

# The Blue Mountain EAGLE

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Eagle file photo

John Day Police Department.

## City reacts to county policing plan

By BENNETT HALL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Grant County's response to John Day's law enforcement funding proposal got its first public discussion last week, but it didn't happen at a meeting of the Grant County Court.

Instead, it happened at a work session of the John Day City Council.

On Oct. 13, a day after the council voted unanimously to suspend the cash-strapped John Day Police Department, City Manager Nick Green attended a meeting of the Grant County Court to make a proposal: The city would give the county \$300,000 a year from its general fund for law enforcement services in exchange for the same amount from the county's road fund for street improvements in John Day to spur housing development.

County Judge Scott Myers said he wanted the proposal in writing. A written version of the proposal was submitted to the county on Nov. 8.

The County Court has yet to discuss the city's proposal in a public meeting.

Myers has said that, before the county court has that discussion, the city should decide whether to transfer to the county a three-year, \$375,000 federal Community Oriented Policing Services grant. City officials are still waiting to hear back from federal officials about whether the COPS grant is transferable.

Since the John Day Police Department was suspended, the duty of enforcing the law within the city limits has fallen on the Grant County Sheriff's Office, which has four patrol deputies to cover the entire county. Sheriff Todd McKinley has repeatedly told both the City Council and the County Court that he needs additional deputies to provide adequate coverage.

Since mid-December, County Commissioner Sam Palmer has met to discuss the issue of law enforcement funding informally with Sheriff Todd McKinley, City Councilors Gregg Haberly and Heather Rookstool, and community member John Rowell.

On Jan. 21, the county counsel emailed a detailed proposal for law enforcement coverage to the city attorney, which only became public after Green put it on the agenda for a work session during a special meeting of the City Council on Feb. 1.

Palmer attended the meeting and participated in the work session, engaging in a public discussion of the proposal with the city councilors.

The county's proposal, which is based on a service agreement between Deschutes County and the city of Sisters, would give the Sheriff's Office three additional deputies to provide coverage in John Day. (At full strength, the John Day Police Department had four sworn officers.)

To cover the cost of that coverage, the city would pay a minimum of \$282,400 a year, assuming it is

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# Seeking common GROUND

## Stakeholders committee lays out desired conditions for USFS Blue Mountain management plan

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Groups that have long been at odds on forest management issues have reached a consensus on goals and desired conditions that will frame how the U.S. Forest Service drafts land management plans on three national forests in Northeast Oregon and Southeast Washington.

At a meeting on Jan. 25, the access subcommittee of the Blue Mountains Inter-governmental Council — or BIC for short — submitted its final rule and desired conditions to the full council.

The Forest Service formed the BIC, made up of county officials, tribal members and other stakeholders from the Blue Mountain region, after the agency's proposed 2018 management plan revision fizzled in the face of intense public scrutiny.

The three national forests covered by the management plan — the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur — are collectively known as the Blue Mountain Forest and make up a third of Oregon's national forest land.

**"I THINK WE MADE HUGE PROGRESS WITH THE BIC ON UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER."**

Craig Trulock  
Malheur National Forest supervisor

Each forest has its individual resource and management plans, with desired conditions and goals spelled out. While the plans do not dictate project-level decisions, the desired conditions will form a foundation for the broader guidelines surrounding key issues such as forest access, elk security, forest health and grazing when the Forest Service begins the process of revising its management plan for the Blue Mountain Forest.

Craig Trulock, Malheur National Forest supervisor, said he is not sure when the revision process would begin. However, he said a proposal has been forwarded to U.S. Forest Service headquarters in Washington, D.C., to put a team together to begin drafting the revision.

From the beginning, Trulock said, the idea was to seek compromise and solutions on as many issues as possible.

