



The Furrow

Newsletter of Oregon Rural Action

Sowing Seeds of Change

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Calendar

Blue Mountain Wal-Mart/Land Use Team —September 25th

End-of-season Farmers Market festivals La Grande and Baker City, September 27

Tour of Solar Homes (Union County)—October 4th

BCGA presentation by local garbage haulers—October 15th

ORA Board meeting (Baker City)—October 18th

2003 ORA Convention—November 1st

BCGA presentation on composting—November 19th

The **Blue Mountain Chapter** will meet next on Wednesday, October 8th at 7:00pm at the USFS Forest & Range Sciences Lab, on Gekeler across from Birnie Park. A regular meeting schedule for the fall & winter has yet to be determined, but future meetings will incorporate breakout sessions for significant work on the chapter's various issues.

Baker County Grassroots Alliance will meet next on Wednesday, October 1st at 7:00pm in meeting room at the Baker County Library in Baker City. Through November 2003, regular chapter business meetings will be held the first Wednesday of each month, with special public education meetings focused on solid waste management on the third Wednesday of the month. Both sets of meetings convene at 7:00pm at the Baker County Library.

The **Snake River Chapter** meets the second Monday of each month at 6:00 pm for potluck/snacks and 6:30pm for the meeting at the AFSCME Union Hall, 463 S. Park, Ontario.

2003 ORA CONVENTION SET FOR NOVEMBER 1ST

This year's annual ORA convention is scheduled for Saturday, November 1st and will take place once again at the Parish Hall of the Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church in La Grande. As in the past, the day's events will include a business meeting of the membership, keynote speaker, afternoon workshops, silent auction, delicious lunch and dinner, and old-time country dance. All members and friends are invited to attend and childcare will be provided.

ORA will welcome Teri Blanton as this year's keynote speaker. Teri, a long-time leader with Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, has worked for over 20 years to protect rural Appalachian communities from the ravages of coal strip-mining. (*More*)

Allies from Oregon Action and the Rural Organizing Project will give workshops on progressive tax reform, and Kevin Williams from the Western Organization of Resource Councils will lead sessions on the principles of community organizing. Jennifer Barker, director of the Eastern Oregon Renewable Energies Nonprofit (EORenew) and organizer of the annual SolWest Renewable Energy Fair in John Day, will teach participants how to save on home energy bills. Joel Huesby, a rancher of pasture-finished meats from Touchet (Wash.) and one of last year's keynote panelists, will join Janie Burns of Nampa (Idaho) in leading two sessions on local organic food production. And Ulee Yanok will share highlights from her upcoming Freedom Ride for Immigrant Workers' Rights. EORenew will hold its annual meeting as part of the convention, and interested parties are encouraged to sit in.

Mark the date on your calendar now and plan to join us for part or all of the day on November 1st. A convention brochure with more information will be mailed in early October. For more information, contact the ORA office.

FOOD STRATEGY MEETING POSTPONED

The September 20th strategy session aimed at identifying an ORA-wide food issue has been postponed. The ongoing Farmers Market season and other conflicts prevented a critical mass of members from across the region committing to participate. In April, members discussed a variety of topics related to local food or food safety and prioritized four of them for further consideration as an issue that the entire organization would work on in the coming year: Farmers Markets, Genetically Engineered foods, establishing a Local Processing Plant, and Labeling & the Consumer's Right to Know. It remains to be seen whether ORA is currently well enough positioned with the staff and resources to conduct a regional campaign on Food—staff will consult with key members this fall in an effort to re-schedule this strategy session. If you would like to be involved in this process, contact the ORA office.



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BLUE MOUNTAIN CHAPTER FOCUSES ON WAL-MART SUPERCENTER ~CHAPTER CELEBRATES 3RD ANNIVERSARY~

October 2003 marks the third anniversary of ORA's first chapter. The Blue Mountain Chapter re-convened on September 9th and is looking ahead to an active season of work on several issues. The La Grande Farmers Market has enjoyed a breakout year under the guidance of the Farmers Market Advisory Group, which is quickly becoming independent of the chapter and expects a busy off-season of preparations for 2004. The Blue Mountain Energy Team is sponsoring a Tour of Solar Homes in Union County on October 4th (*see story below*) and continues its efforts to convert OTEC's Green Power program into a fund for local renewable energy projects and to facilitate the start-up of a small-scale wind farm.

