

## Skamania County EMS begins charging for rescue services

By SCEMS  
For The Pioneer

STEVENSON – The decision to begin collecting payment for rescue services performed by Skamania County EMS (SCEMS) was made in November 2018 when the Skamania County Public Hospital District No. 1 commissioners reviewed the current billing policy.

The commissioners adopted the policy change, defining fees which apply for certain services.

The first bill for rescue services provided by SCEMS was sent to a recipient of a 911 activated emergency rescue in April.

The rescue services offered by SCEMS, those in which fees are applied, include removal of people from vehicles, confined spaces, cliffs, roadways, trails, waterways or traversable and non-traversable terrains with the use of specialized equipment.

So far, SCEMS has billed

four people for rescuing them, primarily due to injuries sustained on wilderness/hiking trails in Skamania County. The rescue services required specialized equipment, specialized training, and multiple personnel to perform. Services provided may include, but are not limited to, packaging, leading, carrying or moving patients. Most rescues require many hours to complete and collected fees will go to the reimbursement of time spent by staff at the call, travel expenses, supplies expended, and maintenance and replacement of rescue equipment used while providing the service.

“We recognize that the visitors to our beautiful County do not intend to be in need of our services,” said EMS Superintendent Ann Lueders. “But we have a responsibility to the taxpayers of Skamania County and, therefore, we make every effort to recuperate the expenses that



Hikers on Dog Mountain and other trails in Skamania County will pay a fee for rescues performed by the Skamania County Emergency Medical Services agency. Photo provided by EMS

are incurred while performing these necessary tasks. We as a Washington State agency have a duty to respond to, contact and assist injured people no matter where they are in our wilderness area. The transferring of patients back to the trailhead or down from the cliff face is the added ser-

vice that we are charging for.”

SCEMS charges an “all inclusive” rate for rescue services based on the total length of time spent by personnel performing the rescue. The fees cannot be collected from most insurance companies but may be covered by rescue travel insurance policies. The

fee only covers a fraction of the cost associated with the performance of these rescue activities throughout Skamania County.

The billing policy with the adopted rescue response fee schedule is available online at [skamaniaems.com/board-of-commissioners](http://skamaniaems.com/board-of-commissioners).

## ‘Old Guys’ group brings new life to Wind River Arboretum

By Philip L. Watness  
The Pioneer

The Wind River Arboretum in Stabler looked like a garden gone to seed a few years ago when Phil Dodd and his group of Old Guys Who Build Stuff agreed to revive the century old experimental forest.

The overgrown trails and dilapidated interpretive signs within the arboretum discouraged people from entering the stands of exotic, foreign trees. The facility had fallen into disrepair after the U.S. Forest Service closed the Wind River Nursery in 1986 and transferred much of the facility to Skamania County.

The aluminum interpretive signs were smeared with lichen and moss. Grasses and ferns obscured the paths.

Many of the non-native trees planted at the site had long since succumbed to severe winters and extended droughts or had been killed by bugs and diseases.

The names of trees from the far East, Europe and south and central America were etched into signposts. But like many of the trees which had died over the years, the posts



Phil Dodd, organizer of the Old Guys Who Build Stuff volunteer organization, center, talks to U.S. Forest Service Mount Adams District Ranger Emily Platt about the group's effort to restore the Wind River Arboretum on Wednesday, May 15. Skamania County Commissioner Bob Hamlin, right, listens in. Photo by Philip L. Watness

themselves were rotting and falling over.

The Old Guys Who Build Stuff, a volunteer group of mainly retired U.S. Forest Service employees, has worked over the past two years to clear the trails, replace the signposts, clean the interpre-

tive plaques, and replace the impressive sign welcoming people into the century old experiment.

Visitors walk on winding trails through the canopy of Western Red cedar, Pacific Silver fir, Grand fir, and Noble fir, Vine Maple, Pacific

Dogwood, and Red Alder. Many of 165 species of trees, though, have fallen to the forest floor, stand grey and dying above or been completely removed over time.

For almost a century, the arboretum at the former Wind River Nursery provided for-

esters insights into which species would prosper in the damp Pacific Northwest climate. The best-adapted trees turned out to be the native species to the local environment – primarily Douglas fir and Western Hemlock.

The significant arboretum, though, deserved to be revived, Dodd's group decided.

They had formed in 2012 to restore several shelters in and around the Mount St. Helens Monument. Dodd had worked at the volcano since before the 1980 eruption, so he knew what the shelters looked like in their glory days. In 1991, the forest service had restored the Bolt Camp, Pine Creek and House Rock shelters but the structures had fallen into disrepair by 2012.

Dodd and fellow retiree John Langford talked to then-Monument Manager Tom Mulder and Deputy Monument Manager Diane Perez about assisting the federal agency in preserving the historic structures. They hashed out a group volunteer agreement with officials of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest

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## Former nursery houses to be rented for overnight stays

By Philip L. Watness  
The Pioneer

Skamania County is going into the vacation rental house business.