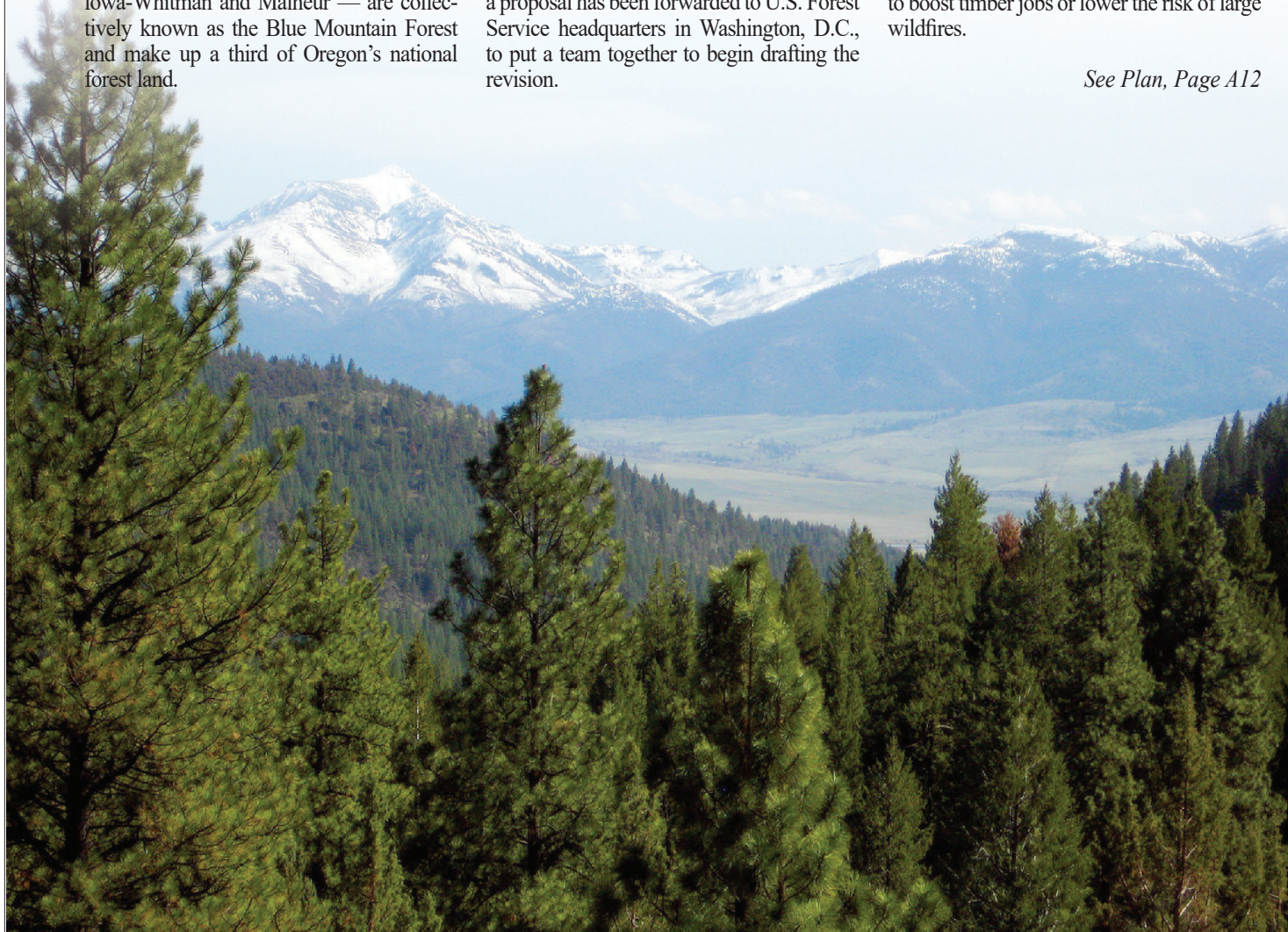
"I think we made huge progress with the BIC on understanding each other," Trulock said.

The Forest Service's 2018 management plan revision, which was drafted before Trulock was named Malheur's supervisor, received intense backlash. The plan called for an increase in thinning dry upland forests to improve wildfire resilience while doubling the current timber harvest and designating 70,500 acres of new wilderness.

The Eastern Oregon Counties Association, to which Grant belongs, listed eight main objections, including economics; access; management area designation; pace and scale of restoration; grazing; fire and salvage logging; coordination between agencies; and wildlife.

The counties argued the agency's plan would close roads and limit livestock grazing while failing to thin enough of the woods to boost timber jobs or lower the risk of large wildfires.

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Blue Mountain Eagle, File

A view of Strawberry Mountain in the Malheur National Forest.

## Survey says: Voters split on pool bond

By BENNETT HALL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Voters are split down the middle over whether to approve a bond measure to pay for a new aquatic center at the Seventh Street Sports Complex, a recent survey shows.

Some 35% of respondents said they would definitely vote yes for a bond measure to raise up to \$4 million for a new community pool in John Day, while 34% said they would definitely vote no. When voters who say they would probably vote a certain way or are leaning in that direction are factored in, the tallies add up to 51% in favor to 45% against — a margin of just 6 percentage points



Courtesy of Opsis Architecture

This conceptual drawing shows what the proposed aquatic center at the Seventh Street Sports Complex might look like.

— with 4% undecided.

The John Day-Canyon City Parks and Recreation District is proposing to build a six-lane, 25-yard outdoor pool with locker rooms and office space to replace the 64-year-

old Gleason Pool, which has been closed for two years and is slated for demolition.

The preliminary cost estimate for the project is \$6 million, and \$3 million in state and city funding is already commit-

ted. The district needs to raise another \$3 million to \$4 million, depending on final cost estimates, to complete the aquatic center, and it plans to put a bond measure on the ballot this year.

To gauge the level of public support for the project, the city commissioned a survey by FM3 Research of Oakland, California, at a cost of \$25,000.

According to parks and rec district board member Lisa Weigum, FM3 attempted to contact every registered voter within the district's boundaries, which encompass the cities of John Day and Canyon City as well as a large amount of unincorporated land around both communities.

The firm reached out to vot-

ers by telephone, email and text, as well as sending out postcards to street addresses and PO boxes. A total of 467 district voters participated in the survey, which was conducted by telephone and online between Nov. 29 and Dec. 27. FM3 estimates a margin of error between 4.5% and 6.7% at the 95% level of confidence. Weigum said the district board was pleased with the level of participation in the survey.

"I was really excited to see we had 467 people respond," she said. "For a community our size, the number of people responding was pretty high."

A deeper dive into the data

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