

Jack Buell announces run for re-election

Dan Hammes/St. Maries Gazette Record

Doing more with less will continue to be the biggest challenge facing the Benewah County Commissioners, according to Commissioner Jack Buell.

Mr. Buell made the comment during an interview in which he announced he will seek re-election as Benewah County Commissioner.

"The biggest challenge we have is the lack of tax base while the cost of providing county services, especially roads, continues to climb," Mr. Buell said.

He cited the move by the Idaho legislature to exempt all property owned by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe from taxation. That combined with land purchases by the federal government for the tribe have reduced the tax base.

"What happens is everyone else has to make the difference so taxpayers are at the limit of what they can pay, which means the county has nowhere to go for additional tax revenue," he said. "Yet costs continue to rise."

Mr. Buell has served as county commissioner since 1974. He said he enjoys his work as county commissioner and that prompted him to seek another term. During his tenure, he said his goal has always been to provide county residents with the best service possible at the lowest cost.

He cited the transfer station at the county landfill as an example. Original estimates of the cost to build the facility were considerably higher than what the county eventually paid for the project.

"We've done a good job of stretching tax dollars for the county and not only in major projects. We also work hard on maintenance of equipment to keep costs down," he said.

Roads are always one of the major issues facing the county commission, he said. The county maintains more than 325 miles of road with a road budget of \$1.3 million. He cited the major project on the St. Maries River Road in which the county used a federal grant with county money to complete major repairs on the stretch of the river road.

"We've used local improvement districts in the past to do the same thing. The fact is given our tax revenue the county does not have the money for major projects but we do stretch those dollars by working with other entities to get the job done."