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Charolais Heights paving project draws to a close

By BENNETT HALL
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — The Charolais Heights intersection improvement project on the north side of town is nearly complete, and residents could soon begin driving on the freshly repaved streets.

The troublesome intersection where Charolais Heights Drive, Valley View Drive, Bridge Street and Boulder Lane come together has been realigned with an eye to improving traffic safety, and portions of the streets have been regraded and given a fresh coat of asphalt.

The project was a major topic of conversation at the Sept. 29 meeting of the John Day City Council, with the discussion centering on how to get motorists to slow down as they pass through the reconstructed intersection.

Several councilors reported complaints from citizens about motorists speeding through the intersection — even though the project area was supposed to be closed to through traffic while construction was underway.

“I’m a glass half full kind of guy,” Green joked. “We’ve gone from everybody complaining because the roads are not good enough to everybody complaining because the roads are too good.”

“The road is faster because it’s straight now,” Councilor Heather Rookstool noted, adding that she thought stop signs should be placed at the intersection.

“People travel way too fast” on Valley View, said Councilor Paul Smith, who took part in the meeting remotely via videoconferencing. “I think the new asphalt is beautiful ... but we’ve got to find a way to slow (the traffic) down.”

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Forest project moves ahead

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Malheur National Forest’s plan to thin forests, manage prescribed fires and remove commercial and non-commercial timber on 40,000 acres will wrap up its 45-day comment period Oct. 12.

Kate Cueno, a district planner with the U.S. Forest Service, provided an update on the Cliff Knox Project at the Sept. 22 meeting of the Grant County Court. Cueno said the proposal calls for harvesting 19,000 acres of commercial timber and another 4,400 acres of non-commercial, smaller-diameter trees for biomass, posts and poles for fencing.

Under the Malheur National Forest’s proposed action, known as Alternative 2, 20 miles of Forest Service roads would be closed, Cueno said, but noted these are previously administrative road closures.

A different possible version of the plan, dubbed Alternative 3, would close 37 miles of roads with the intention of improving elk habitat on the forest to prevent the animals from wandering onto private land.

The project will be within a Wild

MORE INFORMATION

How to comment:

Those who would like to comment electronically can go to:

<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=50433>

More information about the Cliff Knox Project can be found at:

www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50433

and Scenic River corridor, a restrictive management designation that people often cite as one of the primary contributors to catastrophic wildfires scorching the West, according to Malheur Forest Supervisor Craig Trulock.

“We’re trying to take that head on and actually do treatments in places that have previously been easier to avoid,” Trulock said.

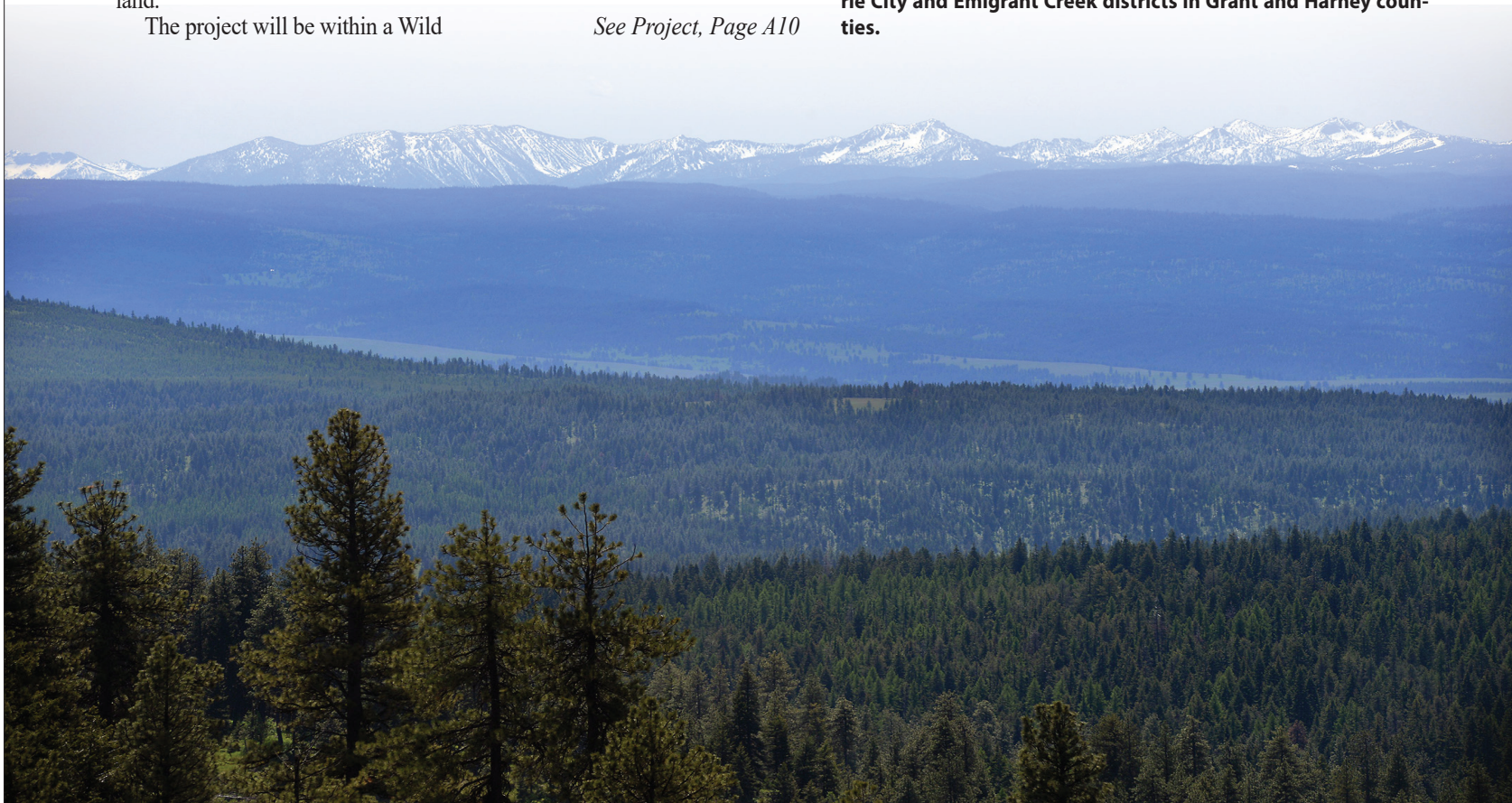
A real-world example of the value in treating the forest and removing fuels, according to Trulock, would

