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## Nature Conservancy holds tour Juniper Canyon Roads get major overhaul



photo by Katie Wall

Heppner and lone community members (front l-r): Bob and Sharon Harrison; (back l-r): Loyal Burns, Jim Swanson, Burke O'Brien, Claudia Hughes and Tom Wolff look on as Conservancy representatives Leslie Nelson and Steve Buttrick show map of local juniper and sage brush area.

By Katie Wall

Saving the Washington ground squirrel is not the only reason the Nature Conservancy has leased, and hopes to purchase, 23,000 acres from 3 Mile Canyon Farms. They are also looking to save the habitats of the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, and Northern brown owl. The Conservancy is also looking to protect and nourish the native habitats of local shrubs, such as blue bunch wheat grass, sagebrush, and junipers.

Leslie Nelson and Steve Buttrick, with the Nature Conservancy, guided eight people from the Heppner and lone areas on a tour of parts of the Boardman Conservation Area. Nelson and Buttrick explained that the Washington ground squirrel had been listed as a state endangered animal and that the federal government was looking at making the squirrel a federally endangered animal. Nelson explained a federal listing could greatly affect the local farmers.

Another concern of the conservancy is weed control. Yellow star thistle is one of the weeds that has caused the most problems in the conservation area. Over 3000 acres of land is covered in yellow star thistle. Nelson informed that about 15,000 paid hours and 10,000 volunteer hours have been put into controlling the weeds. The Conservancy prefers to hand pull the weeds, but for large growth areas is beginning to use localized chemical sprays. In place of the star thistle, the Conservancy would like to see blue bunch

wheat grass and other native grass growing.

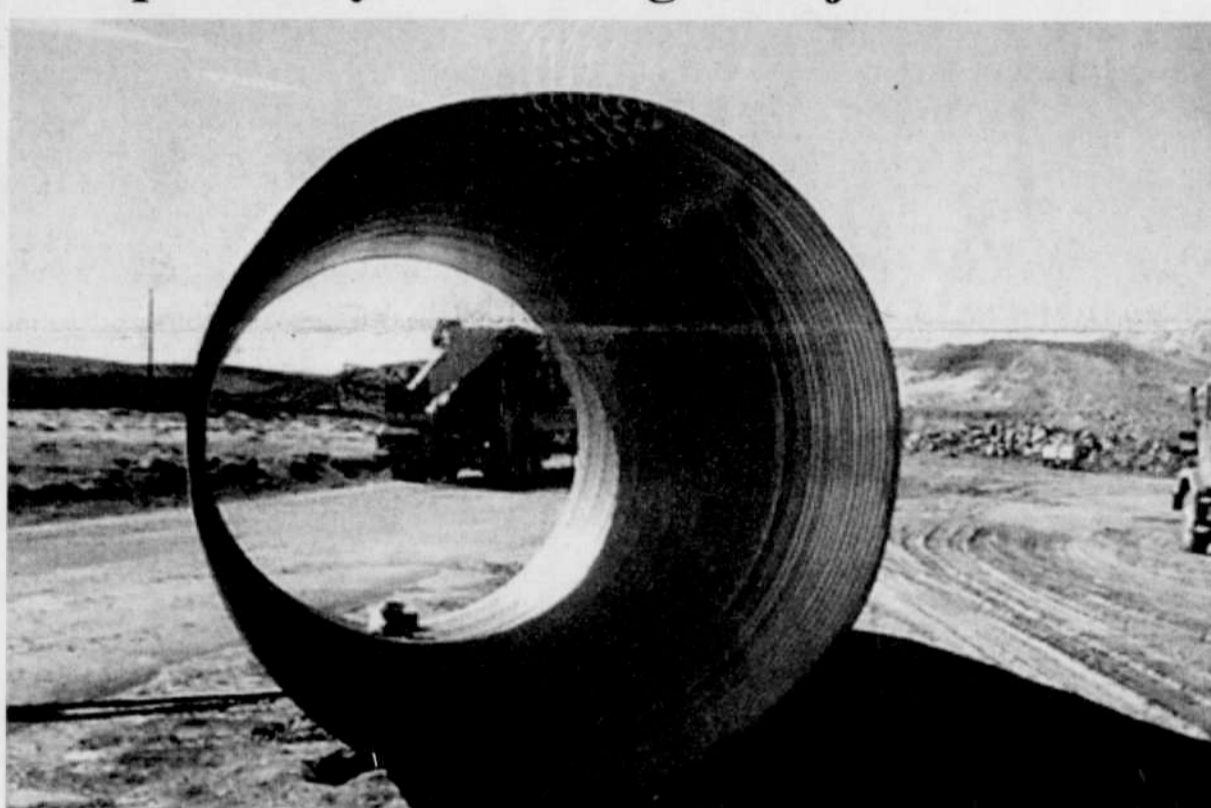
One of the shrub concerns for the Conservancy is to see an increase of the juniper population. As of now, only a narrow rim of junipers exist in the conservation area. The juniper plays an important part in that it is the tree that ferruginous hawks prefer to nest in, but it cannot be any juniper. The hawk prefers mature open crown junipers.

