’t follow what the counties would want us to do,” he said.

Casamassa said the Forest Service recognizes the strong attachment to the land by rural people that goes back generations, and that the agency should not be over-regulatory.

“We should work together, solve problems, look at solutions that are durable, that are politically and socially durable, and that they’re in it for the long term to sustain a commu-

nity and the resources around the county,” he said.

A previous letter to Congress

In August 2017, House members from 14 states urged President Trump to sign an executive order requiring that federal agencies overseeing public lands coordinate their planning with state and local governments.

“Unfortunately, under prior administrations, federal departments and agencies often disregarded the views of local officials when creating management policies that had broad sweeping impacts,” the congressmen said. “To be blunt, the prevailing attitude was often ‘Washington knows best.’”

According to their five-page draft executive order, coordination refers to “government-to-government oral and written communications between authorized represen-

tatives of a federal agency and the elected officials of a state or local government or their duly authorized representatives.”

Furthermore, the draft order states, “Coordination means the responsibilities of each government entity are equal, not subordinate, and therefore must be harmonized for effective governance.”

The draft order specifies that local or state governments must be provided a written review document about any federal actions before they are presented for public comment. The review document must include a determination by a state or local official stating whether the proposed federal action is consistent with state or local objectives, plans, policies and programs.

Before issuing a final decision order on a proposed federal plan, policy or program, the responsible agency must provide state and local governments with a document that

describes efforts made to coordinate, identifies any issues or conflicts with state or local plans, policies or programs, and explains how those issues and concerns were resolved.

Federal agencies must keep apprised of state and local government’s land and resource use plans, policies and programs and must make all reasonable efforts to achieve consistency between federal, state and local objectives, plans, policies and programs, the draft order states.

“To ensure that the coordination process is properly completed, each federal agency shall appoint an official who is responsible for ensuring that meaningful and effective government-to-government coordination is completed in advance of the federal agency’s completion of the (National Environmental Policy Act) process and the final agency decision,” the draft order states.

Coordination, 10 years ago

The county court discussed the idea of coordination when Dennis Reynolds served as Grant County judge from 1995-2006. Five years after he left office, the court asked him to travel to a conference on the subject and report back.

“There were a lot of inappropriate assumptions, which we are still suffering from today,” he told the Eagle.

Legal counsel, local government representatives and even some federal agency personnel attended the two-day conference at Western Wyoming Community College in Rock Springs, Wyoming, he said.

In his report on the conference to the court, Reynolds recommended against requesting coordination with the Forest Service, based on the information provided at the conference.

Reynolds learned that only

elected officials could participate in the public lands planning process once the county requested coordination, and they couldn’t provide expert testimony. The officials could only speak as representatives of their constituents, Reynolds said.

The Grant County judge and commissioners didn’t have the time or staff to work with the Forest Service at that level of involvement, Reynolds said in his report. On top of that, he said he learned that the Forest Service could bill the county for any time spent coordinating with the county in the planning process.

Reynolds said the county cannot simply tell the federal government what to do with its public lands. His advice today is that the county coordinate with other counties to lobby Congress to change public lands management policies. He said that would be a better use of county funds.

Improve

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Lack of lighting in the parking lot poses a safety issue, she said. Conduit has already been run underground for power.

Winegar said she received two estimates to install new lights ranging from \$20,000 to \$25,000.

Keerins Hall has been re-roofed and now needs siding, windows, doors and heating. Winegar noted that the OSU Extension office could relocate to Keerins Hall once the work is completed. An engineer could review interior work, and rebates were possible for new heating systems, she said.

Picnic tables at the RV park also need replacement, Winegar said. Estimates to replace 10 tables with low-maintenance, 300-pound metal models range from \$6,000 to \$8,000, she said.

Code amendment

The seats were filled for a public hearing on an emergency ordinance amending the Grant County Land Development Code’s language on farm and forest zoning districts.

A letter sent to affected landowners had warned that the regulations could affect property values, but the regulations already existed in state law, Grant County Planning Director Hilary McNary told the court.

The 120-page proposed ordinance would update the county’s development

code and incorporate certain state regulations into the code, including regulations on youth camps, experimental forests, solar farms and wind-generating facilities.

McNary noted cases where other counties inadvertently provided incorrect information on allowed and conditional uses, and when the landowners successfully appealed the counties’ rulings, the cost of the appeal fell on the landowners.

Updating the development code will not only simplify the planning staff’s work – it will also protect landowners. The county planning commission had recommended approval, and the court approved the ordinance.

The court also rescinded a Dec. 19 ordinance that established a 3 percent tax on sales of recreational marijuana but hadn’t obtained voter approval. Myers noted that the tax ordinance was never enforced, that the retailer collected the tax on good faith, that the \$5,050 turned in by the retailer has been returned and it was up to the retailer to dispose of the collected tax.

The court also approved a request from Grant County Clerk Brenda Percy to replace an aged microfilm machine with a new digital model valued at \$12,000.

The following volunteers were appointed: Rick Henslee, Pat Holliday, Steve Parsons and Steven Baldwin to the planning commission; Allison Field to the South East Area Commission on Transportation; and Bob Quinton to the budget committee.

Public

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ted 56 million metric tons of greenhouse gasses.

The most direct impacts for Oregonians are expected to be in gasoline and natural gas prices. Northwest Natural estimated its rates could increase by 54 percent, while estimates show gasoline prices could go up by 16 cents per gallon when the program would start in 2021. Several industry leaders testified their costs would go up, but because they work in agriculture or production and compete with companies in other states or countries, they couldn’t pass costs on to consumers.

Those in favor of the regulation say Oregonians stand to reap huge benefits if cap and trade is passed.

David Roland-Holst, director of Berkeley Economic Advising and Research, on Friday presented research showing such a state policy would directly benefit Oregonians in multiple ways.

In total, the cap and trade program would increase Oregon’s gross domestic product by 2.5 percent, bring in 50,000 jobs and reduce emissions by 82 percent by 2050, he said.

Industry leaders are less keen on the idea.

Peter Saba, vice president of Schnitzer Steel Industries, testified that the company’s McMinnville steel mill would be forced to cut emissions in half over the next 13 years. There is no technology to allow them to do that, Saba said, so they would have to buy more allowances or limit production.

Saba said the company has already reduced emissions by 650,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide. Saba said if Schnitzer is forced to curtail production, competitors elsewhere not subject to such emission limits would step in, causing a net gain in global emissions.

“Talk about carbon leakage,” Saba said.

Curtis Lesslie, vice president of environmental affairs for Ash Grove Cement Company, said his company operates Oregon’s only cement plant in Durkee in Eastern Oregon. Releasing carbon dioxide from limestone – part of the cement-making process – accounts for 65 to 80 percent of the plant’s emissions.

There is nothing they can do about that, Lesslie said. So the company would be forced to buy more allowances, which would

reduce the distance it can competitively ship the cement.

Lesslie said Chinese cement makers, who already are able to produce cement more cheaply, would step in and take Ash Grove’s market share.

Chris Edwards, a former state senator, also testified on the bill. Edwards introduced a cap and trade bill in the 2016 session. But now he’s a lobbyist for the timber industry and was arguing for more special protection for the industry. He said replanting trees in logged areas provides more trees to pull carbon from the air, lowering greenhouse gasses.

He said the timber industry would be hit by transportation costs. Edwards said he was surprised to find out the timber industry wasn’t exempt from the bill, and wanted to be involved in amending it to be more favorable to timber companies. Industry isn’t united against the proposal, though.

Les Perkins, Hood River County commissioner and manager of the Farmers Irrigation District, said summers are getting hotter and farms need more water. He said money from selling allowances could be used to improve water storage for farmers and combat wildfires on county lands.



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