The chapter's hottest issue at the moment, however, is the effort to prevent Wal-Mart from expanding its current discount store into a SuperCenter. In August, developers submitted proposals to the cities of La Grande and Island City for a SuperCenter on property across Island Avenue from the existing Wal-Mart, a parcel that is currently outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) of both cities. Although both applications have been deemed incomplete and in need of additional information, the chapter's Wal-Mart/Land Use Team, which last year spearheaded a challenge of the County's inflated 20-year population projections, has leapt back into action and is developing a strategy to block the premature expansion of our UGBs. The team will watchdog other SuperCenter proposal for opportunities to block the development or at least ensure that the company pays its fair share of infrastructure costs. A public education campaign is being prepared to build a broad base of support for sound land use decisions related to this matter and to highlight the potentially negative impacts (social, environmental, economic) of a big-box store of that size and scale. The group is meeting next on Thursday, September 25th in the Misener Conference Room (County Planning Building, 1001 Fourth St. in La Grande) to line out the campaign plan and create a budget. Persons interested in joining this effort should contact Brett in the ORA office (975-2411).

WHAT OREGONIANS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TAXES & BUDGETS

Saturday, October 25th 9:00am to 1:00pm (Hoke 202/203, EOU campus)

Citizens for Oregon's Future is a new coalition is working to raise the level of public discussion on taxes and budgets in Oregon. The group's mission is to assist Oregonians in advocating for a tax system that is fair, stable, and adequate to meet Oregon's needs—it is not pushing for any specific tax reform measure. On Saturday, October 25th, the coalition will offer a training in La Grande on the EOU campus. A slide presentation will give basic facts about Oregon's tax and budget system and identify options for change, with the pro's and con's of each. The workshop is designed to train people to make presentations to groups large and small about taxes and budgets in Oregon. Participants can join the coalition's speakers' bureau or use the information just to be more knowledgeable in their everyday conversations with other Oregonians. The training is free, but pre-registration is strongly encouraged. Contact Citizens for Oregon's Future for more information—call (503) 232-8808 or check out their web site at www.foreregon.org.

BAKER COUNTY GRASSROOTS ALLIANCE LOOKS AT LANDFILL ISSUES



ORA members in Baker have been following the County's current effort to update its 1994 plan for Solid Waste Management and are looking to promote responsible options for waste reduction and waste management over the long term. The chapter is quickly bringing itself up to speed on the realities of garbage and will host a series of educational events this fall in Baker City.

The central question addressed by the County so far deals with the anticipated closure of the local landfill within the next 10-12 years and whether it will then be cheaper to build a new, lined landfill facility that meets environmental standards or to truck waste to an existing facility elsewhere. BCGA members are wondering whether a concerted effort to increase recycling rates or provide composting facilities might reduce the county's wastestream enough to significantly extend the life of the landfill. Or if modern incineration technology can handle the county's waste without creating additional pollution problems, perhaps generating electricity at the same time.

In an effort to learn more about these and other possibilities as well as to raise the profile of the current planning process, the chapter has planned a series of public education events on the third Wednesday of the month in September, October, and November. On September 17th, the group presented an hour-long video profiling different innovative approaches to solid waste management around the world. Ten people attended and participated in a short discussion that yielded a list of questions for the presenters at the next educational event on October 15th, Loren Henry of Baker Sanitary Service and Darin Larvik of City Garbage Service (La Grande) will speak about the basics of solid waste management and recycling. On November 19th, the chapter will host a public presentation on composting. All events begin at 7:00pm in the Baker County Library and are open and free to the public. For more information, contact chapter officers Roxanna Swann (523-9265) or Alice Lentz (524-1978).

