

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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Lunch time



This bald eagle at Vernonia Lake apparently stopped in for a frozen entree while ice covered most of the lake .

Wyden hears concerns about county fund, Iraq, health care

Oregon citizens are concerned about the loss of federal payments to counties, Iraq, and increasing health care costs, Senator Ron Wyden told reporters Monday morning, following conversations with Oregonians during five town hall meetings during the weekend.

Before a law passed in Sept. 2000, counties received payments based on 1908 and 1937 laws requiring the federal government to share 25 percent of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) receipts and 50 percent of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) receipts with counties in any state where timber was cut on Federal land. In the nineties, federal timber sales declined by over 70 percent nationwide, and the corresponding revenues shared with rural counties also declined.

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000 established a six-year payment formula, based on historical timber receipts, for counties that had been receiving revenue sharing payments for the USFS and BLM lands. The formula estab-

lished a stable revenue source for education, roads and various other county services in rural areas. Because the federal government owns more than 50 percent of Oregon land, 33 of Oregon's 36 counties receive the funds.

Without reauthorization of the act, Columbia County will lose \$2.4 million, which is 25.9 percent of its general fund – the discretionary funds that are used for law enforcement, roads, transportation and other vital services. Some Oregon counties will lose as much as 70 percent of their general funds.

Citizen's comments about Iraq were "spirited," Wyden said, but regardless of their opinions, they feel it is necessary to protect the troops. There was no consensus regarding funds for additional troops.

Escalating health care costs, about 11 percent for 2007, are resulting in more people without health insurance. Wyden has introduced a health care act which The INDEPENDENT will cover in future issues.

Flea market planned to help B'feld couple

The Mist-Birkenfeld Helping Circle and Natal Grange are sponsoring an area-wide flea market fundraiser, including a bake sale and lunch items sale, on Saturday, February 10, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Natal Grange to help Bill and Lynne Kyser of Birkenfeld, whose home was damaged by a chimney fire December 17.

While the Kysers were home the evening of December 17, they noticed a clicking sound, then saw sparks around their chimney. They immediately vacated the house.

The Mist-Birkenfeld Fire Department responded and put out the fire. However, much smoke damage occurred and

chimney repairs are needed before they can move back in, according to the fire marshal. Since the fire, there has been additional damage due to the recent wind storm. They are currently staying with a neighbor.

There is no estimate on the cost of repairs yet. The Kysers had no fire insurance due to on-going medical expenses from Bill Kyser's heart transplant.

Another local family is also in need of help because of medical expenses. For information, please see Letters,

Items are being sought from the public to be sold at the fundraiser. Donated items can be delivered to the Natal Grange on Friday, February 9, from 2:00 to 7:00 p.m. Cash donations can be made by check to Mist-Birkenfeld Helping Circle, Secretary-Treasurer Irene Jones, 69099 North Bank Road, Birkenfeld, OR 97016.

Anything not sold before 5:00 p.m. on the day of the sale will be sent to St. Vincent de Paul or Goodwill. Donors who wish to pick up their unsold items should do so by 5:00 p.m.

Funds raised will be used for materials, permits and contractor expenses necessary to repair the Kysers' home.



A Life Flight helicopter landed at Vernonia High School about 2:00 a.m., Jan. 23, to transport a local woman to OHSU hospital after she fell five feet from a balcony and suffered a concussion. She was released from OHSU on Jan. 30.