

Alderdale Community Update

Volume 1 Edition 1  Spring Quarter 2000

Upcoming Community Council Meetings

• Some of your neighbors are doing their best to help rebuild the community of Alderdale. One of the first steps to doing that is the creation of an active community council. Get involved and help neighbors to create a better place to live and work. If you are interested in working with others to create a community council, please contact Russ Rasmussen at (509) 894-4422 or at work at 894-4773 .

Future Events

• If anyone would like to see their events posted in the next newsletter, please contact your community council.

Alderdale Road up for bid

About a year after the Klickitat County Road department applied for federal funding to transform 17.5 miles of the Alderdale Road into a year-round route designed for truck traffic, the \$4 million project went up for bid on Monday, May 22.

The project that is expected to begin in about a month and continue on for 75 calendar days until late October, has been a long time in coming. All in all, 6.5 miles of the road will be reconstructed and a total of 17.5 miles will have new overlay that will be strong enough to carry trucks at full legal roads 365 day per year.

According to Alderdale resident Russ Rasmussen, "The community has lobbied hard for the last few years to improve these roads and we're thankful that the County and State government think enough about the development in Alderdale to complete this project." He also said that road projects such as this one are often an inconvenience at the

beginning but are well worth the hassle in the end.

The state's Community Economic Revitalization Board's (CERB) Rural Economic Vitality grant, which is the main source of funding for this project, is designed to promote economic development. For Alderdale, that means promoting agribusiness in the east end of Klickitat County by improving transportation of commodities coming out of the area.

According to Assistant County Engineer Jim Amundsen, if it wasn't for the CERB grant, the project would have probably been broken up into several smaller pieces and completed over a six to 10-year timeline.

Beginning last December, the Klickitat County Road Department's Bjorn Hedges has been working hand in hand with the residents of Alderdale on this project. The community's support with meetings, follow-ups, and one-on-one discussions have led to the success of this road project.

"Everyone seems to be really positive about the project," said Hedges. "This has been a really nice project for us in regards to the support we've gotten from those living in the area."

"The Road Department has bent over backwards for us since the beginning of project to get the community's input before designing and engineering," said Rasmussen. "In terms of my previous experience in other areas, Road Departments usually don't show up at your door asking for suggestions. It's already done if they come to your door at all. Luckily, this hasn't been the case here in Klickitat County."



Fire District #10 Fire Chief Peter Mercer presents a \$12,500 request for equipment at the February 23 Economic Development board meeting. As a result, an ambulance has been purchased all 20-plus firefighters will have new wild fire protection gear.

Sprint phone lines update

In about one month, residents of the Alderdale area in eastern Klickitat county will have much-improved telecommunications service. Thanks to local efforts, the County's telecommunications planning **SEE PAGE 2**

Heard it through the Grapevine

Napa. Yakima Valley. Rhone. Alderdale. Alderdale? Within the past three to four years, the little known community has begun to blossom and bloom to what may become a world-class wine grape area in the near future. Old time names like Mercer, Andrews and Champoux along with newer names like Farmer and Boyle are becoming the leaders of the area's newest agricultural industry.

In actuality, the idea of growing wine grapes in the Alderdale area is far from new. During the late 1970s, Don Mercer had a dream of vineyards up, down and sideways along the cliffs of the Columbia River all the way from Alderdale to Lyle. He planted his first block of grapes for the ag experimentation station in Prosser in 1972. From 1979 to 1981, Don planted more than 130 acres of grapes and continued to produce until 1989 when he hired on Paul Champoux to manage the vineyards.

Since purchasing the original vineyards from Don in 1996, Champoux has expanded the

operation to more than 170 acres and sells grapes to more than 15 different wineries. Of the 15 wineries, Champoux Vineyards, LLC has five member wineries and sells to top names like Hogue Cellars. The other 10 wineries are smaller boutiques.

"It is great selling to small wineries that hand craft their wines," said Paul. "It's good for my grapes because the quality gets known to more areas and they tell people where the grapes come from."

"This area right here has been and will continue to produce the premier red wines in the state," said John Farmer of Winemakers, LLC who is also located in Alderdale. With more than 800 acres purchased in 1996, Winemakers has one of the largest vineyards around. In addition, next to Mercer Ranches, Winemakers is one of the largest employers in the area with more than 60 seasonal workers and five year-round employees.

Last year was their first commercial harvest and their fruit went to Columbia Winery in

Woodenville, Wash. as well as others in the Yakima Valley and some as far east as Idaho.