UNION COUNTY TOUR OF SOLAR HOMES

On Saturday, October 4th, the Blue Mountain Energy Team will be directing a tour of several of Union County's energy-efficient homes. Participants will have the opportunity to check out local houses that boast renewable energy-generating technology (wind turbines, solar photovoltaic panels), passive solar hot water heating, passive solar design, recycled building materials, super-efficient appliances, and other features that reduce their footprint on the planet. This event is part of a statewide effort that will feature similar tours in places like Portland, Salem, Eugene, Bend, and Klamath Falls that same weekend. Free magazines with informative articles and some tour-home descriptions are available in the ORA office and at selected businesses and offices around the county.

The Union County tour will visit solar homes in Cove, Elgin, and La Grande including those of Kay Firor & Kent Osterberg, Arthur Bingham, Chuck & Kathleen Koch, and Bruce Macke. The owners will elaborate on the features and field questions about the designs, products, and construction techniques that make their homes a bit more sustainable and earth-friendly than the average dwelling. You might be surprised at how comfortable and affordable some of these features can be and can learn about some of the pitfalls to avoid in your own design.

Save the date and look for more details soon on the ORA website and in the Observer, or contact Brett in the ORA office (975-2411).



Arthur Bingham's Home

Snake River Chapter News

In June, the Snake River Chapter sponsored a workshop entitled Organics and the Farm Bill. Peter Miller from Oregon Tilth and Lance Phillips from the Soil & Water Conversation District of Malheur County gave participants information about grant opportunities in the Farm Bill and how to transition to organic farming. Twelve people attended this half-day workshop, which included a delicious organic lunch cooked by ORA Snake River Chapter members Marv and Diane Hollen.

The Snake River Chapter meets the second Monday of the month at the AFSCME Union Hall. In addition to its focus on organic farming and assisting farmers with alternative sustainable farming techniques, the chapter is still monitoring the City of Ontario's water shut-off policy. At present, there is no agency or group that is willing to screen water users to help them with their bill payment.

One potential issue being looked into by members is the lack of public transportation in Ontario. On-demand bus service is no longer available; the senior bus can be reserved a week in advance and costs \$10/trip, but for everyday people attempting to get everyday chores accomplished, there is effectively no public transportation in the area.

The next Snake River Chapter Meeting is scheduled for October 13th, AFSCME Union Hall, 463 S. Park, Ontario. For more information, contact Ulee Yanok at 869-2740 or Nancy Gledhill at 208-642-2760.

ORA and ROP to participate in the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride

Immigrant workers, living and paying taxes in the United States, deserve the rights to legalize their status, to have a clear road to citizenship, to reunify their families, to have a voice on the job without regards to legal status, and to enjoy full protection of their civil rights and civil liberties rights denied by their undocumented status and outdated laws. The road to citizenship needs a new map. The goal of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride is to help draw that map.

Ulee Yanok, Vice Chair of the Oregon Rural Action Board, will be participating in the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride from September 23rd to October 5th in collaboration with the Rural Organizing Project. ROP is sending five riders from the Northwest who will make stops in Washington, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, and Ohio before arriving in Washington, D.C. on October 1st to unite with seven other busloads of supporters to lobby legislators.

On Saturday, October 4th, the Immigrant Worker Freedom Riders will be welcomed at Flushing Meadows Park in Queens, New York, where hundreds of thousands of supporters will rally for legalization and new immigration policy to culminate the Ride. Immigrants and their supporters from communities across New York City and the country will gather alongside community and religious leaders, elected officials, and celebrities for an all-day festival for immigrant rights that will transform the grounds around the Unisphere a symbol of the world of countries of origin of the people of the United States into a diverse village united in a common cause.

Ulee will present a workshop focused on her experiences during the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride at the third annual ORA convention on Saturday, November 1st. Please plan to attend if you are interested in this important aspect of social justice. And thank you to all of you who contributed to help make Ulee's participation in this historic event possible.



Mark the date on your calendar now and plan to join us for part or all of the day on November 1st. A convention brochure with more information will be mailed in early October. For more information, contact the ORA office at 541-975-2411.