

W. S. D. I.

**AGENDA COVER MEMO**

Memorandum Date: March 9, 2011  
Order Date: March 30, 2011

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**TO:** Lane County Board of Commissioners

**DEPARTMENT:** Lane County Sheriff's Office and Lane County Public Works, Parks Division

**PRESENTED BY:** John Miller, LCSO Search And Rescue Coordinator and Howard Schussler, Assistant Director, Parks Division

**AGENDA ITEM TITLE:** IN THE MATTER OF AUTHORIZING THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF THE HOWARD BUFORD RECREATION AREA, OUTSIDE OF THE MT. PISGAH ARBORETUM, TO ALLOW FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE TRAINING IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 2011 OREGON ASSOCIATION OF MOUNTED POSSES SEARCH AND RESCUE SYMPOSIUM

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I. **MOTION**

Motion to authorize a temporary closure of the Howard Buford Recreation Area, outside of the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum, on May 22, 2011, from 8:00am to 1:00pm, to allow for search and rescue training in conjunction with the 2011 Oregon Association of Mounted Poses Search and Rescue Symposium.

II. **AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY**

The Lane County Board of Commissioners is being asked to temporarily close the Howard Buford Recreation Area, outside the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum, on May 22, 2011, from 8:00am to 1:00 p.m. for a mock search and rescue operation as part of the Oregon Association of Mounted Poses Search and Rescue Symposium. The mock search and rescue event will require closing the hiking trails of the Howard Buford Recreation Area for up to 5 hours on Sunday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

III. **BACKGROUND/IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION**

A. **Board Action and Other History**

Each year, the Oregon Association of Mounted Poses holds a Search and Rescue Symposium somewhere in Oregon. Lane County has not hosted the

event for over 15 years. This year, the Howard Buford Recreation Area (HBRA) was selected as the event location and the Sheriff's Office and Lane County Parks join in requesting the Board authorize temporary closure of the HBRA for this event.

Lane County Sheriff's Office all-volunteer Mounted Posse continues a long tradition of community-based law enforcement. The Lane County Sheriff's Mounted Posse members assist the Sheriff's Office in search and rescue, law enforcement and ceremonial duties. Through that organization, the Sheriff's Office also enjoys a long history with the Oregon Association of Mounted Poses. The Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue staff maintains regular communication with the posse and routinely involves them in local searches as well as mutual aid searches in nearby counties.

Similarly, Lane County Public Works Parks Division has a long standing relationship with the posse through the ongoing use of the equine arena at HBRA and the many hours of volunteer work performed by the mounted posse at the park.

The symposium, to be held at HBRA, will include a wide range of training and educational opportunities for participants including: How to Pack and Carry Overnight Gear, Horse First Aid, Basic and Advanced Land Navigation, Plant Identification, First Aid, and Crime Scene Management and Forensics, and other topics.

The main event of the symposium will be a 5 hour mock search for three "lost" hikers on Mt. Pisgah, the morning of Sunday, May 22. Once the search is initiated, it will be conducted as a real world event complete with an operational plan and full implementation of an Incident Command System (ICS). The mock search is intended to unfold in a manner that is as close to an actual event as possible. For that reason, organizers would prefer having the HBRA closed during the event. If unsuspecting hikers were in the area, they may be confused by the event or concerned about who might be the target of the search. Additionally, large numbers of non-participants on the search site could lead to confusion and communication difficulties among participants. For these reasons, organizers would prefer the site be closed during this time. As this is a controlled event, the mock search may end sooner than 1pm and under no circumstances would be allowed to extend beyond 1pm.

HBRA provides an outstanding venue for such an event due to the size and nature of the terrain. The site presents an excellent real world environment for search and rescue, so much so that each year Lane County Sheriff's Office responds to 5 or 6 calls to locate lost hikers who wander off trail or are caught on trails after dark.

In addition to the mounted posse, event participants will include local Ham radio

operators, Explorer Scouts, the Sheriff's K-9s and their handlers, and many other volunteers. It is estimated that, in addition to volunteers, there will be approximately 50-60 participants in the event. All participants will be required to attend a briefing on safety and park etiquette and protocols, including the requirement to stay on park trails or roads and to respect the park environment. The goal of organizers and participants will be to leave the area used during the symposium in equal to or better condition than when they arrived.

The Friends of the Arboretum at Mount Pisgah are aware of the SAR event and do not have any events scheduled during the proposed closure.

