

**VIEWPOINT** • LETTERS • COMMENTS • EDITORIAL

# Willow Creek Dam project endorsed

Tonight's the night for residents to register some control over the future of their communities.

The opportunity comes in the form of a public meeting on the proposed construction of the Willow Creek Dam project.

Senator Mark Hatfield announced recently that he could obtain the money necessary to fund construction of the dam as it was authorized in 1965 by congress.

The Senator says it can be done without going through the bureaucratic boondoggle that happened here in the early 70's when the Corp of Engineers came to town for public hearings and cost-benefit ratio reports. Hatfield proposed to include the appropriation in the Public Works Bill passed each year by congress; a massive, catch-all bill that approves the spending for thousands of projects throughout the United States.

What can the dam do for Souther Morrow County?

One, it will provide flood protection; two, a reservoir for irrigation; three, some recreational facilities; and four, it will provide for the economic stability and continued orderly growth of the area.

The cities of Heppner, Lexington and Ione are currently faced with flood plains that will virtually eliminate the possibility of new construction and extensive remodeling in the commercial and some residential sections of the respective cities.

With the construction of the dam, however, flood plains in those cities would be eliminated for all intents and purposes. Work done by the Heppner Water Control District has probably already accomplished lowering of the flood plain to an extent but we bet Housing and Urban Development (HUD), who now administers the national flood insurance program, wouldn't believe it.

It is indeed unfortunate that productive agricultural lands need to be taken to construct the dam, but we feel it would be more unfortunate if the cities of Heppner, Lexington and Ione gradually became villages.

We support the construction of Willow Creek Dam under the original authorization with the understanding that no further studies and public hearings will need to be done.

We all know that this is an election year for Senator Hatfield—although there really isn't much percentage in this project for him because the issue will be decided locally long before election time; and we all know the Corp of Engineers can't stand the sight of running water, which most of us don't agree with; and the sentimental aspects of the issue are numberless. Residents should look at the facts...especially the fact of what the dam could do for them and their families in the years ahead.

**Below is a Straw Ballot readers are urged to mark and return. Local officials will use ballot results in their decision on the Willow Creek Dam project**

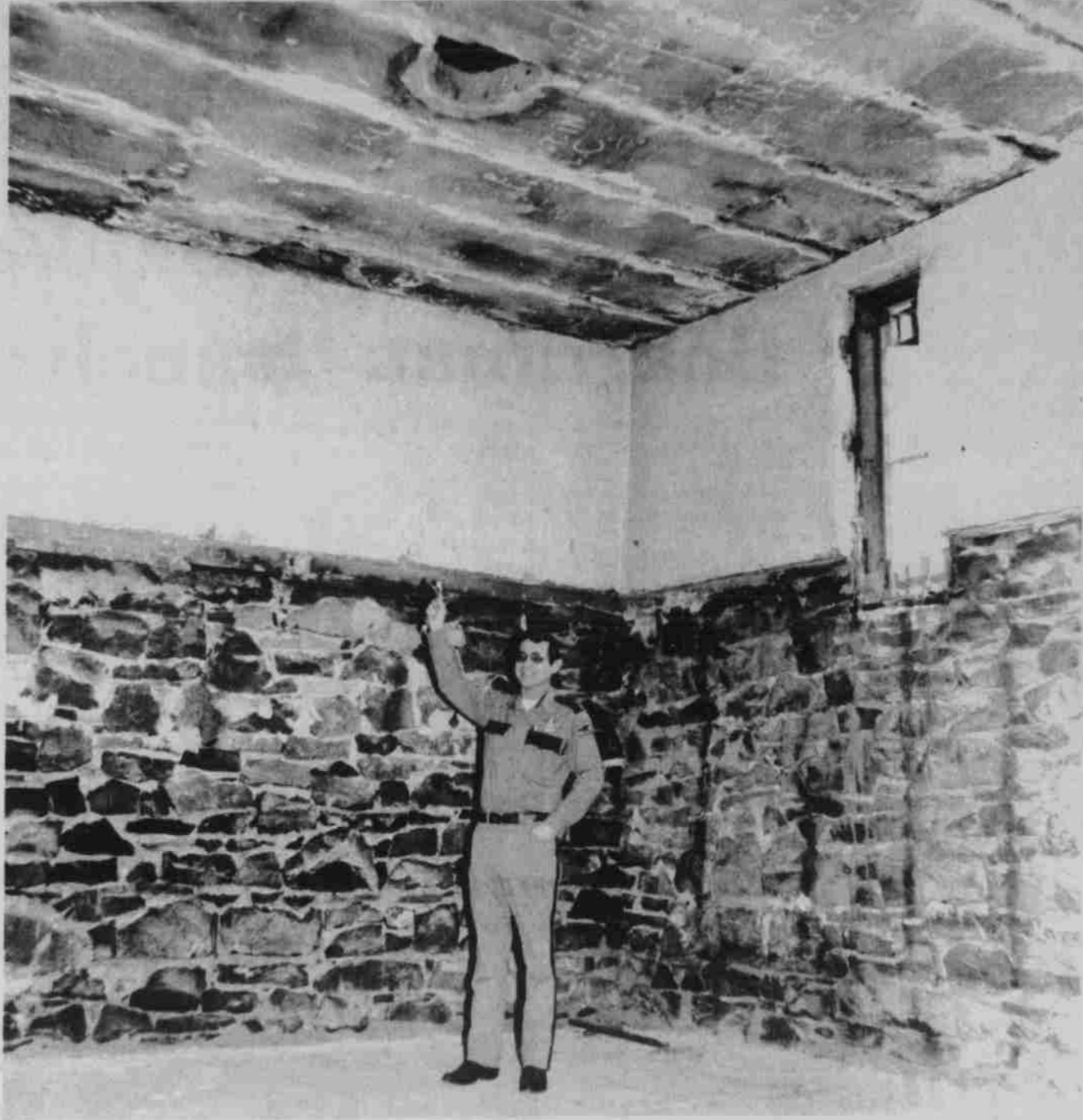
**Straw Ballot**  
**Willow Creek Dam Project**

