



Oregon

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July 3, 2013

TO: Land Conservation and Development Commission

FROM: Grant Young; Northeast Regional Representative

SUBJECT: **Tour Information for July 25, 2013, LCDC Meeting**

Chief among the impressions one gets from visiting Harney County is the magnitude of the place. Here, space and distance is an integral part of life. I call the eastern part of Harney and the southern 2/3 of Malheur “the Big Empty.”

Harney County is the largest county in the state of Oregon at over 10,000 square miles but has a population of only about 7,000 (people, that is – there over 100,000 head of cattle). With an average population density of about 0.7 people per square mile, there is a lot of space per person compared to west side counties. Burns is the county seat and the only city of any size in the county; according to one historian, from Burns to the nearest “town” is over 70 miles.

The concept of space, and what it means to the residents, is one of the most important things residents hope to convey to the commission, so the tour is going to show a bit of space. We will strive to have a local resident in each vehicle to give their perspective and history of the county.

The tour will start in Burns, travel south approximately 1.5 hours to Diamond, northeast along the Diamond Craters to the Pete French Round Barn, and return to Burns.

TOUR ROUTE AND POINTS OF INTEREST

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. After departing from Burns we will travel south through the western side of the refuge through a point known as “The Narrows.” The refuge was established in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt as the Lake Malheur Bird Reservation. President Roosevelt set aside unclaimed lands encompassed by Malheur, Mud, and Harney Lakes “as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds.” The newly established “Lake Malheur Bird Reservation” was the nineteenth of 51 wildlife refuges created during the Roosevelt

administration. At the time, Malheur was the third refuge in Oregon and one of only six refuges west of the Mississippi.

The refuge is located 30 miles south of Burns. The visitor center will be closed on weekends through July so we will not be stopping; however, the refuge museum, located at headquarters, is open from dawn until dusk each day. For more information please visit the website at <http://www.fws.gov/malheur/>.

Diamond. The Hotel Diamond is the first scheduled stop. The hotel’s website (<http://www.central-oregon.com/hoteldiamond/>) states: “Few places have escaped commercialization and tourism like Diamond, Oregon which lies at the base of the breathtaking Steens Mountain in the heart of country rich with the history of settlers, Native Americans, shepherders and cattle barons. Experience the vast beauty of Harney County – Oregon’s own outback... adjacent to the Malheur Wild Life Refuge and Kiger Gorge....”

Diamond Craters. From Diamond, we will backtrack for a few miles then travel northeast along the Diamond Craters Byway. The route skirts the southeast edge of the Diamond Craters, an Outstanding Natural Area of 17,000 acres. This area has some of the most diverse basaltic volcanic features clustered within a relatively small area unlike any other place in North America. There is only a 550-foot range from the lowest to highest point with elevations ranging from 4,150 to 4,700 feet above sea level.

Named for Mace McCoy’s diamond brand, Diamond Craters displays the entire range of eruptions possible in basaltic volcanism. This volcanic area was formed during the past 25,000 years, with some of the eruptions taking place as late as 1,000 years ago, and now resembles a thin, rocky pancake with a few bumps. Features identifiable at the Outstanding Natural Area include craters and vents, cinder cones, spatter cones, lava tubes, driblet spires, a graben, and water-filled maar. It’s an isolated place and precautions should be taken when traveling in the area. There are no tourist facilities. Carrying drinking water is a necessity, and your hiking acquaintances can include **rattlesnakes**. If you come upon one, you’ll know by the unique sound. Stay still and usually the snake will leave.

Peter French Round Barn. From the Diamond Craters we will continue north and east to the Pete French Round Barn and visitor center. Built in the early 1880s, the French Round Barn is not actually a barn but rather an enclosed corral designed to break horses during the high desert’s harsh winters. It was constructed under the direction of Pete French, eastern Oregon’s best known “cattle baron.” French came to Oregon from California in 1872 as an agent of Dr. Hugh Glenn, who had a large wheat and cattle operation based out of Sacramento. Over the course of the next 25 years, French built up the largest cattle empire in Oregon at the time, acquiring well

over 100,000 acres of land and tens of thousands of head of cattle and horses before his murder at the hands of a disgruntled settler in 1897.