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Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

Kate Cueno, a district planner with the Forest Service, gives an overview of the Malheur National Forest’s Cliff Knox Project during the Sept. 22 session of the Grant County Court. The 40,000-acre forest restoration project spans the Malheur’s Prairie City and Emigrant Creek districts in Grant and Harney counties.



Eagle file photo

The Malheur National Forest’s proposed Cliff Knox Project aims to make 40,000 acres of forest in Grant and Harney counties more resistant to catastrophic wildfires. The project would use prescribed burns, thin roughly 19,000 acres of commercial timber and close approximately 20 miles of roads.

Some firms beat hiring crunch

Editor’s note: Today is Part 5 of a five-part series of articles by EO Media Group looking at the lack of workers for jobs in Central, Eastern and Coastal Oregon — why workers are not returning to previously held jobs and how businesses are functioning without being fully staffed. This last segment looks to the future.

Satisfying work seen as one way to avoid employment woes

By ERICK PETERSON
and SUZANNE ROIG
EO Media Group

HERMISTON — Not every company is feeling the employment pinch equally, according to some local construction companies and at least one economist. People at N.W. Crane Service Inc. and other companies say they are not having the same problems with staffing as other industries. And when they do have personnel issues, they are not related to the pandemic.

“We’re blessed,” said Ryan Karlson, logistics manager at N.W. Crane Service in Hermiston. Though he credited much of his success to luck, his company’s achievements in hiring and maintaining staff seem to be more than a fluke.

First, he said, crane businesses

Worker Shortage



LAST IN A 5-PART SERIES

attract a special sort of person. Karlson’s company employs 12 crane operators and drivers. Karlson is himself an experienced crane operator and knows a thing or two about this type of worker.

Crane operators, he said, are excited by the challenge of their work. Often, prior to beginning their careers, they looked up at cranes while doing other construction, and they wanted to get behind the controls of the huge machines.

This desire, he said, is sometimes hidden deep in their hearts. When



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian/East Oregonian

Workers with N.W. Crane Service Inc., of Hermiston unload parts of a crane while assembling it on Sept. 27 at Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Washington. The crane service is among the Eastern Oregon companies that have managed to avoid the staffing problems plaguing other industries as a result of the pandemic.

they finally talk to an employer about crane work, and they learn about the opportunities, they are excited. And when they get a job, often they do not want to leave it.

Being able to offer employees a challenging, fulfilling and enjoyable job, then, accounts for part of N.W. Crane’s employment success. This is not the end of the explanation, however.

A major reason Karlson has been

able to foster loyalty is because he offers in-house certifications, which employees appreciate.

Certificates are important for crane operators. Many work sites, including ones owned by Amazon, allow only certified workers. And many employers, Karlson said, require employees to find and pay for their own certificates.

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