



Environment & Natural Resources – Civic Engagement Series

Tuesday, November 7, 2023 | 5:00 – 7:00 PM | In-Person

In-Person: La Pine Activity Center, 16450 Victory Way, La Pine, OR 97739

AGENDA

- 5:00 – 5:30 **A. Community Meal**
- Catered by La Pine Activity Center Kitchen
- 5:30 – 5:35 **B. Meeting Begins**
- Introductions
 - Moderator: Kristine Thomas, Sunriver Area Chamber of Commerce
- 5:35 – 5:45 **C. Purpose & Survey Overview**
- Who are We?
 - Newberry Regional Partnership – a team of public and private citizens who have come together to develop a long-range plan for growth in South Deschutes County
 - Project Goal: collaborative organization of community leaders engaged in planning for and dealing with changes associated with growth in the future.
 - Purpose
 - Address the effects of growth in Newberry Country (South Deschutes, North Klamath, West Lake Counties)
 - Serve as facilitators for collaborative, community-led development.
 - Create a Community Strategic Action Plan
 - Today's Purpose
 - Engaging community discussion on matter of interest and/or concern
 - Candid conversations welcome
 - Bring forth issues, problems, challenges, successes, opportunities, and ideas for action to address today's topic.
 - Survey Overview
 - Total study population: 16,800 in 97739 and 97707 zip codes

- Sought to collect information on community priority issues and values.
- Biggest Concerns from Survey:
 - Growth & Change
 - Public Safety – wildfire, homelessness, drug use & crime
 - Recreational opportunities & family friendly activities
 - Social divisions in the community
 - Quality of public education
 - Lack of local restaurants, shops, and competitive grocery stores
 - Access to healthcare and 24/7 emergency care
- Important Results
 - 72% of respondents were Very or Somewhat pleased with outdoor recreation opportunities.
 - Additional home developments, adverse impacts on water quality and quantity, increasing traffic.
 - Trash and safety in our forests and public lands
 - 79% of land in Deschutes County is publicly owned.

5:45 – 6:05

D. Panelist Presentation

Tony DeBone – Deschutes County Commissioner

- Lives in La Pine community
- Committing to getting a roundtable discussion organized.
- Solid waste – new landfill needs to be sited within the next 10 years. Solid waste advisory committee working on this.
- Will include recycling and material separation, maybe energy production.
- Deschutes County makes land-use decisions, Water Resources Department is looking at the future of water – quality, quantity?
- In period of drought, water levels are decreasing. Hoping we will return to a wet cycle to help replenish the water supply.
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) – in South Deschutes County must be sited on parcels of 5 acres or more because of groundwater concerns.
 - Built on land with a primary residence, may need to upgrade or expand septic system to accommodate. Can be expensive.
- RV occupancy as rental – is it permanent housing? Code enforcement doesn't allow, but it is being discussed by the Planning Commission, can make public comment during these meetings.
- Some 5-acre parcels in the South County area where people want to build houses but cannot because it is zoned Forest by the state.
- 50 years into our state land use system – Commissioner DeBone advocates for changing some of these laws to allow for more flexibility.

Lee Stevenson – Central Oregon Trail Alliance

- COTA, focuses and engages people who love riding bikes and mountain biking.
- Trail building, projects done in Sunriver Area, also new projects east and west of La Pine.
- South Deschutes County Chapter (SoDeCo Chapter) covers Newberry Country.
- Goal of connecting community, preserving habitat, designing, and building trails with full Forest Service support and partnership.
- Enlarged the core elk habitat by over 1,000 acres, other habitat restoration projects, native trees, shrubs, and ground cover.
- Trails are for everyone; COTA wants them to be accessible to everyone.
- Summer work parties, newsletter, like to be outside, helping the community and the environment.
- <https://www.cotamtb.com/south-deschutes-county.html>

Rika Ayotte – Executive Director, Deschutes Land Trust

- Certified by the state to advise people with and about the Oregon Health Plan, do not need to be a patient to receive this service.
- DLT purchased Caldano/Spectre Ranch, 11,000 acres right near Highway 97. If not bought by DLT, the property would've been partitioned and turned into 5 housing lots.
- Can keep this historic property for preservation and habitat for the elk population.
- Ecological importance – Elk habitat, Paulina Creek, habitat for fish and wildlife as well as historic water rights. Water rights transferred away from irrigating pastures and into the preserve for habitat restoration. Some will also be channeled to the City of La Pine to address groundwater concerns.
- Long term goal for Paulina Creek Preserve: Restore 3-miles of Paulina Creek, green the meadow, and provide robust public recreation access.
- Have been listening to the community, what they envision for the preserve:
 - Values (focus on safe recreation), hiking, biking, ride horses, be in nature.
 - Increasing livability of community
 - Wildfire protection
 - Water and habitat protection
- Indigenous history of the preserve and Newberry Caldera area. Want to continue to allow tribal access and share the indigenous history of the area.
- The Preserve can be an opportunity for youth to engage with community and nature. Want to support these initiatives.