The French-Glenn Livestock Company built miles of fences and numerous buildings, including three round barns, only one of which remains. Inside this structure is a circular stone corral 60 feet in diameter and two feet thick. The umbrella-like roof is supported by a center post and a ring of interior posts, all made of juniper. The building's two entrances and fourteen windows are framed with sawn ponderosa pine, while the roof is covered in western red cedar shingles. It has been resingled at least twice, once in 1918 and again in 1969.

Richard Jenkins runs the visitor center, along with his guard-dog, Spike. Spike can extend vertically about three times his body length and has the oral attributes of a frog, so be cautious in bending over to greet him or he'll jump straight in the air and wash your face. Richard worked the Jenkins Ranch for 50 years before coming to the center, and is a great source of local perspective and knowledge. The Jenkins family donated the Round Barn and surrounding lands to the Oregon Historical Society in 1969. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. In the mid-1990s the Oregon Historical Society worked cooperatively with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to rehabilitate the site and to develop an interpretive program. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department assumed ownership and management responsibilities of the site in 1995.

Crane. From the Round Barn we travel along the eastern edge of the Harney Basin. The distance and flatness of the terrain is striking. Along the way we pass west of Crane, Oregon.

The town was at its peak during the time it served as the railhead for the Union Pacific Railroad. The railroad arrived in 1916 to much fanfare from Harney County citizens. The Burns Times Herald reported, "Chief Construction Engineer Young brought the first train in with two coaches and several flat cars filled with excursionists from Ontario, Vale, Juntura, Riverside and other points. As soon as he had disposed of the excursion people, he invited the Harney County people to ride with him, and the train was soon filled. It was necessary to make two trips to and from the scene of the big steam shovel in Crane Creek Gap, to accommodate all."