After nearly two decades of fits and starts over management of the Wind River Business Park at Stabler, the county Public Works Department recently finished renovation of three houses along Chapman Avenue.

The county had turned over management of the business park to the Port of Skamania County in 2012, but a new county commission changed course. Led by then-Commissioner Chris Brong, the county renegotiated the long-term agreement with the port.

On Tuesday, May 21, the port approved amending that agreement to remove the residential structures from its purview. The county had requested the change to reflect its plan to manage the houses

as vacation rentals.

The four county owned houses had stood vacant since December 2016 when the county evicted the tenants with the plan to begin renovating the houses. Two of the houses needed their roofs replaced. The interiors also needed work – new paint, refinished hardwood floors, refreshed bathrooms and kitchen cabinets.

Surplus furniture from Skamania Lodge came at just the right time a month ago to furnish several of the houses. The lodge upgraded its furnishings under the new management agency, so offered the furniture to the county. The county received end tables, coffee tables, leather chairs, lamps, artwork and dressers from the lodge. The houses will also have washers and dryers.

Skamania County has also purchased mattresses, kitchen

equipment and other products to get the houses ready as overnight rentals. The plan is to market the rental houses for \$150 per night. Reservations can be made by calling the Public Works Department, 509-427-3910. Jennifer Deskin of Public Works said she anticipates the county will do marketing outreach in the coming months.

The county is in the process of updating its website, and the plan is to have an online reservations system once that goes live later this year.

“We’re doing a little more than the forest service does with their rentals,” said County Commissioner Bob Hamlin. That’s primarily because the houses have indoor plumbing. “We imagine that at some point, we will have four or five of these up and running, that there will be family gatherings and businesses holding meetings.”

The county has two houses along Chapman Avenue ready to rent and a third house leased from the forest service situated along Hemlock Creek. The former Hemlock Lake used to lap closer to the house’s rear deck but the removal of the dam a number of years ago took away that convenience. The house was in better shape than several others, though, so the county didn’t have a lot of work to do on it other than refinish the wood floors, paint the walls and bring in the furnishings.

The plan is to have all three houses available to rent by June 1.

“If we can get this together and do repairs to all of them, we’ll feel like we accomplished what we intended to set up,” Hamlin said.

The U.S. Forest Service in 2018 leased a number of other structures, including several residential buildings to the

county. The county agreed to renovate and maintain the property ahead of the proposed conveyance of the land and structures. The U.S. Congress would have to approve transferring the additional property to the county.

The county commissioners invited representatives from the federal legislature to tour the property on Wednesday, May 15. Dena Horton, Southwest Washington outreach coordinator for U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, toured the buildings to get the lowdown on the county’s plans. The county is counting on Cantwell and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray as well as U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler to champion the conveyance before Congress.

The Wind River Business Park Advisory Committee has been meeting monthly over the past year with the goal of recommending to the county

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## News Briefs

### WSDOT talks SR 14 project

CARSON – Community members are invited to attend an open house on Wednesday, May 29, to learn more about work beginning this summer to keep people and freight moving between Carson and State Route 14.

The Washington State Department of Transportation plans to build a roundabout this summer at the intersection of Wind River Road and SR 14.

The open house will be 5-7 p.m., Wednesday, May 29, at the Wind River Education Center, 441 Hot Spring Ave., Carson.

WSDOT doesn’t plan a formal presentation so people can drop by at any time during the two hours.

### State removes two cougars

Two cougars were killed by officials with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife on Friday, May 10, in Stevenson

Captain Jeff Wicksham, the southwest region officer, said the animals were destroyed after attacking and killing a sheep in the Baker Road area.

“We’ve been having sightings of a larger cougar since February,” Wicksham said.

He said sightings generally slow down during the summer months, then ramp back up around October.

“The snow pushes them out of the hills,” he said. “They primarily go for deer, and we have a lot of deer in Stevenson.”

He said cougar sightings are not rare in the rural areas of Skamania County. He said people should be aware that they’re living in cougar territory and exercise caution.

### County approves gun resolution

The Skamania County commission on Tuesday, May 21, voted unanimously on a resolution supporting Sheriff Dave Brown regarding enforcement actions of Initiative 1639. The law addresses issues regarding possession and use of semi-automatic guns and goes into full effect July 1.

The resolution states that the county “cannot in good faith assert enforcement authority pursuant to I-1639” due to concerns about the law’s implementation. Among those concerns is a lack of clarity about training requirements, background checks, secure gun storage and annual verification of gun owners.