The land in the conservation area is also currently being used as grazing lands. The current grazing lease ends in 2005. Nelson also explained that due to the Conservancy only having a lease on the land they cannot allow hunting or unguided tours. The Conservancy is looking to change some of this once the land is purchased.

Another interesting factor of the conservation area is that seven miles of the Oregon Trail runs through the conservation area and meets up with the five-mile stretch through the bombing range.

Buttrick explained that he would like to see the Conservation area be some small preservation areas surrounded by the larger conservation area. Preserve was defined as non-use of an area, with conserve defined as wise use of an area.

The Conservancy has many projects they would like to see completed in the area and is hoping to create an area that is enjoyed by the animals and shrubs, as well as people.



A rock crusher is framed by one of the 10-foot culverts going in on the Juniper Canyon Road project

Juniper Canyon Road, which runs between Lone and Bombing Range Road, is getting a major overhaul and the work is being done by the county road crew, which according to road boss Burke O'Brien "are doing a heck of a good job".

The road crew, which normally does maintenance work around the county, has been doing major construction work on Juniper Canyon since the first part of August. Juniper Canyon has been closed off with detours around the construction since that time. Construction is expected to continue until May when the \$800,000 project is expected to be completed.

Although 3.8 miles of the road is being completely redone, the biggest part of the project is taking out a bad corner in the road, or as O'Brien calls it a "length restricting curve." "Semis and other trucks were having a hard time getting around that curve," O'Brien said. He added that it will make the road safer and easier to use when completed.

"From a maintenance crew to a construction crew they have done a heck of a good job," he said of the road crew. They are also learning new skills while doing such a large job. "A lot of the guys are learning how to operate other types of equipment

## School superintendent doesn't expect new schools in Boardman, Irrigon to open on schedule

Morrow County School Superintendent Dr. Jack Crippen told the school board Monday night that he doesn't believe the district can open the two new elementary schools in north Morrow County on schedule because of lack of money for staffing and students to fill the schools. The schools, one in Irrigon and one in Boardman, both still under construction, were scheduled to open for students next fall. Crippen said that financial woes on the state level, resulting in less state money to the district, and a struggling Oregon economy, resulting in fewer families moving to the area, contributed to the district's situation. Fewer students means less state money for the district schools. He said that he anticipates cuts in the district's budget and consequently, cuts in staffing. He added, however, that he expected the population in the north end of the county to increase in the future so that the new schools would be required.

Dr. Crippen presented three scenarios to assist the board in making possible cuts, none of which bodes well for Morrow County Schools.

