

# County to amend planning within John Day's urban growth boundary

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

The city of John Day has asked Grant County to designate the roads within the city's urban growth boundary public roads to provide appropriate access for potential landowners.

Shannon Springer, Grant County planning director, said each city in the county, except for Prairie City, has an urban growth boundary outside their city limits. Under county jurisdiction and within the border of the UGB, the unincorporated land is for towns to expand their city limits.

Springer said the county's planning department, per agreements with each city, notifies the respective city's planning department of land-use applications within its UGB. The cities have 15 days to comment on proposals before the county approves them.

John Day's agreement, she said, has a provision that the county designates roads within their UGB as public roads. She said, within the UGB, there are roads that serve properties "that are not really anything but private easements."

She said the city asked the county to designate these easements as public roads to comply with the city standards and the provision within its code.

Springer said complying with John Day's code would be a "legitimate request."

She said the city and the county have been inconsistent in abiding by their own rules.

Springer said the city's point is that people need appropriate access to public roads when dividing property and creating new parcels for development.



Eagle file photo

**Shannon Springer, Grant County planning director, addresses Grant County Court Nov. 18.**

Springer told the court there are no particular standards regarding private easements that go from a public to a private road within its codes.

"There are lots of things that are just provided access by easement with no particular surface, or drainage or any other kind of standards applying. I just have an easement to get to the property, which is probably short-sighted in retrospect," Springer said.

She said there are a "handful" of roads that the county needs to fix, which would likely not meet standards.

She said portions of the county's codes are not a good fit for a rural county. She said they were borrowed and adopted from Jackson County.

County Commissioner Sam Palmer said, given the booming housing market and likely more jobs to follow, now is the time to amend the codes.

Springer said code amendments are a lengthy process.

"It is going to be a bit of a process," she said. "Not that we can't do it. It's just not going to be an overnight thing."

Palmer said he did not want to make the process "too restrictive" and wanted to treat each situation on a "case-by-case" basis.

"I think writing these rules or revisiting them is totally appropriate," he said.

However, he said he would like to see a mechanism that allows for exceptions.

## Public health update

Kimberly Lindsay, the county's public health administrator, and Dustin Wyllie, program manager of the Community Counseling Solutions Developmental Disability program, updated the various programs.

Wyllie said the DD program has 43 people enrolled in support services and 32 getting case management through CCS. He said people get case management through two entities, either CCS or Eastern Oregon Support Services.

## Emergency management

The court approved and signed a cooperative emergency agreement with the Oregon Department of Transportation Department. Myers said Paul Gray, the county's emergency manager, brought the document to the county. Myers told the court that this would allow the county and the state to share resources, responsibilities and personnel in emergencies.

Gray also sent the court an infrastructure contract from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to sign, assuring the county would track and document all COVID-19-related expenses for up to 75% in reimbursements, provided the county documents expenses correctly.

# John Day wastewater treatment plant update focused on collection system

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Wastewater in John Day might have a new way of traveling in the collection system.

Jim Pex from Flagline Engineering presented to the John Day City Council three alternative designs for the collection system on Feb. 9 that addresses concerns on the current siphon and pump stations and lifetime costs for the integration of a design.

Pex said, after reviews and discussions with the city, the siphon is problematic because of the materials used to construct it and the location of the siphon being under the river.

"Really, there's not a great way to maintain it if there's plugs or something else that could be really problematic to staff," Pex said. "Ninety percent of the city's system flows through that pipe. If there was an issue, it would create a lot of long lasting problems



Eagle file photo

**The John Day sewer treatment plant.**

that could not be resolved immediately."

The first option is to rehabilitate the siphon line by possibly using a cast-in-place pipe that helps with leaks. The CIPP is a flexible liner inside the existing pipe that would be inflated and exposed to heat to create a smooth surface inside the pipe.

Pex said a problem would be with heating the pipe due to its location under the river and the difficulty with heating the CIPP with leaks in the system.

"It's not great, but we want to review the good and bad of all (options)," he said.

The second alternative would be to replace the siphon crossing with a pump station enforced with the new bridge for the Hills Family Park being implemented in the spring.

Pex said this scenario alleviates the concerns of access and maintenance to the siphon during high flow. He said a pump station will help with being able to control the flow of waste.

The downside of the pump station would be the lifetime cost along with the additional attention and maintenance required for the station, according to Pex.

The third alternative is to make the collection system gravity based, which would take out the need for additional pumps and the siphon, according to Pex.

"This alternative gives the city 100% gravity flow through the system and eliminates your pump stations within town (with the exception of one pump that controls

the system)," Pex said.

Pex said the downside of this option is the higher capital cost because of the amount of pipe that would have to be installed. Pex said, from a lifecycle cost, it would likely be cheaper because the costs associated with maintaining a pump station would be absent. One pump station would still be needed at the treatment plant.