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- News in brief: Water Jam happens in Underwood, p. 6
- First Friday in Camas features unicorns, p. 10

### On this date

New Zealand mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary and Nepalese Sherpa mountaineer Tenzing Norgay became the first climbers confirmed to have reached the summit of Mount Everest on May 29, 1953.

Firefighters Fest on Saturday, June 1, raises money for volunteer firefighters’ auxiliary. More details, page 5.

**'Old Guys' ...continued from p.1**

and got to work on the dilapidated structures, including the Bolt Camp shelter which had been damaged by a log during a spring runoff in 2006.

"People I knew with the forest service approached me in 2012 to see if we would be interested in restoring the Bolt Camp shelter on the Lewis River – and we did," he said. "They knew we knew how to do it because we were a bunch of retirees. We were also the last generation to actually use them for work, so they mean something to us."

As the volunteers were restoring the shelter, a mountain biker rolled up and asked the name of their group. They didn't have one so he offered "Old Guys Building S\*\*t." A few days later, Luke Wakefield of the Mount St. Helens Institute posted about "Old Guys Building Stuff" on Facebook. A few months later, Dodd said the "W" for "who" was somehow inserted into the name and the name has stuck. The "G" can stand for either guys or gals, so the loose-knit organization includes both sexes as well as teens to octogenarians.

Old Guys/Gals Who Build Stuff isn't registered as a non-profit entity. It doesn't have dues or fees.

The organization doesn't conduct business meetings. And the only requirement for membership is to devote at least one day of work with the group. OGWBS also picks and chooses which projects the volunteers are willing to take on.

"If someone approaches

us to do a project, we go look at it, and we'll either do it or not," he said. "If we decide, 'yes', fine; if we decide 'no', too bad."

The volunteer agreement with the forest service serves as the only official document that grants the volunteers the ability to restore and maintain facilities in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

"What I've found, especially with retirees, they don't want to be committed to something long-term, they want to be able to come and go as they please, and they want to pick and choose what projects they'll be involved in," Dodd said. "If you show up for one event, you're a lifetime member."

The ad hoc group had initially planned to restore the Bolt Camp shelter and adopt it and several other shelters to provide maintenance, but one of the volunteers suggested they work on a trail near a shelter which also been neglected.

"So, we adopted that," he said. "We were only going to do Bolt Camp shelter. We've restored four shelters, and we've adopted six."

The Old Guys/Gals do bi-annual maintenance of the Bolt Camp, Jack Pine, House Rock, and Kumback shelters near the Lewis River in the GPNF and Mosquito Springs and Wicky Creek shelters in Mount Adams Ranger District.

A Skamania County resident asked the group to consider restoring the arboretum trails and signage. The person

said he would maintain the site if they would clear the trails, replace signposts and clean interpretive signs.

"So, we came out and took a look, and the folks said, 'yeah, we want to do it,'" Dodd said. "So we did."

OGWBS has devoted the past two years to the Wind River Arboretum. The facility boasts a new cedar sign made from an old growth tree donated by Nancy Chapman of Portland from the land around a cabin she leases from the forest service at the Government Mineral Springs.

Emily Platt, Wind River District Ranger, approved the processing of the wood for the arboretum. Using an Alaskan chainsaw mill, the volunteers prepared the cedar for use at the site.

"We used 40 feet of it and cut two-inch slabs," he said. "All of the route signs in the arboretum came from the tree."

After two years of drying and planing the cedar, volunteers began installing the way-finding signs last fall.

The donation of the cedar came at just the right time and the price – free – couldn't be matched. Dodd estimated that the large sign at the entrance to the facility would've cost between \$7,000 and \$9,000 if it had been commercially manufactured.

The group also replaced 25 signposts along the paths using the wood from Chapman's cabin.

All told, Dodd said an extremely conservative estimate of the value of their work ranges from \$10,000 to \$15,000.



The entry to the Wind River Arboretum features a huge old growth Douglas fir section. Numerous foreign trees were planted at the arboretum to see whether they would survive in the Pacific Northwest. Photo courtesy of USFS

The group uses "heritage quality" timbers and wood products in replacing old posts and signs with material as close to the original as possible.

Dodd said OGWBS has a core group of seven volunteers but as many as 20 people have worked on restoration projects since 2012.

"We're hopefully making a difference because that's what we want to do, but it's

about getting back together," he said.

The 11-acre arboretum had been the brainchild of Thornton T. Munger of the U.S. Forest Service who proposed the experiment in 1912. Foresters would be able to compare tree species from around the globe with native trees to determine which were best suited for commercial production.

Students of silviculture (i.e. forestry scientists) have

frequently visited the arboretum to view the dead and dying trees alongside those still prospering in the damp weather.

"Well, they used to come out here but two years ago, you couldn't find the trail," Dodd said. "The posts were all gray and rotten because nobody had done any maintenance in years. The forestry classes used to come out. Maybe they will now."

