

TRAIL DUST

Newsletter of the Idaho Chapter of the
Oregon-California Trails Association



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2023/4 Upcoming Activities

Aug 26 th , 2023	Ground Penetrating Radar outing near Ditto Creek
Aug 27 th , 2023	Byway Video outing by Jerry with Richard Hunt
Sep 25 th , 2023	BSU Osher Class
Sep 30 th , 2023	Lander Road Outing at Wyoming/Idaho border
Oct 14 th , 2023	Fall Chapter Meeting and OT Recreation Area
Mar 13 th – 17 th , 2024	National Symposium in El Paso, TX
July 21 – 27 th , 2024	National Convention, Pendleton, OR

Message from the President

By Jerry Eichhorst



I had about 45 people in 20 vehicles join me on the annual byway tour in April. Once again it was a lot of fun with an enjoyable social time at Sweetbriar Winery for a potluck lunch sitting in the sun.

We had several fun days at City of Rocks in May. It is always enjoyable to explore the California Trail in that area and work with our friends at COR. I look forward to more activities with Tara and the staff next May.

The spring chapter meeting was held on May 20 in Burley. It has become apparent that we need more help running the chapter in order to keep up with all of the preservation and other work being done. After a request for additional help, I am pleased to report that Kent Schaufelberger will be the new Membership Chairman, Steve Lawson will be helping with the preservation activities, and Shannon Gorringer and Kristi Hamon will be our new Social Media team. Thanks to all these people for offering to help.

I recently filmed the first of a new videocast series for OCTA on the best trail sites in a state. You can watch this video where I discuss the trail sites in Idaho on the OCTA YouTube channel at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZm44piU7k4>. My thanks to the OCTA video master Richard Hunt for his excellent editing of the video. I will be working with Richard Hunt to create more OCTA videos in late August. He will be shooting video of the GPR work and we plan to shoot a video of the Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway the next day.

In late July I went out with two cadaver dogs and a few chapter members to search for graves on Rattlesnake Creek near the winery, verify graves on Ryegrass Creek, and search for a possible mass burial site on Ditto Creek. It was an interesting two days. My thanks to Lori Blackburn and Rose Smarr for bringing their special dogs to Idaho for a couple of days. No indications of burials were found on Rattlesnake Creek while numerous positive indications were confirmed in the suspected burial sites on Ryegrass Creek. A new area was searched on Ditto Creek with a promising positive indication on a small knoll overlooking the suspected massacre site. I hope that ground penetrating radar in late August will indicate this location to be the site of the mass burial for the skeletons buried in a mass grave many years after the attack.

I am currently working with Gary Makey to have an outing to drive the Lander Road from the Wyoming border to the Fort Hall Indian Reservation in late September or early October. Details will be coming out soon.

The fall chapter meeting will be held on Saturday, October 14, at the Idaho Pizza Company restaurant at Overland and Orchard in Boise. The meeting will start at 11:15. After the pizza buffet lunch, we will go to the Ada County Oregon Trail Recreation Area to view the improvements which Ada County has made to the trails in the area.

Next year's convention will be in Pendleton, Oregon, which will be a much shorter drive. I have offered to have the Idaho chapter lead a pre-convention tour for next year's convention as many people will be driving through Idaho on their way to the convention.

Please watch your email and the chapter website to get more information about upcoming activities.

See you on the trails!



The caravan of vehicles in the annual byway tour on April 15, 2023.

City of Rocks Activities

By Jerry Eichhorst

The Idaho chapter held our annual outings with the City of Rocks (COR) staff in May. This year was special as the COR archaeologist wanted to investigate a couple of suspected graves identified by cadaver dogs two years ago. The investigation proved the locations were not graves after all. The dogs later rechecked the locations in July and neither

site generated a positive indication. It is interesting that the sites received positive indications two years ago.

Meanwhile, I led several treks to some of the California Trail sites in the reserve. We hiked to Pinnacle Pass and to a cave on the back side of Devil's Bedstead which might be J. Goldborough Bruff's

esophagus cave. We also explored trail ruts in front of Register Rock and found new ruts along Circle Creek through the canyon leading into the area. I had found a number of diaries that described entering the area through the canyon so we explored and found some impressive trail remnants.



Section of California Trail in Circle Creek Canyon.

We also did some filming for another OCTA video. This one was put together by

a new videographer, Joshua Kornoff, who recently joined OCTA and the video team. I am not sure when this video will be dropped on the OCTA YouTube channel.



Rough section of California Trail in Circle Creek canyon.