**Yes, I would like to see**  
**Willow Creek Dam constructed**

**No, I would not like to see**  
**Willow Creek Dam constructed**

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail ballot to P.O. Box 337, Heppner OR 97836



## Dollars dictate jail talks

by Jim Summers

Everytime the Morrow County Sheriff's Office picks up a prisoner requiring lodging, the case for a county lock-up facility picks up a little steam.

It's been that way since 1976 when the old jail, constructed along with the courthouse in 1902, was forced to close its doors for not meeting present day state standards and the county sheriff had to start looking around for someone else to take his prisoners. So far there has always been a taker, but the prospect of neighboring county jails hanging up a no vacancy sign, as well as the mounting costs in time, manpower and dollars needed for the transporting, has added more fuel to the fire.

Last month, more than a year of talk about the jail issue materialized on paper when the County Court, County Budget Committee, Revenue Sharing Committee, and representatives from the Sheriff's and District Attorney's Offices met with Portland architect Jack Miller to review blueprints and cost estimates for remodeling the 547 square foot jail building. The price tag was \$89,000.

So with the cards on the table and not enough money to back up their hand, the County Court asked for a reshuffle and sent Miller back to the drawing board to come with similar information on a separate, expanded facility, with adjoining office space. All intended to be placed somewhere on the courthouse grounds.

Part of the thinking here was if the Sheriff's Office moved to the new jail building, it would open up the present office and possibly the old jail to help ease the space problem in other courthouse offices which are already busting at the seams.

Meanwhile, it's back to the

cash business with county planners looking for some grant money to finance the construction and the sheriff continuing to deal out the bucks for transporting and lodging the prisoners.

Last year Sheriff Larry Fetsch and his deputies racked up 10,025 miles and 422 manhours in shuffling the prisoners back and forth from Pendleton and The Dalles to various trials, sentencings and hearings. That amounts to one-fifth of a man's time or \$2,294 in wages. Added to that is another \$1,303 eaten up in vehicle charges at the county rate of 13 cents per mile and the \$18 per day per prisoner lodging fee charged by Umatilla County.

"We need a facility here someplace," said Fetsch. "We've already been turned down on prisoners by The Dalles and I can see the day

when Umatilla County will no longer be able to handle us. All we want is a nice, simple, clean jail and if they want to remodel the old one it would suit me fine."

The plans drafted by Miller provide for a three-cell facility with a booking-visiting room, food preparation area, shower and day area for prisoners. One of the cells would be a maximum security area where women or juveniles could be separated from other prisoners. The jail would be used for holding prisoners only on short terms of up to 60 days.

Slightly less than half of the \$89,000 would cover the actual remodeling such as plumbing and wiring while the rest of the money would go for the hardware and security that is required of every jail in the state.

As is usually the case, the

bottom line on the issue is money. Some, but not nearly enough revenue sharing funds can be put together, planners are "still trying to identify sources" of grant funds and another bond issue pushed before county voters would probably go over like a lead balloon.

Cost estimates for the separate facility will not be available from Miller for a couple of weeks. But with instructions from the court to design a six-cell facility with additional space for offices, the price is expected to double and it certainly won't be any easier to come up with \$180,000 than it is to come up with \$90,000.

"Sure, if they want to spend twice as much to build a nice big jail out on the grass it would be great," Fetsch said. "I just need to have something, and soon."

### Where to write Federal

Following is a list of Oregon and Eastern Oregon public officials for the information of readers who want to communicate with them:

U.S. Sen. Mark O. Hatfield, Russell Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510. Member of Appropriations Committee, Interior Committee, Rules Committee and Indian Policy Review Commission. Portland office, Pioneer Courthouse, Rm. 107, 520 SW Morrison, Portland, Ore. 97204, phone 221-3386.

U.S. Sen. Bob Packwood, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510. Member of Finance Committee and Commerce Committee. Portland office, 1002 NE Halladay, Rm. 700, (P.O. Box 3621), Portland, Ore. 97208, phone 233-4471.

U.S. Rep. Al Ullman, of the Second District, House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. Member of Ways and Means Committee. Salem office, 150 N. Church, Rm. 219 (P.O. Box 247), Salem, Ore. 97310, phone 399-5724.