One scenario uses average daily attendance, weighted by other factors such as the number of English as a second language students, special education students, pregnant and parenting students, the number of students in poverty and the small schools factor. In this scenario, based on the 2001-02 budget with the district receiving \$4,870.05 (a projected figure) per student, only

Columbia Middle School, Sam Boardman Elementary, and Heppner Middle School took in more money than they spent. Based on weighted average daily attendance, CMS brought in \$269,915 more than its expenditures; SBE brought in \$261,842 more; and HMS brought in \$15,296. Heppner Elementary School spent \$634,512 more than its income; Heppner High School spent \$441,379 more than it brought in; Lone Elementary School spent \$287,786 more; Riverside High School, \$171,086 more; Lone High School, \$121,930 more; Lone Middle School, \$52,185 more; and A.C. Houghton, \$19,076 more. The alternative school was under budget with \$186,180 to the black. If the district received \$3,598.17 per student, for example, SBE and CMS were the only schools in the black, and HES, HHS and RHS were the highest spenders over their projected income. The actual amount the district receives per student from the state has not yet been determined.

A second scenario uses class size per teacher to help the board determine where cuts could be made. In this scenario the schools with the lower student/teacher ratios would presumably suffer more teacher cuts than schools with higher student/teacher ratios.

In this scenario:  
-Lone Middle/High School, grades six-12, has the lowest student/teacher ratio, with around 12.58 students per teacher;

-Heppner Junior High/High School, grades seven-12,

averages around 15.23 students per teacher;

-Sam Boardman Elementary, grades K-five, averages 20.48 students per classroom teacher, but with additional specialists such as English as a second language, music, special education, Title I and reading teachers, the ratio is down to around 15.7;

-Lone Elementary, grades K-five, averages 16.5 students per teacher;

-Riverside High School, grades nine-12, averages around 18.3 students per teacher, but this includes students enrolled in alternative school and work experience;

-A.C. Houghton Elementary, grades K-five, averages 21.3 students per classroom teacher, but with special education, English as a second language, Title I, reading, special education and music teachers, the ratio is around 17 students per teacher;

-Heppner Elementary, grades K-six, averages 21.9 students per classroom teacher, but with music, reading and special education teachers, the ratio is around 19 students per teacher;

-Columbia Middle School, grades six-eight, averages around 21.1 students per teacher.

Current enrollment figures as of Oct. 1 show a surprising loss of students in the north end schools and a slight gain in the south end schools over last year's figures. Sam Boardman Elementary, with 471 students, has lost 22 students from October 1 of last year; A.C. Houghton, with 402 students, has lost 10 students from last year; Lone is holding steady at 158 students; Heppner High School, with 194 students, and Columbia Middle School, with 386 students, have each gained three students over last year; and Heppner Elementary School, with 220 students, has gained seven students from last year.

The third scenario uses the Quality Education Model 2000 to determine staffing levels. In this scenario, which compares the number of staff to a model classroom, which calls for no more than 20 students per teacher for K-third grade and a maximum of 29 students per teacher for other classes. In this scenario: ACH, with 23 licensed teachers as of June 2002, would increase to 27.91 teachers, which would be reduced to 22.33 if adjusted to state financing; HES, with 10.5 teachers as of June, would be increased to 10.73, compared to the model, but this would be reduced to 8.59 if adjusted to state financing; Lone Elementary, with 4.25 teachers, would have 3.82 with the prototype and 3.06 adjusted to state financing; SBE, with 29.5 teachers, would have 33.87 with the prototype and 27.10 adjusted to state financing. Grades K-five elementary schools, with 67.25 teachers district wide, would see an increase of employees to 76.34 according to the model, but this would be reduced to 61.07 when adjusted to state financing. Grades six-eight middle schools, with 33.91 teachers, would see a reduction to 29.88 teachers according to the model, which would then be reduced to 23.9 adjusted to state financing. Grades nine-12 high schools, with 43.59 teachers, would be reduced to 32.61 according to the prototype, and reduced further to 26.04 when adjusted to state financing.

The school board will determine which model, if any, to use for making the cuts.

## Heppner Clinic to be open

The Heppner Clinic provided by the Health Department, will be open Oct. 24,

until 7 p.m. for flu and regular immunizations.

The clinic is located about Heppner Hardware.

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