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Thurston Hills Timber Sale Turns into Asset for the Community

EUGENE, OR – Seneca is proud to be the purchaser of the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) Pedal Power timber sale.

The Pedal Power project area provides a unique opportunity to create something special for the community due to its close proximity to Springfield and adjacency to Willamalane Park and Recreation District’s Thurston Hills Natural Area.

The BLM crafted a dynamic plan that includes areas of riparian reserve around streams, late-successional reserve around an older stand, dozens of wildlife trees left throughout the harvest, and an untouched buffer area near a neighboring property. Of the 394 acres, only 92 acres will be harvested in patches dispersed throughout the Pedal Power project area.

Once the harvest is complete in 2021, the BLM in partnership with Willamalane, Disciples of Dirt, and other organizations in the community will extend the trail system that already exists on Willamalane’s property onto the BLM’s Pedal Power site to create almost nine miles of new trails through the dynamic landscape for hikers, mountain bikers and the community as a whole.

Seneca paid a little over \$1 million for the timber, and half of that payment will be transferred from the Federal government to western Oregon counties for public services such as road improvements and law enforcement. The harvest itself will create jobs in the community and provide revenue in the local economy.

The Disciples of Dirt (DOD) is a mountain bike club that is well known within the cycling world for being stewards of local trails and champions for improved trail access for cyclists. Justin Price, Treasurer of DOD said, “Disciples of Dirt is excited for the opportunity to develop more urban trails for multiple user groups. This opportunity will allow the development of a new trail network, provide additional biodiversity, riparian and late-succession reserves to be established within our local

environment. All of which provide our members the ability to experience nature and trails closer to home.”

Willamalane is a nationally recognized award-winning park and recreation district that serves more than 1.8 million people annually. “Our patrons have told us that they’re hungry for more public access and more miles of open trail space,” said Willamalane Superintendent Michael Wargo. “Through the Thurston Hills Natural Area project, we’ll be able to create nearly nine additional miles of interconnecting trails that will support convenient hiking, running and mountain biking in Springfield. It’s always our goal to serve our community and working with all of the partners on this project allows us to deliver. We’re very excited to move this initiative forward.”

Willamalane’s North Trailhead in the Thurston Hills Natural Area (7575 McKenzie Hwy) is the access point to their current trails and will continue to be the sole access point to the growing trail system in the area. The North Trailhead provides restrooms, an information kiosk, picnic table, water, and a bike cleaning and repair station.

Wade Jude, Outdoor Recreation Planner with the BLM wrote in an email, “Given that we are looking at 8+ miles on Willamalane connecting to just under 9 miles phased in on the BLM parcel, that’s a pretty sweet, purpose-built trail system right in our back yard!”

Additional information and a map of the Thurston Hills Forestry and Trails project is available at: <https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/orwa-nwo-thurston-hills-fact-sheet.pdf>

About Seneca

Seneca started as a small sawmill operation founded by Aaron Jones in 1953. Today, owners Becky Jones, Kathy Jones-McCann and Jody Jones continue the legacy of leadership and innovation in the wood products industry, overseeing a family of companies consisting of: Seneca Sawmill Company with some of the most innovative sawmills in the world, Seneca Jones Timber Company with 167,000 acres of sustainably managed timberlands, and Seneca Sustainable Energy which has the cleanest running biomass plant in America, creating enough sustainable energy to power 13,000 homes.

Sustainability is a core value of the multi-generational family business and is woven throughout all of the Seneca companies.

Seneca will plant its 40 millionth tree this spring. Owners Becky, Kathy and Jody will plant the tree with their grandchildren, grandnieces and grandnephews.

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