### State

Gov. Robert Straub, State Capitol, Salem, Ore. 97310, phone 378-3100.

State Sen. Ken Jernstedt (Morrow, Gilliam and other counties), 311 Pine St., Hood River, 386-1393.

State Rep. Jack Sumner (Morrow, Gilliam and other counties), Route 1, Heppner, 676-5364.

### Picture Credit

**Sheriff Larry Fetsch points to prison graffiti found when 1902 jail facility was gutted last year. Fetsch said the hole in the ceiling was the result of a long ago escape attempt. Architects estimate \$89,000 would be needed to renovate the stone structure**

## Sifting through the TIMES

A front page story in the Times this week ten years ago indicated that the county might be part of a trend that was sweeping, and disturbing, the nation at that time: "County and school officials are investigating the possibility that use of marijuana has obtained a start in Morrow County, Judge Paul Jones...told members of the Heppner-Morrow County Chamber of Commerce Monday.

"The judge said that there is strong evidence that we do have in our schools and community some of the drugs we've seen about on television and read about in the news...We don't believe there is anything yet but marijuana."

Editor Wes Sherman commented on the problem on page two:

"In view of the widely spreading use of drugs and narcotics around the nation, it should come as no shock that a few young people are suspected of bringing marijuana here...Nevertheless, there is a tendency for parents and the public to think with some naivity, 'It couldn't happen here.'

"...Smoking and drinking by youth are serious enough, but experimenting with marijuana is dynamite. Somehow they need to be impressed with the fact...that the consequences are so serious that they far transcend any pleasure, kick or bravado that may be experienced...one thing is sure, thousands of hopelessly-hooked users of hard narcotics got their start on marijuana and lesser drugs...There is no place in Morrow County and we pledge every assistance in doing our part to see that it gets no start here."

In other front page news this week in 1968, Marcia Jones, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Jones was selected princess to represent the Wranglers riding club in the 1968 Morrow County Fair and Rodeo; Jerry Sweeney was president of the Oregon State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers at the board's annual meeting in Portland; Dick McElligott, Bryce Keene and Albert Wright were elected as supervisors in the Heppner Soil and Water Conservation District; and Michael D. Bengé, son of Mr. and Mrs. Terrel Bengé of Ione, was reported as missing in Vietnam. (All of Morrow County later celebrated Bengé's return; he is now working to facilitate the return of Americans still missing in Vietnam.)

Patricia Jean Steagall, 19, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Steagall of Lexington, was chosen queen of the 1958 Morrow County Fair and Rodeo this week 20 years ago. She planned to appear astride her registered thoroughbred Justice K. Kratzer during her reign.

Fifty years ago this week, the Heppner Gazette-Times published a bulky, four-section, 32-page special booster edition, hoping to attract new settlers to Morrow County: "...This vast area represents a field of opportunity that heretofore has not been presented to the home seeker. Consequently, the great numbers of newcomers that are populating the western part of Oregon have passed by Morrow County, simply because they did not know that here was a great virgin territory offering in richest abundance the opportunities which they sought. We firmly believe that the next few years will see growth and progress here never before equalized in our history...We hope that you will also get in on the ground floor."

Sifting through the booster edition is a fascinating study of the history of the county in the making, 50 years ago.

It is hard to imagine any aspect of life here that was not at least touched upon—and described in the most glowing terms. Heppner, Ione, Lexington, Irrigon and Boardman were described as "New Western Cities in the Making" and the advantages of living and working in each were covered.

"Welcome to Morrow County, Oregon, 'Where Wheat is King', the front page of the special edition proclaimed, and much space was given to the consideration to not only wheat raising in the county but every aspect of agriculture, including cattle, potatoes, irrigation, hogs, onions, sheep poultry, etc. A photo headlined "Scientific Methods in Morrow County" shows teams of horses pulling threshing machines.

Businesses, churches, banks, and fraternal organizations were all described in many articles throughout the section. "County School System Holds Place among Leaders in State" was the headline for a story designed to encourage would-be settlers with children to consider the county as a home site.

Roads in the county must have been considerably better than those of today—or perhaps the standards were a bit lower—for much space was given to the description of the "Fine Roads in County; Good Transportation Facilities".

Historical accounts of life in the county prior to 1928 also make for good reading for anyone interested in county history.

Reading the booster section, a person can't help but wonder why a county 'boom' did not materialize fifty years ago as a result of the fantastic publicity.

### Letters Policy

ALL LETTERS of general interest are welcomed, providing they are in good taste and not libelous.

250 WORDS IS about the maximum length we can accept, however, if you need more space, please use it.

ALL LETTERS MUST be signed to be considered. If you wish to have your name withheld—for good cause—we will do so after contacting you for an explanation.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS should be included. The number will only be used by the Gazette-Times to confirm it was you who wrote the letter.

THE GAZETTE-TIMES reserves the right to refuse any letter it deems unfit for publication.

LETTERS SHOULD BE addressed to Editor, Gazette-Times, P.O. Box 337, Heppner, Ore., 97836.

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