"Along the Columbia River, cliffs are very warm. It is one of the warmer regions in the state with really nice south-facing slopes that are great for red wines," said Farmer. The warmth is a result of the river making the area a little warmer in the winter and a little cooler in the summer. The low rainfall along the river, in addition to long hot days and cool evenings in the summer, give the area a great advantage. On top of all that, light, sandy, low fertility soils make the region a perfect combination for growing grapes.

There is a lot of similar land available that would make wonderful grapes. However, according to Farmer, the difficulty lies in attaining water rights. "Because of the salmon issue, if you don't already have water rights, then you're stuck because the Department of Ecology isn't approving any more," said Farmer. **SEE PAGE 4**

A "new-

Sprint

from page 2

process, and serendipity, the upgrade timing worked perfectly with the new road project. The outcome is that construction of the new service lines won't cause additional hassles. Both projects will be worked on at the same time.

Sprint, the local telephone service provider for the area, began work in early May to replace the existing local service with higher-capacity cable. By burying the

cable that connects homes to one of three new digital microwave antennas, residents will have an improved link to the rest of Sprint's local/long distance network. During June, the installation of the new antennas will be completed, along with the necessary testing to make sure the new system is ready for operation.

The process has taken about six months, as easements and environmental reviews were necessary. When finished, the new service will provide residents with enhanced calling features such as Caller ID, voice mail and access

to ISDN data services.

"We're very pleased to be able to improve our service in this area," said Tom Yates, Sprint's public relations manager for Oregon and Washington. "We know how important it is to have high quality telecommunication service."

Quarterly Community Newsletters brought to you by:
Klickitat County Commissioners
Alderdale Community Council
Editor-Meghan Sapp

Corps decides against John Day Draw down

After nearly 10 months of study and \$1 million, the Army Corps of Engineers has decided what residents of Klickitat County could have told them for free. Drawing down the John Day Dam would be detrimental to the economy, the environment and the salmon.

According to Col. Randall Butler of the Corps' Portland district, in charge of the John Day Dam, the engineers studied both spillway level at 50 feet below current levels and natural river at 100 feet below current levels. Unless they are provided with other data, he plans to recommend that Congress not approve Phase 2 of the study. Without Phase 2, Congress cannot vote to drawdown the dam.

"The Klickitat County Commissioners agree with your recommendation to not draw down the

John Day Dam," said Klickitat County Commissioner Ray Thayer. "Drawdown would be devastating to Klickitat County and no one knows to what extent the effects would be. We urge you not to spend additional funding on further studies. The Klickitat County Board of Commissioners has passed a resolution supporting no action on the John Day Dam."

During the meeting on February 24 in Goldendale, where more than 100 people attended, a number of people were in support of the Corps' recommendation but still voiced concerns regarding the Snake River Dams. A few people in attendance, mostly representing local Indian tribes and tribal fisheries, were against the recommendation and their comments were heard as well.

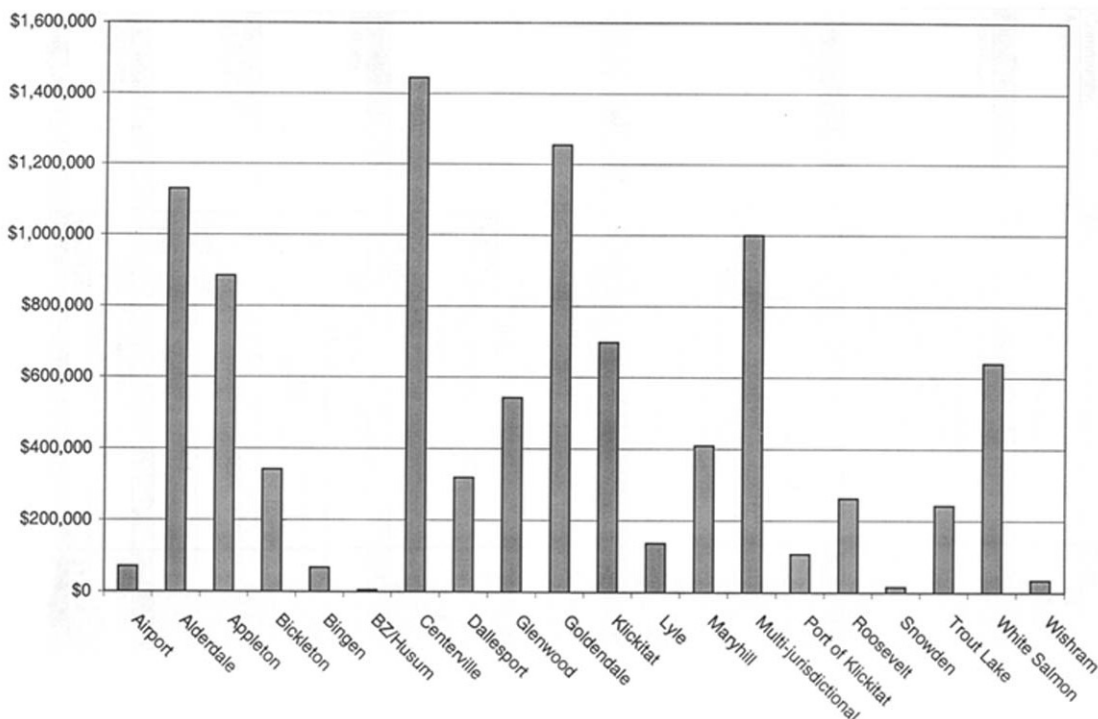
In mid-April, the Clinton administration announced that it would not be hearing any recommendations from the Corps because it felt the science used was not complete and is inconclusive. In response to this action, the eastern division of the Washington State Association of Counties, during their annual conference of county commissioners from 20 counties, unanimously passed a resolution on April 20 opposing dam breaching of both John Day Dam and the four on the lower Snake River.