**State track and field championship**

Friday, May 24, Eastern Washington University, Cheney

**Friday's finals, boys**

**Winners, plus locals**  
**1,600** — 1, Rob McManus (C) 4:24.19; 12, David Carrión (SC) 4:36.92; 20, Garrett

Shapovalov (LC) 5:16.66.

**Preliminaries**

**Locals only (top 8 to finals)**  
**100** — 4, Lincoln Krog (S) 10.99; 9, Chandlor Bucklin (CWS) 11.29; 15, Justin Frahm (KWC) 11.39  
**300 hurdles** — 9, Nils Gedenberg (LC) 43.06; 13, Desmond Phillips (S) 43.63.

**Friday's finals, girls**

**Winners, plus locals**  
**High jump** — 1, Ellie Saunders (SC) 5-5; 2, Jerrica Pachl (SC) 5-3.

**Pole vault** — 1, Julia Armstrong (C) 11-3; 8, Sydney Cole (S) 9-0; 10, Sara Campbell (S) 9-0; 15, Jaida Emerson (S) 7-6.  
**1,600** — 1, Naomi Smith (K) 5:00.04; 11, Lara Carrion (SC) 5:24.52; 15, Lauren Fox (LC) 5:47.10; 17, Sydnee Dyer (SC) 5:52.03.

**Preliminaries**  
**Locals only (top 8 to finals)**  
**100** — 9, Hannah Polkinghorn (CWS) 12.76; 13, Emma Watkins (SC) 12.98; 14, Montana Cowley (SC) 12.99; 300 hurdles — 11, Kaitlyn Rathgeber (S) 48.51.

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**Letter deadline**  
**Fridays at 4 p.m.**  
**400 words or less and one letter per writer per month.**

**Volunteer of the month**  
**Wanda Scharfe**

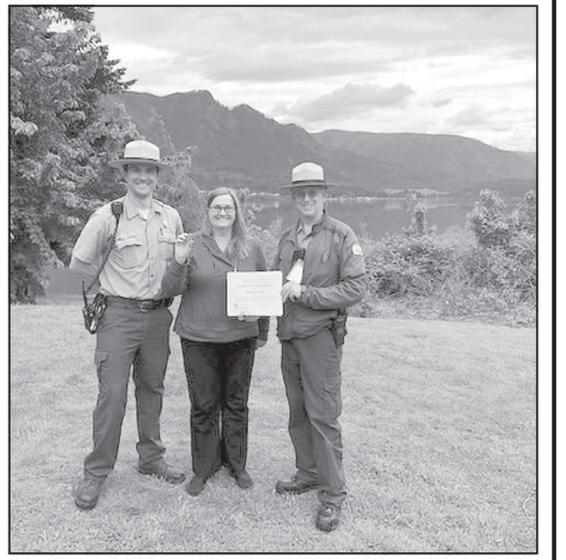
Port of Skamania County Office Assistant Wanda Scharfe received recognition from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers for volunteering in 2018 to pick up trash and assisting with various duties at the Bonneville Lock and Dam. Representatives from the Army Corps presented her with a certificate of appreciation and volunteer medal last week.

"The volunteer coordinator and I thought it would be interesting to see how much stuff I picked up while I was keeping track of my time," Scharfe said. "In 2018, that totaled up to 71 20-gallon bags of trash and seven 20-gallon bags of mono-filament fishing line from the shoreline at Bonneville Dam."

Scharfe started volunteering October 2017 shortly after she moved here from Minnesota. "I would go to the Bonneville Dam to walk the trails and enjoy the sites and sounds of the river and it didn't take long to start to notice the trash that was stashed in under shrubs and along the roadways and paths, and the fishing line along the shoreline."

Work crews regularly pick up the refuse but Scharfe said she wanted to help in between their efforts.

She contacted the Bonneville Dam and inquired about volunteer opportunities. The agency provided training about safety and protocol. Volunteers also undergo a background check. To volunteer at the dam, call the volunteer coordinator at 541-374-8820.



**HELP US!!**

Skamania County is seeking an individual that would be willing to serve on the Washington State Boundary Review Board for Skamania County to represent the citizens of Skamania County.

If you wish further information please contact Debra Van Camp at 509-427-3705.

This Board is comprised of five individuals. Skamania County is seeking one appointment:

- One appointment to represent the County.
- Two governmental appointees
- One Special District appointment to represent the all of the Special Districts

This Board reviews creation, incorporation and annexation of municipalities and special (Junior Taxing) districts.

Please submit a letter of interest to the Skamania County Human Resources at P.O. Box 790, Stevenson, Washington, 98648 or at Skamania County Courthouse, Human Resource, 240 NW Vancouver Avenue, Stevenson, Washington (lower level of the Courthouse) no later than June 15, 2019. For questions contact Debi Van Camp, Clerk 509-427-3705.

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