Jeremy Evans – Public Land Stewards

- <https://plsbend.org/>
- Sons of Smoky: <https://www.sonsofsmokey.com/>
- One of the founders of PLS Bend, started as a motorized vehicle group (4WD club) and was inspired by the need to clean up public lands.
- This year: over 353,000 pounds of trash taken out of Deschutes National Forest, doesn't count BLM land and some other operations.
- Enjoyed playing in the snow with their Toyota 4 Runners, as snow melted in spring of 2017, they realized how much trash was under the snow.
- Their youngest member asked, "Can we do something about the trash?"
- There is a tendency to point fingers and blame, but PLS philosophy is based on taking action and doing the work themselves. They decided to be the solution to the problem.
- Started with clean-ups, a ton of people showed up. Each year there were more participants at their cleanups, huge interest from the community.
- Discover Northwest is their fiscal sponsor, able to not worry about the administrative things associated with a non-profit but have the financial support to get the work done.
- In 2022 they removed 316,000 pounds of trash; had over 200 volunteers show up.
- Volunteers are from a wide range of backgrounds, folks who want to take action to fix a problem themselves. Their cleanups can be effective because of their specialized motorized equipment.
 - Have ability to remove abandoned vehicles and RVs with wreckers, and other equipment. This is a very costly operation that the County can't do themselves.
- 3,000 volunteer hours, each cleanup is 3.5 hours long, fast and effective.
- Approaching 1 million total pounds removed.
 - Completed a La Pine cleanup this year (China Hat area).
 - In Sisters did 55,000 pounds in an afternoon, mainly abandoned vehicles.
- Sisters community has done great work to clean up and care for their public lands.
- PLS is completely volunteer operated.

Lt. Joe Deluca – Deschutes County Sheriff's Office

- Inmate work crews help clean Finley Butte pits, this will be done annually.
- Clean up of transient camps, but don't have the capability to pick up large automobiles, RVs. They do get help from the population that

lives in these areas, want to make their environments as safe as possible.

- Very time consuming and costly to remove motorhomes and RVs, not salvageable.

6:05 – 7:00

E. Group Discussion

- Community Members in the Health and Wellness sector introduced themselves.
- Group activity – participants wrote on sticky notes about Challenges, Opportunities, Successes, and Ideas for Action concerning the topic “Environment and Natural Resources.”
- Participants also asked questions of the panel and took part in large group discussion.
- Many attendees at the gathering are present because of an elk hunting incident that took place near Spring River the weekend prior. [Here is a link to a news article about the incident](#) and the conversations about it that occurred during the gathering.

Challenges:

- Map on the Sherriff’s Office website for no-shoot zones is nearly impossible to access.
- Areas of hunting/no hunting, shooting/no-shooting seem arbitrary and can cause confusion.
- Hunting in Sunriver and Spring River. Forest Service land in Residential Commercial Resort Areas.

Successes:

- The work of Public Land Stewards to keep them clean. Their approach to preventing litter and engaging with the people who cause the trash problem they remedy.

Opportunities:

- More education and awareness about how to safely recreate during hunting season for non-hunters.
- Contact Oregon’s Hunter Association for no-littering awareness and education.
- More exposure for local groups who are building, maintaining, cleaning and restoring our forest land.

Ideas for Action

- Signage on trails to notify people they are in a hunting zone or no-shooting zone.
- Engage and meet the people you have a problem with where they are at.
- Hold a meeting in an effort to address hunting in Spring River area.
- “No shoot” zone map available to the public on Deschutes County website.
- Public service campaign to pick up shotgun shells and trash (ODFW, Oregon Hunters Association, etc.)
- Looking ahead at planned development areas and getting ahead of/creating no shooting zones before it becomes a problem.

- Limit time for speakers at our meetings.
- More public education on what, when, and where hunting season is taking place. Know before you go strategy.
- The issue of hunting in residential areas needs to be addressed all over Deschutes County. There is a 40 acre property in the middle of OUW II that needs to be addressed and I'm sure there is other acreage too!

General Questions:

To Commissioner DeBone: Does or can Deschutes County develop a proactive plan to address these things before they happen? Now we have a culture of reactivity, what can we do to get ahead of this?

- Conversations with federal partners are key, bringing people together.
- It's a shame this situation happened.
- Can create a committee or round table discussion about this topic.
- Must find a way to define on a map where no shooting zones, hunters need to be aware of these rules.

Why not truck the trash out of Deschutes County instead of building a new landfill?

- Current system in Deschutes County is very cost effective. \$65 tipping fee, other places are higher at \$95-105. It is an enterprise fund of Deschutes County, so publicly owned.
- Trucks on the road would be 20-40 trucks/day to the regional landfill in the Gorge, but costs will be higher and continue to increase. Better for the environment because trucking would use more fossil fuels and create emissions.

Legislation is sometimes the process to change land use issues. Do County Commissioner advocate directly for this?

- Senate Bill 100 established the state land use system.
- Commissioner DeBone:
 - Believes it is being held on to too tight. Not allowed to deal with some issues because the state land use systems locks them down.
 - Has great aspects, separating rural and urban areas but needs changes.

How far can you bike/walk from Cardinal Landing Bridge?

- Not pure single track trails but can make it to Sisters.
- Want to build trails from La Pine to Sunriver.
- Partnered with La Pine State Park to do trail maintenance, prevent washouts, channel water away from the trail.

New Trail Head increasing traffic off Road 200 and the road is in really bad condition. What can COTA do to help manage the influx of traffic when they build new trailheads?

- Help to maintain the parking lots near trailheads, planting trees.
- Common to find damage to trailhead parking lots from reckless vehicles.
- COTA when they work on trailheads and trails wants to make the lowest impact possible in communities and the forest ecosystems.

- Lee will make a formal comment about this to the committee.

Is there any work being done on anti-littering campaigns?

- Jeremy with PLS response: What we're facing in our community is a human problem, and it takes a human solution. You can't just tell people what to do, they have to listen too.
- What is effective? Reaching out to the community that you have an issue with, meeting them where they're at, engage with them. The work of public lands clean up will make you angry with what you see.
 - Have to stop the Us vs. Them narrative.
 - Need to hold your fellow community members accountable by encouraging and modeling good behavior.
 - When you see a behavior, don't point a finger but speak to the person, voice your concerns, may cause confrontation but can bring about change.
 - Build allies instead of enemies.

Community Comments (opinions, ideas, accounts, etc.):

Don Selstra, Spring River Resident:

- Considered the event a mass murder of elk, is not against hunting but would like it to be done ethically and humanely.
- What he witnessed was people driving the elk towards Spring River Rd where hunters then opened fire on the elk.
- One cow was taken illegally, also shot in a no shoot zone, 150 yards from a residence.
- Residents want to close these 160 acres for hunting. Not safe to use high powered rifles in a half-mile wide area.
- Elk got blocked in by fences, turned around and went back into Deschutes National Forest Land. Don said, "...you might as well have locked them in a pen and shot them." He was disgusted by the way it took place.
- Reiterated that he is not against hunting, enjoys wildlife and approves it being taken legally in safe areas.
- One who side of the 164 acres is a bike path near Sunriver with houses as well.
- Found two arrows in his back yard, hunters searched on his property for deer they shot.
- Hundreds of thousands of acres in the state, hunt somewhere else than this small stretch of land near houses.
- Response from Commissioner DeBone:
 - History here, duck hunting, relationship with forest service, public lands are right out the back door.
 - Public safety responds to these issues, but it's a designation of private and federal land.
 - Busy area for hunting, ethics of hunting are important to him and many hunters as well. Overall, the situation in this area needs to be improved.

- Deschutes County's process is that a neighborhood has to create a petition to request a no shooting zone which then goes through a public process. This only applies to private land; federal land is an entirely different domain.
- Contacted Deschutes Forest Supervisor, let's work together to improve the situation.

Scott Herbig, Sunriver Resident:

- He would like to make sure that Deschutes County Sherriff's Office enforces law of no shooting zones, continues to happen.
- Law 36 CFR261.10D from US Forest Service covers a 150-acre area
- Make changes in the future and work with what we have already to enforce the laws we have in place.
- Doesn't feel the County wants to enforce the no shooting laws.

