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Official Newspaper, City of Hood River and Hood River County



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HOME

Local News

[News Headlines](#)
[Kaleidoscope](#)
[Features](#)
[Business](#)
[Classtime](#)

Local Sports

[Sports Headlines](#)
[Sidelines](#)
[HRV Schedules](#)

Lifestyle

[Entertainment](#)
[Opinions](#)
[Letters to Editor](#)
[Obituaries](#)

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[Bend Bulletin](#)
[East Oregonian](#)

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[Hood River Fire](#)
[Hood River Police](#)
[Port of Hood River](#)
[Gorge Kids](#)

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[HR County Schools](#)
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Meadows Deal

Governor supports Mount Hood compromise

By **RAELYNN RICARTE**

News staff writer

September 24, 2005

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski is advocating for Congressional approval of a historic agreement to protect the north face of Mount Hood from development.

He has praised the Hood River Valley Residents Committee (HRVRC) and Mt. Hood Meadows for reaching a compromise after 14 months of mediation. In August, both parties reached a settlement that could resolve decades of conflict over land use on the mountain.

"I am gratified to learn that your efforts have resolved longstanding conflicts over land trades, proposed developments and natural area protection on this special mountain. All parties to the agreement are to be commended for their efforts and the fine solutions achieved," wrote Kulongoski in a recent letter to the former opponents.

Under the proposed plan, Meadows has agreed to not pursue further development on its Cooper Spur holdings in the southern section of Hood River County. However, the existing ski area and resort will stay open – but be managed by the U.S. Forest Service – and no expansions will be allowed.

In exchange for that concession by Meadows, the HRVRC will not contest the company's proposal for 480 housing units on property near Government



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Camp in Clackamas County that is already zoned for that purpose. If an independent appraisal of the 140 acres in the neighboring county, currently held in federal ownership, does not meet the same value as Cooper Spur, then Meadows will require some form of compensation. Dave Riley, Meadows general manager, said the forest service could adjust the boundaries to equalize the value differential, or conservation groups could help offset the monetary loss.

"I am very pleased that our governor has seen the wisdom of protecting the historic backcountry on the north side in and around the Cloud Cap Tilly Jane recreation and the Cooper Spur areas as wilderness. We are very excited to be in a position to permanently protect a vast swath of the Crystal Springs drinking watershed," said Mike McCarthy, a local pear farmer and HRVRC member who participated in the mediation process.

"Since we announced the settlement agreement we've heard a great deal of support from all corners. Having Gov. Kulongoski's assistance and support validates that we are doing the right thing," said Riley.

However, in spite of local optimism, the deal is far from done. The plan cannot succeed without help from Oregon's congressional delegation. Not only is Meadows seeking a land exchange with the forest service, all parties want additional acreage given a Wilderness designation. They have asked U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, who makes his home in Hood River, and his peers to place 1,000 acres in the Tilly Jane and Cloud Cap areas under greater protection as well as the undeveloped Cooper Spur lands. Congress would also have to sign off on the land exchange that would grant Meadows the desired Clackamas County property.

The complex agreement between Meadows and HRVRC was reached after about 20 negotiating sessions had been held, both in person and via conference calls. The Portland-based mediation firm of Resolve, Inc., helped the conservation group and the corporation work out an acceptable compromise. HRVRC wanted to protect the watersheds and forest lands of Mount Hood and Meadows to meet a rural housing and recreation demand.

After reaching consensus, the two sides personally met with the governor's office to explain the proposal. Oregon's lead official has now offered his full support for federal legislation that can turn the

	<p>plan into a reality.</p> <p>"I am confident that the model of problem-solving and dispute resolution created by the agreement will inspire the early support of Congress," wrote Kulongoski.</p>	
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