

OPINION

Underground power and a bike path—Yes or No?

BY JOHN HART

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has authorized a power generation plant on the Applegate Dam, using whatever water the Army Corps of Engineers allows out of the dam to generate electric power. I'm not opposed to that (besides, it's already a done deal.) The U.S. needs electrical power and in the scheme of things, this is a fairly benign way of getting some. Also, there has been a fairly transparent and lengthy review allowing for input, so citizens and agencies have had a shot at influencing the process. Fish, plants, birds and bugs have all been addressed. What seems to me NOT to have been addressed is people; especially those of us who live in the proposed power corridor and those of us who use that corridor for recreational travel.

My specific concern is the power distribution path: The 14 miles of poles and right of way necessary to take the power from the dam, out to the Pacific Power sub-station on highway 238 near Ruch. The existing path is already unattractive but the proposed path will be downright UGLY! FERC staff has reported that the poles will have to be heightened and the right of way width increased. On a quick trip along Upper Applegate and Hamilton Roads, I spotted homes where that wire path is already within 25 feet of the actual residences.

What I'd like to see happen is to have the distribution poles taken down and (where possible) the utilities placed underground, with a surface over the top that allows for bicycle and pedestrian and/or even equestrian traffic. The first mile of power from the dam to the first utility pole is already slated to be underground so why not the entire length? Now, I'm not naive enough to believe all 14 miles can be done this way. I'm sure there are some areas too steep or too rocky or too wet (did you know there is a river somewhere around here?) or crossing too close to someone's bedroom but surely there must be some

reasonable portion that can be modified this way. "Yes" it may be more expensive "up front" and "yes" there are going to be other problems but if we don't address this now or even discuss it and decide to abandon the idea, when will we do it? It will never get easier or cheaper.

I can live with the thought that others see this as a crackpot idea, but I'm frustrated by the apparent lack of opportunity to be heard, even if rejected. There does not seem to be any one place to go to coordinate this process. FERC has had its say. The State of Oregon Water Resources Department is apparently the next reviewer but has no interest in bike paths. The Governors office "appreciates my interest" but referred me to my local and federal elected officials. The county thinks it is a good idea but has no money.

Lest anyone think I'm just trying to stir the pot, you should know that my wife and I own about 1/2 mile of Upper Applegate road frontage that we would be willing to donate to a path. Another family near the 14-mile mark is also willing to donate frontage to make this happen. Are there others who would entertain the idea of donating land to such an undertaking? Have you other suggestions to influence the process?

So now I've vented but need to decide what to do next. I'm looking for new feedback. If anyone else who hasn't already been involved is interested in pursuing this please ship me an email to jg.hart@charter.net. (Don't miss the "dot" between the "jg" and "hart" and please put "Bike Path" in the subject line so I don't miss the email.) Let me know if you agree and whether you have some specific strategy you are willing to pursue. If I decide to continue tilting at this windmill, I'll include you on an updated email list. THANKS for listening.

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Upper Applegate Road

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OPINION

The problem with America

BY A. DOLLISON

Two young farmers came to our ranch to inquire about raising vegetables and produce on our unused pastureland. My husband and I were delighted to work with these young farmers and proposed to provide them with a farm stand just inside our gate off the main road to sell their farm produce.

I visited our county offices to inquire about a permit for a simple farm stand, no construction plans, no size dimensions, just a small shaded stand with a counter for a small cash register, weighing scale and display racks inside for various foods for sale. I assumed a fair price for a county permit for such a small structure might run \$45.00 to \$65.00 or thereabouts. To my astonishment, the going price for a permit for a basic farm stand is one thousand, five hundred dollars (\$1,500.00)

I asked if a farm stand was included

into a "one size fits all" category with a garage, shop or house. The nice and embarrassed county employee apologized and assured me \$1,500.00 was the current price for a permit for a farm stand and there were no exceptions, no reductions or ways to get around this charge.

How are young Americans supposed to support themselves in this horrible economy with a new or start up venture when our government throws up such an outrageous cost for a simple permit? How much trouble is it to file a form in a computer? \$65.00 should be the high-end cost for such a simple procedure. \$1,500.00 is not only a huge hurdle, it's an insult to common sense. This government works for us. How do we allow them to do this to us?

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Local support for children with special needs

BY TRESSI ALBEE

Almost five years ago, my husband and I were blessed with the birth of our son Taj. When Taj was around a year old, I noticed that he was not as verbal as his older brothers had been. Whenever I voiced any concern, I received many well-meaning comments like, "He's fine. He'll talk when he is ready." I allowed myself to be temporarily reassured, but I never felt quite right about how his language was developing.

As we celebrated Taj's second birthday and his language was still not evolving, my concern was growing, and the well-meaning comments were not stemming the flow of my worries. I took Taj to our pediatrician. The first few trips to the pediatrician consisted of checking Taj's hearing and an acknowledgement that he comprehended language at an age-appropriate level. That was only mildly reassuring because it did not seem to explain his inability to speak. So, I took him back again, and this time I received a referral to Southern Oregon Education Service District-Early Childhood Services (ECS) for evaluation. If you have a child whose development seems different from what is considered "normal", I implore you to trust yourself and your instincts and keep reaching out until you feel you are getting the help you need for your child. Remember, you are your child's primary and most effective advocate.

When Taj was two and half we received the referral to ECS and our path began to brighten. Though Taj was ultimately diagnosed with Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS), a rare neurological disorder, I felt a mixture of shock and relief. I was relieved because now I had a word I could research and I admit profound solace that the diagnosis of CAS and Taj's symptoms finally began to make sense to me. Though the diagnosis was difficult, it also created a starting point for us to help Taj.

CAS is a neurological disorder that affects a person's ability to speak by disallowing the normal sequencing process that occurs between the brain and the execution of the words. Taj's



receptive language is normal, meaning he understands what is said to him. However, Taj's expressive language was extremely delayed and the little language he could produce was not intelligible.

We began to ask many questions about whether or not Taj would ever speak normally. We learned that there is a wide range of recovery regarding children with CAS. Treatment for CAS is many years of intensive speech therapy. Certainly our family experienced a fair amount of fear, worry, and frustration, but mostly an outpouring of love for Taj and the immense challenge he was facing.

I would not have wanted to go through this experience without the support of all the people we have come to know at ECS. Through ECS, all children up to 5-years old in Josephine County can receive free evaluation and services for any kind of developmental delay or disability. I cannot express enough gratitude to the people we have worked with at ECS. After two years of receiving services at ECS, Taj is speaking with 58% intelligibility.

In Josephine County many children with delays or disabilities do not receive services from ECS. Sometimes parents have difficulty acknowledging the challenges facing their child. However, the research reveals that children who have developmental challenges or disabilities are more successful when they receive supportive services early in life. So, it is beneficial when parents do seek support and services for their child. If you are a parent in the Applegate/Williams Valley raising a child with any kind of developmental delay or disability you are invited to join a local support group.

For more information please contact:

- Southern Oregon ESD - Linda at Early Childhood Services 541.956.2059
- Applegate/Williams Parent Support Group:
Tressi Albee • 541-415-0436
tressi@wildblue.net or



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