The resolution asks Governor Gary Locke, the State legislature and the Congressional delegation of Washington to "actively and aggressively oppose any effort to breach or draw down Columbia River reservoirs or dams."

Projects funded by Landfill

This graph demonstrates how the Roosevelt Regional Landfill revenues were used through out the county on both community and road projects during 1998 and 1999 projects. Year 2000 figures have not yet been compiled. Note: For Alderdale funds, the \$1,000,000 County match for the \$4,00,000 project is shown.

Landfill-Funded Projects by Community
1998-1999



Alderdale Community Council
Alderdale, WA

Postal Patron
Alderdale, WA 99356

Wine Industry *from page 2*

comer” to the area, Destiny Ridge was begun in 1998 by Don and Rob Mercer and Jarrod Boyle. Boyle, who worked for Hogue Cellars for three years in grower relations remembers the first day he saw what would become Destiny Ridge. “I was driving by the place one day when I was checking out Paul Champoux’s place. I looked up on the ridge and saw an amazing site. It was then I knew it was destiny,” said Boyle.

Currently, Destiny Ridge has contracted all of their grapes to other wineries. But according to Boyle, they are hoping to have their own label next year, focusing on scarce, quality wines, including the Sangiovese variety. Destiny Ridge will be the only vineyard in the state that is growing this increasingly popular wine that has taken Europe by storm.

Working off of the new-found popularity of Washington wines, Destiny Ridge is planning to set up a large, weekend-long sales event. Though the event is still three years out, they are currently investigating incorporation of a lacrosse or polo tournament to attract international attention for themselves and perhaps all of the local Alderdale wineries.

Get involved with your community!

Letter From the Editor

The purpose of these quarterly newsletters is to keep you informed about what is going on in your community and the County as a whole. These 4-page newsletters are delivered every three months and are free to the community. The Klickitat County Resource Development department has set aside \$500 per community, per year, to cover printing and circulation. I am working hand-in-hand with your Community Council and the Klickitat County Commissioners to ensure that you receive the best information possible.

Now that these newsletters have become a reality, thanks to the foresight of Klickitat County Commissioner Don Struck, I hope the void felt by some of the county’s communities will be filled.

I want to make absolutely sure that you, the residents of Alderdale, realize that this is **your** newsletter.

You are the only ones who know what is important. I want you to know that my ears are open to you. I invite you to contact your council members to discuss how you think the newsletters could be improved or what should be in the next edition.

I can not promise that every idea will be incorporated immediately, but your voice will be heard. Let me know about events, news, anything you feel the entire community should know about. I am sure we can work together to make sure the newsletter is the best it can be.

I will set aside space every quarter for “Letters to the Editor” where you may give ideas or voice your gripes about what is going on in the community or the county. Please do not use offensive language and limit your submissions to 100 words. Also, as with newspapers, the letters are printed at the discretion of the Editor and may be edited.

Enjoy your community’s voice and I look forward to hearing from you.

Meghan Sapp

Important Contact Information

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