

Sisters silviculturist to speak about forest management

By **Jodi Schneider McNamee**
Correspondent

The idea of working directly with nature appealed to Will Brendeke, and at a young age he decided to become an entomologist. But in 2003, after receiving his bachelor's degree in entomology, Brendeke joined the Peace Corps, and for over two years he volunteered doing agroforestry in Senegal, West Africa.

Living in a tiny mud hut without electricity or running water, he taught the Senegalese herdsmen how to plant trees and build live fences out of thorny brush. He enjoyed his work in the Peace Corps so much that it inspired him to pursue a career in forestry when he returned home to Southern Illinois.

Now he is a silviculturist at Sisters Ranger District on the Deschutes National Forest.

"I grew up in a suburb on the outskirts of Chicago. My family took me on lots of vacations in Wisconsin and my dad always took us places to explore," said Brendeke. "So a sense of nature was instilled in me at an early age. I decided to go to school for my bachelor of science degree in entomology at Southern Illinois University in 1999. And during that time I applied to the local forest service and they hired me as a seasonal worker, and for two years I was exploring the back woods of Southern Illinois."

After returning from the Peace Corps Brendeke went back to the University of Illinois and received a master's degree in forest ecology.

"I worked in a couple of National Forests, including the Finger Lakes area in New York before coming to Oregon in 2008," said Brendeke. "I worked for the

ranger station in Prairie City, Oregon, out in the Malheur National Forest for six years before coming to Sisters last year to live."

Brendeke is now involved in forest management/restoration in the Deschutes National Forest.

Brendeke will be speaking on sustainable forest management practices at The Belfry with John Bailey, OSU associate professor of silviculture/fire management, on April 21 for the Frontiers in Science free symposium hosted by Sisters Science Club. Brendeke will be speaking about the Green Ridge Landscape Restoration Project.

“ He has training, the insight and the attitude to move forward with some crucial issues facing Sisters Ranger District... — John Bailey

"I met John Bailey through the coursework on my way to get certified as a silviculturist," said Brendeke. "The certification entails going all over the country spending time in classes at four different universities, and one of them was Oregon State University (OSU). Each

university had a professor that hosted the silviculturist module and John was my teacher at OSU. I got certified on top of my graduate degree."

"Will is one of a new breed of silviculturists who embraces modern-day challenges associated with land management. He has training, the insight and the attitude to move forward with some crucial issues facing Sisters Ranger District, and it is exciting for me at Oregon State University to have such a colleague on the ground with whom to collaborate," Bailey said.

The Sisters Ranger District is currently at work on the Glaze Forest Restoration Project, a collaborative project to restore 1,200 acres of eastside ponderosa pine forests, aspen stands, and riparian areas so they can function more naturally in a fire prone environment. The project was first introduced by Tim Lillebo (who passed away last year) from the conservation group Oregon Wild and Cal Mukumoto, of Warm Springs Biomass. Maret Pajutee is the district ecologist and is the project lead.

"Our next process in the Glaze project is more prescribed fire. It's another important tool in forest management; restores the seedbed for ponderosa pine and also rejuvenates the sebaceous layer, it's a rejuvenating tool in a lot of ways," Brendeke said.



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Will Brendeke is at home in the natural world.

Prescribed fire is a tool that's critically important to keep ponderosa pine in the landscape, and it's critically important to reduce accumulations of fuels.

"Personally to me forest management is important in maintaining biodiversity and landscape, managing for multiple species and adjusting concerns of society," said Brendeke. "In forest management there is a lot of blending of disciplines together, and to me as a silviculturist, my main focus is looking more at the tree aspect and looking at density of trees, species composition and structure, which is the horizontal and vertical arrangement of trees."

Fire historically has behaved rather randomly. In some places it burned hotter than other places, and Sisters Ranger District is trying to replicate that by reintroducing fire as prescribed burning in a patchy mosaic.

"I love the trees and everything about the forest. I really like thinking about disturbance regimens; I think it challenges me personally to kind of look at nature objectively and think about the patterns and processes that were at play that helped shape the forest in forest development. For me it's more of a passion, and I'm just lucky enough to have a job that ties into my passion," Brendeke said.

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