

# BROADBAND

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 lion federal infrastructure bill approved by congress last November.

Also included in the local broadband funding was money for a professional grant writer specific to broadband grant writing, digital inclusion and equity to make sure all areas of the county demographics have access to broadband, and legal expenses for the broadband team if needed. The local electrical co-op, Columbia Basin Electric (CBEC), was also recruited in the broadband effort, as it agreed to handle the money and be the fiscal agent for the broadband team. "We can provide the accounting of the expenditures," said CBEC manager Andy Fletcher who was at the meeting. "Our object is nothing more than fiscal agent," he emphasized.

The broadband effort in the county is aimed mainly at pushing fast internet availability out into the rural areas, as the cities have been seeing higher speeds made available by private businesses. As an example, with the arrival of GorgeNet in Heppner and Ione there is now very high speed affordable internet being offered for every home and business in those cities. The more rural areas of the county, however, still lack high speed or even reliable and affordable internet access, which is where the action team is focusing its efforts.

**OHV grazing rights**  
 In other business at its March 9 meeting the commissioners approved a revised Grazing and Fire Fuels Management Agreement for the county-owned 9,000-acre Off Highway Vehicle Park in the mountains. The agreement is similar to prior grazing contracts the county has with local cattlemen on the property but does include an increase in fees. Two area ranches, Horseshoe Hereford and Triangle Ranches, will continue as contracted ranches to graze on the property.

County officials have appreciated past close relationships with the ranchers in management of the property including at certain times moving cattle on and off the property to accommodate park users. Of the land approximately 7,700 acres are located in Morrow County and are included in the lease, while the other 2,000 acres are in Grant County. "Horseshoe Hereford Ranch and Triangle Ranches are willing to work as partners with Morrow County to provide fire management grazing at the Morrow County OHV Park," the agreement stated. The ranches "...have shown an ability to work collaboratively with Morrow County Parks to re-

duce the fire fuel risk at the OHV Park, while also providing feed for livestock," it stated.

Under the agreement the ranches will pay the county \$11,680 annually for the grazing rights, a \$3,000 increase over the previous year. County Park official Greg Close and Commissioner Don Russell had done research and talked with other ranchers about common grazing fees around the county to come up with what they said was an equitable charge for the rights.

The agreement runs from April 6, of this year to November 1, however county officials said because of the July Fourth OHV camping crowds, the cows usually don't come onto the property until after then.

**Flood plain at old mill site**

In other action the commissioners voted unanimously to write a letter to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) in support of a \$1 million Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group (SCVEDG) grant application for elimination of the flood plain at the former Kinzua Mill Site in Heppner. local economic development officials believe the flood plain at the site has kept new businesses from locating there. The mill closed in 1998 permanently, laying off 138 workers and dealing a major blow to the south county economy.

"Heppner is home to a now abandoned industrial lumber operation... that to this day cannot be developed because of floodplain restrictions there," the letter said. The letter sited the closure of the coal plant in Boardman as further impact on lost jobs and negative economic impact on the county.

The letter also said WCVEDG has received "roughly three calls a month from companies interested in developing the Heppner industrial park site, and during COVID, they received 30 such calls." It said removing the flood plain restrictions would open up this large area for business development. "Not only will the County's general lack of buildable industrial land be addressed by opening up almost the entire 80-acre industrial park from floodplain restrictions, but it will enable existing small business entities to expand and redevelop the area," it said.

"There has been consistent and predictable interest in the industrial park/Kinzua Mill site for siting commercial, manufacturing and other business entities, but the floodplain restrictions severely limit development options.

Mitigating the floodplain's impact through individual plans at each business would be cost prohibitive, and a barrier around the entire site would be much costlier than the planned excavation, bridge removal and grading," the letter concluded.

WCVEDG president Kim Cutsforth, who is a local expert in flood plain issues, told the Gazette-Times if awarded the \$1 million grant would need a 25 percent match, or \$250,000 from the mill site owner Port of Morrow. She said the port approved the match at its meeting last week.

**Commission discusses resignations**

In other business the commissioners appointed Robin Canaday, currently Nurse Supervisor, as interim Public Health Director and Public Health Administrator. She will take the place of Nazario Rivera who recently resigned the positions. The appointment will be for 90 days

until a replacement can be found.

At their March 2 meeting the commissioners discussed the recent resignation of both the county Finance Director Kate Knop and Financial Analyst Deanne Irving. The county is entering its budget season, so it is a busy time for finance. Commissioners also discussed who would fill one of Knop's other rolls as administrator and judiciary of the county's retirement plan. Knop said she spends a lot of time working with current and retired county employees answering questions about their retirement. The commissioners talked about either outsourcing some of Knop's duties or hiring qualified people in the area to work on a contract basis until a new finance director can be hired. The county is also without a public works director as he recently resigned his position also. The county is now in the process of searching for his replacement also.

## Boyer-McKnight exchange vows



Tyler and Lindsey Boyer

Tyler and Lindsey Boyer, Heppner, and Lindsey McKnight, Girdwood, Alaska, were married at the Alyeska Alaska Resort, near Girdwood on July 10, 2021.

Tyler, the son of John and Kelly Boyer, Lexington, is a graduate of Heppner High School. He received his bachelor's degree from Linfield College and his master's degree in psychology from Lewis and Clark College, Portland.

He is employed as an assessment coordinator for Community Counseling Solutions in Heppner. Lindsey, the daughter of Jean McKnight, was raised near Anchorage, Alaska, and graduated from the University of Montana with a master's degree in Human Resources. She is employed as the human resources manager for the State of Oregon in Pendleton.

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# Volunteer campground hosts being sought

The Umatilla National Forest is looking for volunteers to spend the summer as campground hosts at the Jubilee Lake, Woodward, Olive Lake, North Fork John Day and Bull Prairie Lake campgrounds. A campground host greets campers, provides information on the surrounding area, and generally makes campers feel at home. Hosts will visit with campers and day-use visitors, clean and maintain restrooms, restock supplies, occasionally clean up after camp and carry out minor maintenance as needed. They keep an eye on things and set a good example for others in the campground. Individuals or couples can apply to be hosts. Retirees often apply to the campground host program, finding it the ideal way to spend the summer in a beautiful setting. Hosts need to be friendly, flexible and responsible. Host applicants may be subject to a criminal background check.

Those who apply will need to supply their own trailer, camper or motor home. Campground hosts will be provided a campsite, usually near the main entryway to the campground.

Those who are interested in becoming a Forest Service volunteer campground host at Olive Lake Campground, please contact Roy Vega at [john.vega@usda.gov](mailto:john.vega@usda.gov).

North Fork John Day Campground is located eight miles N of Granite and is situated along the beautiful North Fork John Day River and is a gateway to the adjacent wilderness of the same name. The campground offers five tent sites, and 15 tent/trailer sites, as well as horse handling facilities and a trailhead. This campground is typically hosted from Memorial Day through mid-October, though a shorter duration is negotiable. If you are interested in becoming a Forest Service volunteer campground host at North Fork John Day Campground, please contact Roy Vega at [john.vega@usda.gov](mailto:john.vega@usda.gov).

Bull Prairie Lake Campground is located 36 miles south of Heppner and offers 30 tent/trailer sites, 12 picnic areas, a beautiful 28-acre lake with four floating fishing docks and a 1.5-mile paved accessible trail. This campground is typically hosted from Memorial Day through mid-October, though a shorter duration is negotiable. For more information on becoming a Forest Service volunteer campground host at Bull Prairie Lake Campground, please contact Roy Vega at [john.vega@usda.gov](mailto:john.vega@usda.gov).

Woodward Campground is located right off Highway 204 at Tollgate and offers 14 tent/trailer sites, four picnic areas, four accessible toilet facilities, and views of Langdon Lake (however Langdon Lake is a private lake and access to the lake

is not allowed). Hosts are typically on-site from early July through the end of September. The hosts at this campground are also responsible for taking care of Target Meadows and Woodland Campgrounds, which are both located nearby. For more information on becoming a Forest Service volunteer campground host at Woodward Campground, please contact Kiyoshi Fujishin at the Walla Walla Ranger District (509) 522-6277 or [kiyoshi.fujishin@usda.gov](mailto:kiyoshi.fujishin@usda.gov).

Olive Lake Campground is located 12 miles SW of Granite and sits on the shore of a 90-acre high mountain lake. This campground is typically hosted from early-June through Labor Day. The campground features 28 campsites and seven accessible toilet facilities. Other features include a two-mile accessible hiking trail around the lake with nearby access to wilderness and scenic area trails, a boat ramp and two docks. If you are interested in becoming a Forest Service volunteer campground host at Olive Lake Campground, please contact Roy Vega at [john.vega@usda.gov](mailto:john.vega@usda.gov).

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