



The Furrow

Newsletter of Oregon Rural Action

Sowing Seeds of Change

September 2004

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Calendar

OREGON RURAL ACTION 4TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
Saturday, October 23rd, La Grande

Baker County Grassroots Alliance meets the second Tuesday in October and November (because of debates & the election) at the Baker Country Library, 7:00 PM

The next meeting of the **Blue Mountain Chapter** will be December 13th -- we will send you notices of time and place.

The **Snake River Chapter** will not meet in October due to a candidate forum at TVCC on October 11th. The November meeting will be a social gathering for members, tentatively set for Sunday, November 14th. Watch for details.

Principles of Community Organizing Training
Pendleton, April 2005

Holding the Line for Positive Growth

by David Whitson, BMC Member

In January of this year, about seven members of the Blue Mountain Chapter's Committee for Positive Community Growth initiated action in opposition to the City's Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA). The stated purpose of the La Grande CPA was to adopt and integrate a 0.77% growth rate into the City ordinance and amend the projections of anticipated land-use needs and wants in the La Grande City Comprehensive Plan (a city vision document). The growth rate provides the basis for determining how much land we'll need to bring within the City's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) to accommodate future development.

The Committee scored a major Victory when the City conceded that there is in fact a *20-year UGB land surplus in all three general land classes* (residential, commercial, industrial), including 14.5 vacant, buildable commercial acres and 28.4 industrial acres of land presently in the UGB. This was significant for our side in the argument about whether we do or don't actually need to expand the UGB's existing boundary to meet 20-year growth needs in our community.

Through the use of some "Fuzzy Math" and questionable "Gravity Modeling," the City had initially concluded that there was a twenty-year *deficit* of 18.8 acres of commercial land and a *surplus* of 1.6 acres of industrial land in the UGB. However, they then determined that La Grande needed 100 additional acres of commercial and 55 acres of industrial land. Due to some very focused work by three dedicated members, there were five draft revisions to the original numbers between January and June before the CPA was passed by the City Council on September 15th.

Despite the failure of the City to justify a UGB expansion based on either population or job-base, the City leadership has introduced a new job forecast and now insists that La Grande needs to add 61.9 new, vacant, buildable commercial acres and 124.5 industrial acres to the UGB, to enable and streamline the planning and development process to accommodate large-lot commercial and industrial development. The City has decided to conduct a study, funded by tax-dollars, to determine where best to add this additional land.

Active committee members met this month to discuss the outcome and decide whether to appeal to the State's Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) for remand. Although there was merit behind many arguments for an appeal, we voted not to – personal energy, work and family obligations need attention as well.

For myself, I spent last weekend weeding my garden and picking plums. Fall's Indian Summer is upon us and winter is coming soon. Speaking for the Committee for Positive Community Growth, we all send a hearty well done and thanks to everyone who supported us and made their own unique contributions as well. We fought the Good Fight! Together, we did make a significant difference. There will be other opportunities.

Buy Green Power



Have you seen information from your utility about Green Power? Did you know that you can, at little extra cost, divert your energy dollars away from high-impact hydropower, coal, gas and nuclear plants and invest in renewable resources instead?

The Northwest's environment, economy, and human health will benefit from your investment. Purchasing **one** 100 kWh block of wind power each month for one year prevents the creation of 1,680 pounds of carbon dioxide, the leading global-warming gas. This has the same environmental benefits as not driving the average car 1,800 miles or planting at least one-third acre of trees.

Green Power options in Eastern Oregon:

- * Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC): 200 kWh/month is \$3.00 extra.
- * Idaho Power: \$1.00 buys 80 kWh/month; purchase any amount of Green Power.
- * Pacific Power:
 - o 100 kilowatt-hour increments of new wind energy go for \$1.95/month per block.
 - o You can purchase all your electricity from 100% new renewable sources. The additional cost of \$0.0078 (less than a penny) per kWh/hr is about \$0.25 per day for the average customer using 1,000 kWh per month.

CHAPTER NEWS

Baker County Grassroots Alliance

During the summer months, **Baker County Grassroots Alliance** focused on writing and adopting our by-laws, and in August we met for a potluck and elected officers for the coming year: Mike Braymen, Chairperson and Board Representative; Randy Joseph, Vice-Chair; Carolyn Kulog, Secretary; and Ramon Lara, Treasurer. In October and November, we will be discussing new issues for organizing—members and guests are encouraged to bring their ideas.

The Small-Scale Recycling committee has drafted a letter to be submitted to the DEQ in support of a grant application for Household Hazardous Waste planning. The grant is to study Household Hazardous Waste solutions for Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties. Randy Joseph is keeping the group advised on the development of a state-level strategic plan for renewable energy and changes coming with respect to PURPA (Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act) and qualifying renewable energy facilities. Randy is hopeful that there will be opportunities for making Process Engineered Fuel (PEF) technology a part of state planning and policy making.

Blue Mountain Chapter

A small team of leaders of the **Blue Mountain Chapter** met over the summer, drafting by-laws, establishing a new meeting schedule, and nominating officers. At the first quarterly meeting in September we adopted by-laws and elected Jim McIver, Chair; Michael Bettis, Vice-Chair and Treasurer; Fred Monzyk, Secretary; and Elizabeth Boretz, Board Representative. Each quarter (September, December, March, June) we will meet for a potluck meeting, receive updates from the issue teams, discuss potential new issues, and provide time for open discussion.

Snake River Chapter

The **Snake River Chapter** celebrated its third anniversary in August and marked the event by adopting by-laws and electing new officers: Nancy Gledhill, Chair and Board Representative; Ulee Yanok, Vice-Chair; and Kris Bates, Secretary/Treasurer. The group is using a new gathering space for many of its meetings—the library at St. Peter's Catholic School in Ontario.

We are moving ahead in our campaign to make changes in the City of Ontario's water-billing policies, with the development of several versions of a bi-lingual (English/Spanish) informational brochure about the issue that we are distributing around the community. Our objectives include getting the City to provide more information explaining the bill in English and Spanish, adjusting the fees and fines for late payments and shutoff/re-connect to be more friendly for low- and fixed-income residents, clearly publicizing options for payment plans, and establishing a hardship fund from voluntary contributions. In late August, several members met with the Mayor, Council President, and Public Works Director to discuss our ideas and test the waters. We have been invited to make a presentation to the City's Public Works Committee in November and will be meeting again with the Public Works and Finance Directors in a few weeks—several of our ideas have already begun to be implemented by the City and we will be pushing for more. Our efforts to involve members of Ontario's Latino community in this campaign are beginning to bear the fruit of diversity.