

# Quarterly Connection



## Wallowa Resources Ready to Move Into Old Hospital Building

In a move approved by the Wallowa County Health Care District and Wallowa Resources' Board of Directors, the District will donate the Old Hospital Building to Wallowa Resources this spring. "I'm pleased to be able to keep the old hospital building as a community asset, especially with the added benefits that Wallowa Resources will be able to develop there," said District CEO, Dave Harman.

From 1950 to 2007, the old Wallowa Memorial Hospital on First Street in Enterprise served the medical needs of Wallowa County. But a need to provide better technology and outpatient

care, combined with a desire to add more medical services, gave momentum to construction of a new, state of the art facility. In spring of 2007 the new hospital opened north of Enterprise, leaving the old hospital building mostly vacant. The Wallowa Valley Care Center, an intermediate care nursing facility added to the old hospital in 1963, remains in operation at the site.

So, for the last three years, the main hospital has stood empty. During this time, and even before the hospital's relocation, the District Board of Directors has

explored alternative uses and/or ownership for the old building, all the while paying for maintenance and utility costs for the entire building, which has been a significant drain on District funds. While the Board realized that the building still had value, they could not indefinitely afford to support a mostly empty facility. Facing the possibility of having to eventually raze the building, the Board of Directors and Dave Harman approached Wallowa Resources to discuss transferring ownership of the building to WR.

After nearly a year of negotiations, the agreement has been finalized. "This is a fantastic opportunity for Wallowa Resources. Now we have

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the resource and space to enhance the impact and the reach of our programs,” said Nils Christofersen, WR Executive Director. “I think Wallowa Resources and the community will realize great benefit from this move in the near and long term.”

The building, now called the Wallowa Resources Stewardship Center, will provide much needed space for growing programs and expanding staff at Wallowa Resources. A large conference room will accommodate meetings, presentations, and workshops. And in the future the Stewardship Center will include a natural resource education room where residents, visitors, and students can utilize reference materials, examine natural history specimens, and conduct research.

The 25 room facility will also be home to local non-retail entities, many of which will work closely with WR to advance our work in creating jobs and businesses, sustaining healthy watersheds, and building a robust stewardship education foundation for County youth, college students, and the general public. “There are many examples around the country that show the benefits of ‘clustering’ organizations that work toward common goals,” explains Jim Henson, Chairman of the Board of Directors for Wallowa Resources. “The close proximity will help in sharing ideas, innovations, even personnel and equipment. I anticipate this facility will have a synergistic effect that will enhance Wallowa Resources’ and their partners’ programs.”

A few businesses have already moved into the WR Stewardship Center. Renewable Energy Solutions (RES) – owned by Ben Henson, Lou Perry, and WR Community Solutions – specializes in renewable energy projects and business solutions for rural residents and communities. RES’ municipal clients include Wallowa County, Baker County, and Imbler School District; non-profit clients include Total Land Care Malawi and Sustainable Northwest. Project partners have included Washington State University and CARE International. Sun Storage, owned and operated by Lou Perry and Jonathan Monschke, works closely with RES to design and build solar energy capacity in residences, businesses, community

## Wallowa Resources Welcomes Holly Akenson as the New Director of Wallowa Mountain Institute



This winter Holly Akenson joined the Wallowa Resources team as the director of the Wallowa Mountain Institute. After a months-long search that included dozens of regional and national candidates, Holly was selected to coordinate WMI’s research, outreach and education programs. She will work closely with WMI staff on youth stewardship education, nature and heritage programming, and the expansion of WMI’s partnerships with universities.

She brings a wealth of education and research experience, and sees great potential for growth in Wallowa Mountain Institute’s programs. “I am really excited to join the Wallowa Resources team as the first Director of the Wallowa Mountain Institute. In my brief time on the job I have been impressed with the energy and enthusiasm of everyone associated with Wallowa Resources and the strong connections between Wallowa Resources and dedicated local leaders and university partners. I am looking forward to making my own connections and contributions to the people and lands of Wallowa County,” she added.

It’s a homecoming of sorts for Holly, who grew up in Northeastern Oregon and attended Baker City High school.

She then graduated with honors from Eastern Oregon University, with a BS in Biology and a BS in Education. She received a Masters Degree in Wildlife Resources from University of Idaho. Most recently, Holly worked for the University of Idaho as Manager/Scientist of Taylor Wilderness Research Station. There she developed and coordinated field programs for university students, with an emphasis on carnivore and bighorn sheep research as well as long term monitoring in the Idaho wilderness. Prior to her 13 year tenure at Taylor Ranch, Holly operated a wildlife consulting business in Northeast Oregon, where she worked with state and federal agencies as well as private landowners on wildlife and natural resources projects. Holly is a Certified Wildlife Biologist.