"Option two is a viable option, and from a cost perspective alone and not a lifecycle perspective, is definitely the cheapest between option two and three," Pex said. "Option three gets you away from it (the pump stations), and gravity always wins on lifecycle costs."

Pex said an early estimate of the cost for integrating the first package would run about \$1.7 million, alternative two would be around \$2.3 million and alternative three could run about \$4.3 million.

"We always want to be on the high side of our estimates especially when we're asking for grant funding," Pex said. "Pretty much every bid tab is going to be 10-12% over what we think it's going to be to give you guys room."

No decision was made on which design to go with, but the groundwork for the new wastewater treatment plant is still expected to begin in the spring or summer of 2022.



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# County opposes additional wild, scenic river designations

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Court members are penning a letter of opposition to a bill in the U.S. Senate mandating more local streams become designated as wild, scenic or recreational.

The River Democracy Act of 2021, written and co-sponsored by Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, would add 4,700 miles of rivers and streams in Oregon to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system, bringing the total length of protected rivers in Oregon to almost 6,900 miles, or 6.2% of the state's 110,994 miles of streams.

The U.S. Forest Service, or another agency named in the bill, would develop a management plan and determine the level of protection for each stream.

"Our rivers and streams are some of the most special natural treasures Oregon has to offer and have always been integral to the health and vitality of our communities and rural economies," said Merkley.

County Commissioner Sam Palmer said he did a "quick tally" and calculated 130 miles of streams and rivers in Grant County or the Malheur National Forest would be affected by the bill.

He said most of the "rivers" are just streams, already under protection by the Forest Service.

Palmer said the bill is not legislation for Grant County. He said nobody asked for feedback from anyone from the region.

Palmer said there is opposition to the bill in Baker, Grant, Harney and Wallowa counties.

He said it would take another tool from land managers to manage the lands appropriately, be it "wildfire, recreation or anything else."

Myers said either state or federal agencies designate the John Day River's total length as wild and scenic. He said most streams or anything with water running through it is under some type of riparian protection. He said this bill is a "big jump."

Palmer said there are segments of the waters that run between private lands that the federal agency would monitor.

He said the proposed legislation goes against everything the county is working toward with the Blues Mountains Intergovernmental Council.

"We were never brought into these conversations early on in this legislation," Palmer said.

Wyden spokesman Hank

Stern said the people from around the state nominated upwards of 15,000 rivers and streams.

He said the legislation requires that federal land management agencies assess the risks of wildfire in wild and scenic river corridors and near homes and businesses. The land managers, he said, must develop and implement a "risk-reduction."

He said the bill allows federal land management agencies to enter into cooperative wildfire-fighting agreements with states and local governments.

Additionally, he said, nothing in the legislation precludes the ability to fight fires in wild and scenic corridors, including the construction of temporary roads when necessary for public safety.

"The bottom line is the bill would not restrict access to rivers," he said. "In fact, it does just the opposite. It provides additional resources to improve access to public lands."

He said roughly 150 miles of the John Day River is federally protected as a wild and scenic river under the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Nothing changes that designation, he said.

The River Democracy Act proposes protections for two fish-bearing tributaries and hunting habitat, according to Stern. He said this includes 10 miles of 30-Mile Creek and 17 miles of Bridge Creek.

"The River Democracy Act would only affect federal land in a way that protects the natural state of the rivers and promotes their outstanding values, including recreation, drinking water, and fish and hunting habitat," he said.

He said the bill, according to the outdoor and recreation industry, would support 224,000 jobs statewide and would generate \$15.6 billion in consumer spending.

He said the bill would also establish \$30 million annually in Oregon through a federal grant program for states and local governments to increase water quality, watersheds and infrastructure.

Stern said there is language in the bill that explicitly makes it clear that valid or vested water rights will not be affected. Additionally, he said, it states Oregon can still administer water rights per state laws and regulations.

Stern said the legislation spells out in its text: "Nothing in this Act or an amendment made by this Act affects private property rights."

## REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR FIRE CONSULTANT

Morrow County Public Works Projects - Morrow County, Oregon

Morrow County, Oregon, requests proposals for a qualified Fire Consultant to provide services for Morrow County Parks. Contractors submitting qualifications shall be considered based upon the following general evaluation criteria:

1. Fee schedule.
2. Experience.
3. Method of approach.

Copies of the Request for Qualifications may be obtained from Morrow County



Public Works, P.O. Box 428, 365 W Hwy 74,  
Lexington, Oregon 97839, (541) 989-9500,  
spointer@co.morrow.or.us

Complete proposals will be accepted at the same address no later than 4:00 p.m., March 4, 2021. Any questions or concerns may be addressed to Sandi Pointer.

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