Carla, Spring River Resident:

- She spearheaded the closing of the end of the peninsula to waterfowl hunting. Brought together stakeholders and partners from County, Forest Service, community members, and hunting organizations.
- At the time, it was not a no shooting zone and hunters were shooting towards he home. Area of recreation where people were not aware of hunting and vice versa.
- Still hunting areas north of this area. Now the issue on the peninsula is big game hunting.
- Wild and Scenic River Act close the other portion of Spring River to hunting. Cattle grazing has also been ended in this area to preserve riparian habitats.
- Extremely traumatized from this event, elk were trapped with nowhere to cross the river. Virtually created their own refuge for elk.
- Wasn't trying to push out hunters and their sport, but the peninsula is not a fair play area.
- Who do we go to first?
 - ODFW, Sherriff's Department, State Police all haven't addressed their concerns
 - Believes that County should be lead on creating the change and establishing no shoot zones.
 - County is critical to get all the Commissioners and community members together for a roundtable discussion.
- Lt. Joe Deluca's response:
 - Will investigate violation of no shooting zone.
 - They are willing to help and listen, there are actions they can take.
- COTA does great trail work, but we need signage for people to let them know they are in a hunting zone.

Mike Thorn, Spring River resident:

- Interviewed with KTVZ about the incident.
- Not against hunting but do it in a safe matter.

- Came across the incident last weekend, cars pulled over, and state troopers were present. All agencies said it was a legal hunt.
- Concerned about the safety of the residents, need to change the rules in the area.
- People walk in the area; it's often used for recreation.

Unnamed Community Member:

- We are in their [the wildlife's] territory when we build these homes.

Sarah Mahaffey, La Pine resident:

- Avid hunter, saw the gut piles left after the elk massacre. Feels that as a hunter, the hunters involved in this incident are ruining the sport for responsible hunters.
- Law enforcement should stick by the 150 yards from residences and recreation area rule.
- National Forest and BLM is recreational, if you are using these areas during hunting season be familiar with the rules and aware of your surroundings. Download the Onyx app (maps with labels for different areas and uses). WEAR ORANGE, you and your animals.
- It's not her job as a hunter who has a tag and license to be put in a position where she has to educate other people recreating in the area.
- The Upper Deschutes and Central Cascade unit she cannot bring her goats because some hunters are irresponsible, shoot from the road, across roads, across rivers. People know the rules but push the boundaries.
- If people choose to live in this area near public lands, people need to understand that hunters will use the area and they shouldn't have their rights taken away because of other irresponsible hunters.

Jeff Wieland, Spring River resident:

- Competition shooter and hunter who lives near where the incident took place. This incident should not have been called hunting. Shooting and trespassing violations.
- Used to hunt in the area but stopped because so many people recreate, seasonal residents, families and children.
- The Forest Service has also thinned the trees in the area, makes elk hunting easier than it was before.
- He is not going to be fearful for his wife, kids, grandkids, dogs.
- The only acceptable solution from his point of view is that this piece of property becomes a no hunting zone. It's a liability for all groups involved.
- He is not going to live his life in fear because we don't have the courage to make a change.
- The shallow aquifer has dropped over a foot. Rain and snow precipitation did not help river flows because it went to fill groundwater first. Hopes the County will consider limiting consumption. A lot of money is going into channeling water into the river, need to put limits on development, especially the high-value homes that don't solve the housing crisis or water issues.

Wells are going dry around the county, one resident just had to dig a deeper well. It was easier to go through the Well Abandonment, Repair and Replacement Fund (WARF) program, but Deschutes County is out of money for these programs. What can the County do?

- Neighbor Impact manages the funds to help pay for wells in the county. The County does not run one themselves. COIC has funding for septic repairs/replacements.
- Commissioner DeBone: is it the government's responsibility to provide these services?
- Some dry wells were just not correctly dug in the first place, very old and have other issues than lack of water.
- A community member commented that some people don't have filters or manage their wells properly.
- La Pine has a decent water supply as of right now.

Unnamed resident:

- Lifelong hunter doesn't feel welcome in the conversation about the elk being "murdered," doesn't feel like it is an open conversation.
- Other residents responded saying they are not against all hunters and hunting but are opposed to the way the elk over the weekend were unethically hunted and killed.
- Where are the people who shot the elk?