## Putting Federal Stimulus Dollars to Work in Wallowa County

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Wallowa Resources and the Wallowa Whitman National Forest received \$250,800 in federal funding last fall to identify, contract and monitor fuel reduction projects on National Forest System lands within Wallowa County.

An estimated 100,000 acres of timber in the WWNF are in need of management to restore health to these fire-adapted ecosystems. Fire suppression, lack of mechanical thinning, drought, and insect infestation have combined to create high fuel loads in many parts of the forest. The Wallowa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan identified areas of particular concern. WR will act as the lead contracting agent, targeting work on approximately 1000 acres of “NEPA-ready” projects

provided by the WWNF. Where feasible, contracts will be designed to make the resulting material available to the new woody biomass businesses emerging in Northeast Oregon, such as Integrated Biomass Resources LLC in Wallowa. About 60% of the acreage should provide opportunities for biomass removal and utilization, including use by the Enterprise School District’s new woody biomass boiler.

WR and WWNF will partner in the pre and post implementation monitoring of these projects. An important component of the monitoring is building a case for WWNF to continue mechanical fuel reduction and biomass removal beyond the term of this project. Preliminary work indicates that biomass removal and transportation to facilities in Wallowa are 10% more cost effective than piling and burning, the most common existing practice. Generating consistent supplies to small, emerging biomass businesses could result in significant local economic benefits.

The foundation for receiving ARRA funds was laid last spring. As the representative organization for Wallowa County Biomass Group, Wallowa Resources entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Wallowa Whitman National Forest, Wallowa County, and Oregon Department of Forestry to enable biomass harvest on the identified acreage on WWNF lands. Although non-binding, the MOU – signed in April 2009 – described the shared vision to promote forest and watershed health, community well being, quality family wage jobs and business opportunities, and to broaden understanding of the linkage and opportunities between healthy watersheds and healthy communities.

buildings, agricultural operations, and for remote off-grid applications. Sun Storage seeks to be a profitable world-class manufacturer of innovative solar power solutions, and to provide family wage jobs for rural Oregonians. Renewable Energy Contractors LLC, which partners with both Sun Storage and Renewable Energy Solutions, has also moved into the WR Stewardship Center.

Work is currently underway to transform hospital rooms and lounges into the new offices of Wallowa Resources, and a firewall that separates the Care Center from the old hospital is being constructed. Remodeling will continue after the move.

Biomass Units of Chesnimmus Creek in the Wallowa Whitman National Forest





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## Coming Events

**SOLV IT:** Join WR for a fun and rewarding day of river clean-up, environmental education, and noxious weed removal on Devil's Gulch! Saturday, April 17 (Earth Day). For information, contact Sarah Ketchum at 541-426-8053 x 26. Email: Sarah@WallowaResources.org. Or you can visit our website: [www.WallowaResources.org](http://www.WallowaResources.org).

### NATURE AND HERITAGE PROGRAM

**Naturalist-Lead Single-Day Fieldtrips:** Thursdays – Sundays, May through October. Check out itineraries and pricing at [www.WallowaResources.org/daytrip.htm](http://www.WallowaResources.org/daytrip.htm)

### YOUTH STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION

**WREN** (Friday Field Science Days): April 2 - June 4, 2010

Open to all Wallowa County 5th-8th graders

Applications & program details at [www.WallowaResources.org/wren.htm](http://www.WallowaResources.org/wren.htm)

**OWL** (Outdoor Wallowa Learning): May 24-27, 2010

Joseph 4-6th graders, Wallowa Lake State Park

Program Details: [www.WallowaResources.org/owl.htm](http://www.WallowaResources.org/owl.htm)

**WATERSHED FESTIVAL:** Friday, June 25, 2010

Details at [www.WallowaResources.org/watershed07#.htm](http://www.WallowaResources.org/watershed07#.htm)

**WREN Summer Backpacking Program:** July 24-30, 2010. Open to 14-17 year olds.

Applications & program details at [www.WallowaResources.org/wren2010.htm](http://www.WallowaResources.org/wren2010.htm)

### Save the Date!

Wallowa Resources 2nd Annual Barn Dance Fundraiser will take place on Saturday, August 28.

**Please explore and enjoy our  
updated Website at  
[www.WallowaResources.org](http://www.WallowaResources.org)**

In addition to the articles presented here, Wallowa Resources is working on a broad variety of educational, range stewardship, natural resource, policy and watershed restoration projects throughout Wallowa County.

To find out more about what is happening at Wallowa Resources, just go to [www.WallowaResources.org](http://www.WallowaResources.org) or call us at 541-426-8053 today!

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