

Sage-grouse meeting Apr. 22

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife recently released a revision of the updated Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon, originally released in July 2010 as a five-year update.

Recent revisions to the July 2010 draft are based on input from county governments, stakeholders and public comments. The plan now includes expanded sections on climate change, further describes impacts of feral horses on sage-grouse habitat, clarifies that sustainable grazing practices are consistent with sage-grouse conservation and defines implementation of the Core Area approach to habitat conservation.

The updated draft plan and proposed administrative rules will be presented to the Commission for adoption at its April 22 meeting. The public is invited to attend the meeting.

Written comments will be accepted through the April 22 meeting, but to be included in the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission information briefing materials, comments must be received by April 6. They can be mailed to ODFW headquarters or e-mailed to sage.grouse@state.or.us.

Visit the greater sage-grouse section of ODFW's website to view the plan, background information and related documents. A print copy may be requested from Wildlife Division, ODFW Headquarters, 3406 Cherry Avenue NE, Salem, OR 97303.

In March 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that protection of the greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act was warranted. However, listing the greater sage-grouse was precluded at the time by the need to address other species listings facing greater risk of extinction. The sage-grouse is now a candidate species for listing. The primary threats to the sage-grouse across its range are: habitat loss and fragmentation (including wildfire); invasive plants; energy development; urbanization and agricultural conversion and unmanaged grazing.

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer, General Manager,
West Oregon Electric Cooperative



Answering Building Questions

As the new Headquarters facility takes shape, it brings with it many questions. Members and visitors alike see this large new building and are curious about its size, look, and use. I'll address some of the most asked questions in this article.

Now that the walls are up and the roof is being installed, it is easier to see the size and capacity of the building, which brings up the most asked question to date; why is it so big? The overall sizing of the building is attributable to one major factor; this new building was designed for use over the next 50 plus years for WOEC. It needs to be able to house the existing staff and uses, but also be able to handle future uses, growth, and staff. The current building, built in 1956, no longer is adequate for the needs and uses of the Co-op. We've added on more than once, overloaded the electrical system, and stuffed things in every available space that we could. It makes good sense to build at today's prices a building sufficient to handle the current and future needs rather than add on later at much higher costs.

The size of the warehouse is what draws the most curiosity about size. In addition to sizing it for the future as well as current needs, the key factor here is to be able to bring down as much equipment and inventory from the pole yard into the warehouse where it can be better secured. We lose thousands of dollars of equipment, wire, and inventory to theft from the pole yard each year. It is not visible from the road and metal thieves have cut, driven through, or ripped out fencing and gates to get at our equipment costing us money for damage repairs and replacement of stolen items. The new warehouse will be a secure, visible facility to protect our assets.

The truck bay accomplishes the same thing. We do not have adequate space now to park and protect all of our vehicles, so they have been exposed to theft and damage while being parked at the pole yard. This new facility will allow us to get them under cover and protected. We also needed it to be able to handle future needs as well.

A little known item of great interest to the community of Vernonia, that I want to expound upon in this article is that WOEC, has invested into upgrading the facility to withstand a major earthquake. Additional funds were dedicated to strengthening the facility, especially the truck bays, and adding additional lighting and power so that in the event of a catastrophic event, the trucks could



Greater sage-grouse is now a candidate for Endangered Species.

be removed and the space used as a triage center for the community. It could be used for medical uses, command center, or distribution of emergency care and supplies. It is our contribution to the protection and well being of our community and members.

Another question is; why the facility is going to look so nice? The answer is; we made a commitment to be good neighbors and partners to the city and community, and to construct a facility that they could be proud of. WOEC and the City of Vernonia did not want the first impression to be an unsightly, industrial-looking building. As it will be one of the first buildings you will see coming into Vernonia, we wanted it to reflect well upon our community, represent our heritage and history, hence the lodge-timber town look, and set a positive tone and look for the city. We are using as much wood, earth tones and colors, and design to capture this look and make a positive first impression on visitors to our community.

The final question I'll address is the cost. The overall project will end up being around \$3.5 million. The cost when we first bid the project, over 2 years ago, was \$4.8 million. By building it now during the downturn in the economy, we are saving over \$1.3 million as labor and material costs have been reduced. Out of the approximately \$3.5 million, we have paid for over \$500,000 upfront, we will be selling our current facility for around \$1 million, and will finance the balance over 30 years. When we surveyed our membership, over 80% who responded said they would be willing to pay \$3 or less per month for a new facility out of the flood plain. We have been able to keep the cost to the members at that \$3 per month on their bill.

The bottom line is, as an essential service, we needed to relocate our facilities out of the flood plain, build it to serve the current and future needs of the Co-op, and provide better and more secure protection for staff and equipment. It will also be an asset to the Co-op, the community, and the members we serve, be strong enough to withstand a significant, seismic event, make a good impression for the community and those who live in it and visit it, and do so for a reasonable cost. I think we've accomplished these objectives and more through the design and construction of the new facility. It is scheduled to be completed by the end of July and open for business August.

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