

Applegater

Photo by Teya Jacobi

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SUMMER 2014
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Postal Patron

**Please join us for the big birthday party!
Get your advance tickets now.**



Celebrate the Applegater Newspaper's 20th Year at our Summer Birthday Bash

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All proceeds support the Applegater.
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Must be 21 years of age or older. No refunds, all sales final.
TICKETS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR.

Look out for fire season 2014!

BY STEVE ZIEL

It seems like every fire season is different. The following may provide a sense of how this fire season may develop in southwest Oregon.

Currently southwest Oregon is entering a second year of drought, which is expected to continue or intensify between now and what we call "fire season." The length and severity of a fire season is determined by conditions preceding the summer months; this "lead-up time" provides some insight to consider over the course of the next several months. But don't feel alone—as we transition into the upcoming fire season, much of the West is also experiencing similar conditions.

Prime indicator

A prime indicator of our current situation and the season to come has been the lack of normal rainfall since November 2013. The conspicuous lack of snow at higher elevations provides strong evidence that things are different this year—the Rogue and Umpqua basins currently have less than 25 percent of their median snow-water equivalent, with large areas already bare of snow! Worth noting is that we ended 2013 with less than 50 percent of average precipitation (2013 turned out to be the driest year on record for Medford, Roseburg, Klamath Falls and the city of Mt. Shasta). In 2012 Medford recorded just 8.99 inches of rain, shattering previous record lows (average rainfall for Medford is 18.25 inches).

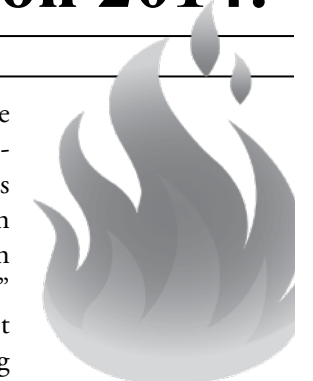
Much of our precipitation since last

fall was in the form of short-duration events rather than the long-term "soaking rains" from frequent winter/spring storms. Fall-to-spring moisture serves to penetrate and saturate our fuels and soil. It is this stored moisture that governs the onset and moderates the severity and duration of a fire season. This year seems different: the fall and winter seasons were dry, and most of our spring moisture came in March. A recent three-month outlook by the National Weather Service forecasts "above-average temperatures, and below-average precipitation" for southwest Oregon. By all indications it may be warmer and drier than usual through June before it gets the hottest and driest in July and August.

Effects of drought on fire season

So, we are in the second year of drought, the forecast is for warmer and drier conditions, and we don't have much snow in the mountains with summer just around the corner. How might this affect our fire season?

Southwest Oregon is densely forested by conifer, hardwood, and brush species that serve as "fuel" during fire season. Our



See FIRE SEASON, page 14

Recreation in the Applegate

BY DIANA COOGLE

Are you looking for outdoor recreation in the Applegate this summer? There's plenty to enjoy!

Trail opportunities

• **Hiking.** Superb! Easy to difficult trails, in woods or up mountains, with views, trees, wildflowers, streams, meadows, and Pacific Crest Trail access. Go to the US Forest Service (USFS) website (www.fs.usda.gov/rogue-siskiyou) and click on "hiking" or ask at the Star Ranger Station (541-899-3800). Good hiking books specific to the area include Luke Ruediger's *The Siskiyou Crest: Hikes, History and Ecology*; Evelyn Roether's *Williams Area Trail Guide*; Diana Coogle and Janeen Sathre's *Favorite Hikes of the Applegate: A Trail Guide with Stories and Histories*; and several books by Art Bernstein, most specifically *76 Day-Hikes within 100 Miles of the Rogue Valley*. Also check the websites

of Applegate Trails Association (www.applegatetrails.org), Siskiyou Uplands Trail Association (www.sutaoregon.org), Bureau of Land Management (www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/tablerock/index.php) and The Nature Conservancy (<http://nature.org/trihikes>).

• **Mountain biking.** Many trails are open to mountain bikers. Check with Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association (www.rvmba.org) or with the Applegate Ranger District of the USFS (541-899-3800), or look on the USFS website at www.fs.usda.gov/mrecremain/rogue-siskiyou/recreation.

• **Horseback riding.** Excellent riding on lots of old logging roads and trails. Check with Grayback Brushriders in Williams (find them on Facebook), the Rogue Valley Equestrian Trails Association (www.rveta.org), and other horse people.

• **Running.** A few years ago Rogue Valley Runners staged a nationally highlighted cross-country run through the Applegate—from Williams to Ashland, up mountains and down. You can run anywhere in the Applegate, but be careful on the roads. Shoulders are very narrow and gravelly.



Enjoy mountain biking in southern Oregon.
Photo: southernoregonmtb.blogspot.com.

• **Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV).** Many opportunities, including Stein Butte at Applegate Lake and Summit Lake trail at Squaw Lakes. For ideas, check with the Bureau of Land Management (541-618-2200), the USFS (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/rogue-siskiyou/>)

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Voters support Southern Oregon Research and Extension!

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Jack Duggan voices his appreciation on page 5.

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