I look forward to more outings next year with the COR staff. I hope we can do metal detecting on the new section of trail in the Circle Creek canyon.

Thoughts on the OCTA Gering Convention



Mitchell Pass and Scottsbluff National Monument

The 2023 National Convention was held in Gering, Nebraska in the shadow of Scottsbluff National Monument. The bluff rises 600 feet above the surrounding land and was known to the Pioneers as ‘the Whale’ because of the way it obstructed their direct passage. The Idaho

Chapter was well represented. The following comments are just some of the views expressed.

Jerry Eichhorst

I enjoyed this year's convention a great deal. It was great to see so many friends again, the speakers were good, the meals were surprisingly good, and I saw lots of Trail sites in the area. It was a long drive to get there and get home, but it was worth the trip.

Gering is a small town with a nice convention center. The hotel was unprepared for so many guests but recovered well by the second day. There was a business meeting the first morning in which John Briggs passed the baton to the next OCTA President, Steve Alison. The first afternoon was filled with speakers as was the last day. The second and third days were bus tour days which seemed to happen with no mechanical issues. I elected to visit the numerous trail sites in the area on my own those days. Steve and Paul Dinwiddie went with me the first day to the east while Bob Clark, editor of the Overland Journal, and Paul went with me the second day to the west. We saw some great Trail sites on both days. We had nineteen people attend a dinner for people from Idaho on Tuesday night. Overall, it was one of the better conventions I have been to.

John and Nancy Briggs

Nancy and I were very much looking forward to this Convention. We had been to the National Monument at Scottsbluff before and had seen some of the other 'sights' in the area but knew there was much we had not yet seen. We were joined by 'family'; Nancy's sister Linda is the voice on a number of our promotional videos, Linda's husband Doug participated as did Nancy's brother Robert whose property is crossed by the California and Pony Express Trails in Nebraska. The talks were excellent all round and we enjoyed the tours. We had not been to Guernsey or Fort Laramie before.



The Ruts at Guernsey



The Barracks at Fort Laramie

It was also our first visit to Robidoux Pass, the original route of the Trails around Scottsbluff.



Marked swale at Robidoux Pass

The social events were all high-energy and very well attended. Congratulations all around to the organizers for an excellent Convention.

Paul Dinwiddie

I had a great time at the OCTA convention in Gering, Nebraska. I found that this part of western Nebraska was much more scenic and interesting than the endless cornfields I imagined. We stayed in an RV

park in sight of Scott's Bluff. I accompanied Jerry on a few day tours where we visited iconic trail sites such as Chimney Rock, Courthouse and Jail Rocks, and the Guernsey Ruts in Wyoming. I also enjoyed the Pioneer Trails Museum we stumbled across in Bridgeport. A tiny little museum stuffed full of local history



Idaho Chapter at dinner

The convention was full of interesting speakers. Who knew that an hour-long talk about the effort to place an Oregon Trail historical marker on the Nebraska-Wyoming border in 1912 could be so interesting? The food was good and it was great to visit with old friends make new friends. Overall, it was a great convention and well worth attending. I am looking forward to next year's OCTA convention in Pendleton, OR.



OCTA Comments on the Lava Ridge Wind Farm Draft Environmental Impact Statement

By Don Wind

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Lava Ridge Wind Project. Generally speaking, we found the document to be well-written, comprehensive, and cohesive. We have compiled the following list of comments from our review of the document.

Page ES-xiii, Alternative E (Reduced Southern Corridors)

Page 3-185, Section 3.5.6.2.5, Alternative E (Reduced Southern Corridors)

The Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA) is concerned about the visual impacts to the Oregon Trail located south and southwest of the project area proposed by Magic Valley Energy (MVE). The project generates adverse effects to the viewshed from the Trail during the day and at night. The experience of current and future generations of recreational visitors, students, educators and historians visiting the Trail will be adversely affected by the sight of rotating wind turbines above the northern horizon. Clearly, these adverse effects will harm the aesthetics of the Trail that visitors expect.

If the project application is approved by the BLM, OCTA would favor the least intrusive option, Alternative E. This alternative would reduce southern corridors and place the closest wind turbines the furthest distance from the

Oregon Trail, thereby reducing adverse visual effects.

Page 3-1, Section 3.1.1, Existing and Future Trends and Actions

Page 3-3, Figure 3.1-1, Existing and future trends and actions near the siting corridors

Page 3-186, Section 3.5.6.2.6, Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts to the Oregon Trail in Idaho and the California Trail in Nevada are multiplied by transmission lines and other infrastructure needed to deliver power generated by the Lava Ridge Wind Project (LRWP). The project causing the greatest adverse effects to these Trails is the Southwest Intertie Project – North (SWIP-North). This 500 KV transmission line crosses the Oregon Trail near Twin Falls, and also crosses the California Trail, the Pony Express Trail, and Hastings Cutoff in Nevada, ruining the viewshed in those pristine areas and having potentially significant physical impacts to the Trails themselves. SWIP-North has been proposed as the primary transmission line project for the delivery of LRWP electricity to Ely and markets in southern California. The LRWP is dependent on the SWIP-North transmission line to deliver generated power to proposed customers.

This EIS lacks a thorough explanation of cumulative impacts caused by separate projects, but projects that are dependent on each other for their value and purpose. OCTA finds that treatment of the cumulative impacts of SWIP-North as necessary ancillary infrastructure is sorely lacking in this draft EIS and needs to be addressed in a more thorough and detailed way.

Unfortunately, other energy projects proposed for south-central Idaho will also have

additional cumulative effects on the Oregon and California Trails in Idaho. Other projects contributing cumulative impacts to the Trails include the Taurus Wind Project, the Salmon Falls Wind Project, and the Gateway West Transmission Line. While the EIS lists these projects as contributing to additional impacts to cultural resources in the area, it lacks a thorough explanation of cumulative impacts to the Oregon and California Trails in Idaho. The BLM should place a greater emphasis in this EIS on the impacts of cumulative effects of the multiple energy and energy infrastructure projects proposed for this area. To focus on each project individually, while ignoring the cumulative effects of at least five energy and energy infrastructure projects in relatively close proximity to one another, will produce adverse impacts in the field never recognized with each new proposed project. This EIS lacks the specificity of cumulative effects and what is to be done to address these effects. This EIS does not address how the cumulative adverse effects are going to be avoided or minimized. This EIS does not address how the cumulative effects of multiple projects will affect the decision-making process for the LRWP.

**Page 3-422, Section 3.16.2, Night Skies
Page App4-4, Table App4-2c, Applicant-Committed Measures – Visual Resources, Lighting, and EMF
Page App11-13, Project Lighting**

All action alternatives suffer from overall degradation of the high-quality viewing of the night skies in the area. Effects from project lighting will be observed throughout the entire region, far beyond the boundary of the currently defined project APE. This will definitely detract from the overall setting and feeling of the Oregon Trail in southern Idaho, negatively impacting the visitor experience along the Trail and at the various camping sites located on or near the Trail itself.

OCTA fully supports the applicant-committed measures that have been proposed to address this issue, and deems them to be critical to the final approval of the project. MVE needs to do everything possible to minimize the impact to the viewing of the night skies throughout the area. One of these measures, the Aircraft Detection Lighting System (ADLS), is of particular importance as this one measure alone is expected to reduce the adverse effect to the night skies by almost 90%. If the project application is approved by the BLM, minimizing the light emissions from the turbine lights, as well as all other light sources within the project infrastructure, should remain a high priority for the construction and operation of this facility.



Diaries Across Idaho`

By Jerry Eichhorst

This issue's DAI is a funny article that my friend Dick Rieck found and sent to me a couple of months ago. Dick commented:

I found it in the Gothenburg Times. It was a reprint of the original story (but didn't mention that fact). In the original paper the character "Febold Feboldson" is well-known as fictitious with many goofy stories attributed to him that are published on a regular basis. Readers of that paper instantly recognize such stories as jokes due to Feboldson being involved. But Gothenburg Times readers might not be aware of that fact and (if incredibly naive) would believe it.

I thought it was funny and hope you enjoy it. Thanks to Dick for sending it to me.



The year 1848 was a big year for Febold Feboldson. That was the year the petrified snow covered the plains all summer and held up the '48ers in their gold rush to California with the result that they became '49ers. At that time Febold was operating an ox train between San Francisco and Kansas City, because the snow prevented him from harvesting his grain.

Since Febold was the only plainsman able to make the trip that year, the '48ers appealed to him for help. His secret was that he loaded with sand from Death Valley, Calif. The sands of the desert never grow cold, and neither did Febold nor his oxen. This sand he sold to the gold rushers at five dollars a bushel, and they were glad to get it.

Then the '49ers began to swarm over the Oregon and Mormon Trails, fifty prairie schooners abreast. But the jolting of the wagons scattered the sand, as anyone can see by the sand hills on both sides of the Platte river. However, there was enough sand to cover every bit of the petrified snow and restore the climate to its proper temperature.

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