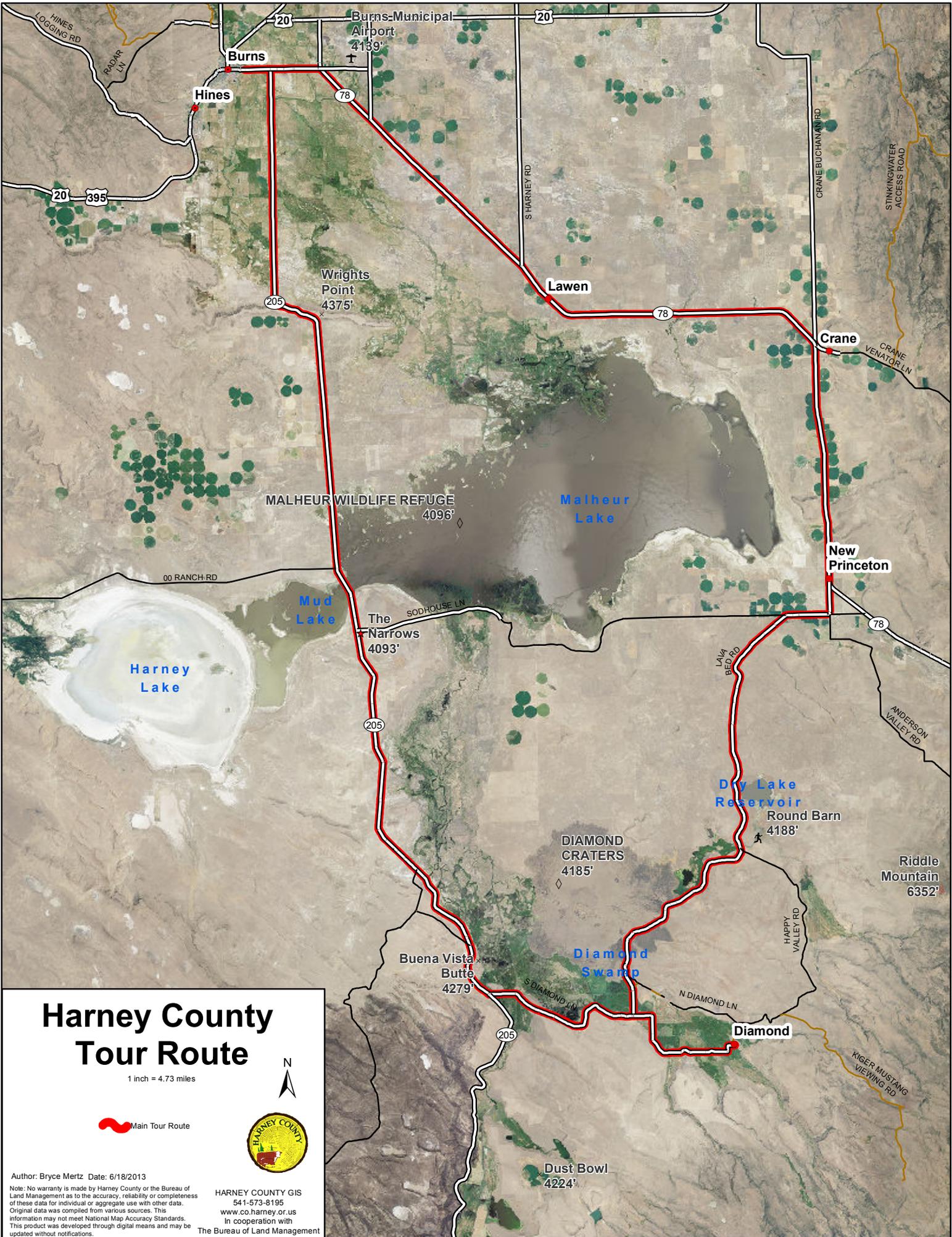
The railroad was destined for Burns to serve a new sawmill there, and in 1924 the line was completed into Burns. The businesses might have survived to serve the eastern half of the county had the town not been plagued by fires. With the arrival of the railroad, Crane became a thriving business center and permanent buildings started going up. One of the first stores sold groceries and dry goods, and was owned by a Mr. Lee. Later the Hotel Denman was moved in from nearby Harriman. A large store called the Vale Trading Company was established by Mr. Dunlop, of Vale and sold groceries, dry goods and machinery – its slogan was "Everything for Everybody."

A high school was built on Crane Creek, and Alice Smith began teaching on October 28, 1901. In 1910, Archie McGowan established one of the first and oldest Ford dealerships in Oregon and sold four Model T's. Weinstein's also had a store in a brick building that was later turned into the Rivoli theatre, and movies became a part of the town's entertainment. There was also the Hudspeth store and the Crane State Bank. Crane once had three garages, a warehouse, a lumber yard, livery stables, a butcher shop, restaurants and a shoe repair shop. In August 1916, P. J. Gallagher and George E. Carter, established a newspaper, the Crane American. Gallagher soon left to pursue a career as a lawyer and Carter continued to publish the newspaper until 1935. He sold the business and it was moved to Burns in 1936 where it ceased publication after a short time.

The state highway department began building a gravel road, Oregon Highway 78, into Burns in 1917, and its completion in about 1920 greatly improved travel conditions for those in the southern end of the county. Ranchers in the area around Malheur Lake moved their families to Crane during the summer months while they did the haying and then moved them back to the Lawen area each winter to feed their cattle and send their children to school. When the railroad came in 1916, Crane citizens saw that they would need an elementary school. With the addition of the lower grades, more people began to make Crane their permanent residence.

Today, the tiny community is the home for Crane Union High School and Crane Elementary School. The high school is a boarding school for the children of ranch families who inhabit the vast rural regions of the county. Some students are living over 100 miles from home. Space shapes the lives and culture of this country. For more about the school, visit the OPB website <http://www.opb.org/programs/oregonstory/ruralvoices/crane.html>

Return. From Crane we will travel generally westward back to Burns.



Harney County Tour Route

1 inch = 4.73 miles

 Main Tour Route



Author: Bryce Mertz Date: 6/18/2013

Note: No warranty is made by Harney County or the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data was compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notifications.

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In cooperation with
The Bureau of Land Management