This is being brought before the Board well in advance of the actual event so that, if the Board approves the request, signage can be prepared and posted, public service announcements can be broadcast and other informational efforts can get underway so that the public is made aware of the temporary closure.

#### **B. Policy Issues**

Lane County Parks has the authority to issue Special Use Permits in accordance with Lane Manual 18.140 and intends to issue a permit for this event. However, authority to close a park, even temporarily, for non-emergency reasons belongs exclusively to the Board.

Temporarily restricting access to a public park can be a thorny decision. The temporary closure may elicit anger and frustration from park users. HBRA in general and Mt. Pisgah in particular, are popular hiking destinations for thousands of people in the community including many people that hike the trails every day or every weekend. There is no doubt that some people will be inconvenienced by this event, if for only a short time. HBRA is rarely closed, though access has been restricted due to fire danger on several occasions.

The Board is faced with a trade off: A temporary park closure will impact people who enjoy the HPRA on a weekend morning. On the other hand, participants in the event requested the closure so that volunteers can receive real life search experience. The skills and knowledge gained at the symposium will be applied by attendees in future searches and enhance the expertise of those who volunteer their time, skills, equipment and knowledge to search for lost of missing individuals across the state, many of times each year.

#### **C. Board Goals**

This recommendation meets the Board goal of providing outstanding customer/constituent services

#### **D. Financial and/or Resource Considerations**

The Oregon Association of Mounted Posses is not requesting any financial support from the County. County costs associated with this event will include signage prepared and posted by the Parks Division to alert hikers of the temporary closure. All trainers and participants are volunteering their time and providing their own equipment to be a part of this event.

**E. Analysis**

This event has the support of the Sheriff, the Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue Coordinator and from Lane County Public Works Parks Division. The Oregon Association of Mounted Posses is a well-regarded, responsible organization made up of volunteers who donate their time, use their own horses, tack, and other gear and equipment to provide a service to the greater community. Increasing the skills of volunteer organizations that assist with search and rescue efforts across the state is a worthwhile objective.

**F. Alternatives/Options**

1. Approve closure of the Howard Buford Recreation Area, outside the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum, for no longer than 8:00am to 1:00 pm on Sunday, May 22, 2011.
2. Do not approve closure of the Howard Buford Recreation Area on Sunday, May 22, 2011.

**IV. RECOMMENDATION**

The Sheriff's Office and Department of Public Works Parks Division recommend approving Options #1.

**V. TIMING/IMPLEMENTATION**

If approved, Public Works Parks Division will begin efforts to notify park users of the temporary closure of Mt. Pisgah on May 22, 2011. These efforts will include signage, public service announcements, and other methods of public information.

**VI. FOLLOW-UP**

None.

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LANE COUNTY, OREGON

ORDER NO. 11 - 3 - 30 - \_\_\_\_

IN THE MATTER OF AUTHORIZING THE  
TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF THE HOWARD  
BUFORD RECREATION AREA, OUTSIDE OF THE  
MT. PISGAH ARBORETUM, TO ALLOW FOR  
SEARCH AND RESCUE TRAINING IN  
CONJUNCTION WITH THE 2011 OREGON  
ASSOCIATION OF MOUNTED POSSES SEARCH  
AND RESCUE SYMPOSIUM

**Whereas**, mounted posse's play an important role in search and rescue efforts across the State of Oregon, including Lane County, and

**Whereas**, the Oregon Association of Mounted Posses plans to hold the 2011 Search and Rescue Symposium at the Howard Buford Recreation Area May 20-22, 2011, and

**Whereas**, Lane County Public Works Parks Division has the authority and intends to issue a Special Use Permit for the event; and

**Whereas**, the Lane County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue Division is helping plan and coordinate the event; and

**Whereas**, the Symposium includes a 5-hour mock search and rescue event on May 22, from 8:00am to 1:00 pm

**Whereas**, conference organizers request that the Howard Buford Recreation Area, excluding the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum, be closed to the public during the search event, and

**Whereas**, the Parks Division will post notices of the temporary closure and various public announcements in various media will be made in advance of the temporary closure.

**Now, Therefore, It Is Hereby Ordered** that the Howard Buford Recreation Area, excluding the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum, be temporarily closed on May 22, 2011, from 8:00am to 1:00 pm. to facilitate a mock search and rescue event as part of the Oregon Association of Mounted Posses 2011 Search and Rescue Symposium.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_ day of March 2011.

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Faye Stewart, Chair  
Lane County Board of Commissioners

APPROVED AS TO FORM

Date 3-18-11 Lane County

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OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL