



Date: March 13, 2024
To: Board of County Commissioners
From: Erik Kropp, Deputy County Administrator
Re: Juniper Ridge Update for March 20, 2024 Board Meeting

Background

Last year, Deschutes County received a formal code enforcement complaint related to County-owned land in Juniper Ridge. There were five main code violations:

1. Tents, RVs and structures being used for camping/living
2. Unpermitted structures being used as dwellings and storage
3. Excessive amount of solid waste
4. People living in RVs without a permit
5. People living in RVs and unpermitted structures without an approved method for the disposal of human waste

In response, County staff developed a remediation plan. On June 21, 2023 the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approved the remediation plan that included outreach to individuals living on the property to offer services and provided a phased approach to immediately mitigate health and safety threats. The BOCC also approved a \$200,000 budget to pay for the plan. Additionally, the plan also included coordination with partner agencies (ODOT, City of Bend, irrigation districts, the Bureau of Land Management, etc.).

An interdepartmental team has been working through implementation of the remediation plan which has included the creation of three basic hygiene stations consisting of a drinking water tank, trash dumpsters, portable toilets, and hand washing stations. Also, security patrols provide general monitoring of the hygiene stations and area and assist the other contactors, when requested. Finally, a contractor has been cleaning up tires and abandoned camps. The team additionally provides updates and a point of contact for service provider communication regarding the property and services.

While part of the original plan, the County decided to not require the people to relocate for the following reasons:

1. Hunnell Road relocation.
2. China Hat situation, including a letter from United State Forest Service expressing concerns that “closing” Juniper Ridge would result in people relocated to China Hat.
3. New shelter beds coming on-line.
4. Concerns that requiring people to leave County-owned Juniper Ridge land would result in relocation to other public lands, including other parts of Juniper Ridge owned by other public entities.

5. Enforcement of the County camping code would require the identification of an alternative location for people to relocate to.
6. The Martin v. Boise court case.

Update on Juniper Ridge Remediation Plan

Since implementation of the Juniper Ridge remediation plan in July 2023, County contractors have:

- Emptied the on-site 30-yard dumpsters five times
 - A 30-yard dumpster holds 7,000 – 10,000 pounds of trash
- Cleaned up 75,000 pounds of trash
- Disposed of 70 “bio-buckets” (buckets used for human waste)
- Disposed of 466 tires
- Cleared snow to maintain access and hygiene services

In total, the contractors have cleaned up 39 abandoned camps. Approximately 20 people in 14 occupied camps remain on County-owned property. However, the number of camps and people living on nearby or adjacent land (non-County owned) is much greater and is estimated at several hundred people. Many of these people are using the basic hygiene stations.

The remediation plan has seen many successes, including:

- Portions of the land being cleaned-up.
- The basic hygiene stations have provided resources to help address public health issues, reducing further negative impact to the land, and have been well received by the people living on the land and service providers providing outreach services.
- The security contractor has established a first-name basis relationship with most people and has called in small fires and other incidents to 9-1-1 to allow a quick response time, and there have been no use of force situations by the security contractor.
- Several service providers have shared their appreciation for the security contractors compassion and attention to the people and the land.
- The solid waste contractor has also worked to develop a relationship with people in the area which has resulted in people voluntarily bringing the contractor trash and tires from their camp.
- Several people have moved out of homelessness (although a cause and effect relationship cannot be drawn).

Challenges still remain, including the need for an alternative outdoor shelter, the inability to remedy all the code violations while people remain on the property, and the continued expense of the basic hygiene services and ongoing cleanup of trash, tires, vehicles and RVs.

Budget Update

As part of the approval of the remediation plan, the Board approved a budget of \$200,000 to fund the effort. The \$200,000 came from Property Management’s Project Development and Debt Reserve Fund (Fund 090).

The table below shows current expenditures through March 8, 2024:

Service	Expenditure	Project Monthly Average Cost
Trash clean-up and dumpsters	\$66,200	\$ 8,300
Portable toilets	\$ 9,400	\$1,300
Potable water	\$10,400	\$1,300
Security	\$22,000	\$3,600
Fire extinguishers and misc. costs	\$ 4,400	n/a
TOTAL	\$ 112,400	\$14,500

Of the \$200,000 allotted budget, \$92,400 still remains. The remaining funds will last until approximately June 30, 2024.

Next Steps

Despite the progress made to date to clean Juniper Ridge and provide basic hygiene amenities, the remaining code violations will not be resolved until people are no longer living on the property. Staff recommends revisiting efforts to close County-owned land in Juniper Ridge when an alternative location in close proximity has been identified and opened.

In the meantime, staff recommends allocating additional funds to continue the basic services once the initial budget of \$200,000 is expended. The funds could come from the ARPA funds set aside to address homelessness, the General Fund, or included in the FY 24-25 proposed budget.

Staff recommends continuing the basic services until an alternative location has been identified and the County can require people to leave the County-owned Juniper Ridge property.