

Wildfire: Everyone has a role (but are they doing it?)

BY SANDY SHAFFER

The map below shows the *top two out of all 417 counties* in our 11 western states with respect to the percentage of private homes (displayed in red) within a half mile of federal land.

Yes, a recent study by Headwaters Economics found that Josephine County is number one, and Jackson County a close second. We Applegaters may not be very surprised with those top rankings; after all, we live with this “checkerboard” daily. It’s why the Jackson-Josephine county area has been a front-runner in natural resource and wildfire issues for decades. It’s also why we’ve collaborated with our federal land managers, and have mutual aid agreements and our own Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). And it’s why we were named one of the first Fire-Adapted Community (FAC) “hubs” in the nation last year. *We know* we have to work together.

As one of the very few people in the Rogue Basin who helped to define a fire-adapted community as part of the National Cohesive Strategy for Wildland Fire Management, I recognize (and preach) that our checkerboard landscape dictates lots of overlap of responsibility for most of the components of FACs. (See the box for a reminder of those components.)

I also realize that just because we’re now an FAC hub doesn’t mean that all of our communities are “fire-adapted” and that we can rest on our laurels! Quite the contrary: while I know that we are far ahead of most areas in the west, I would say that *very few* of our communities are *really* fire-adapted. And given that map, the current drought and recent wildfires in our area, this is very concerning.

To me, FAC roles and responsibilities start with homeowners: *we do our part pretty well* with defensible space, fuel reduction, forest management, family evacuation and emergency planning. Federal land managers do their part with forest management and fuels reduction (when Washington, DC,

and the courts let them) and they can also provide external community fuel buffers. The feds also participate in cooperative fire agreements, as do our local fire districts. Fire districts can help with fuels reduction, education/outreach, evacuation planning, and defining local internal and external safety zones. However, I recently heard one local fire chief (not ours!) say that promoting FACs *wasn’t* part of his job! What the heck?!

The Oregon Department of Forestry plays a lead role in forest activities, especially out in our rural Applegate. They set standards for the management of private forests and regulations for activity on forest lands. They also fight wildfires on private and Bureau of Land Management lands. And, they help with fuels reduction, forest management and public education/outreach.

So, what are the roles of county and city governments? Certainly they

should provide building codes/ordinances for safe, defensible homes and access routes. Also, weed abatement laws, emergency preparedness and notification systems, and maybe evacuation procedures? And since Oregon decided that we would have county-level community wildfire plans across the state, we have CWPPs for both Jackson and Josephine counties in place. Maybe counties are responsible for

providing funding for implementation and updates of those fire plans?

After 15 years in the Applegate, I’ve learned that *this work is never ending*—trees, weeds, grass, towns and communities all grow! Once fire season is over *we all* need to start preparing for next year, *no matter what our FAC role is*.

Given this map, we can’t stop cleaning gutters (those darned pine needles), funding CWPPs (pay attention counties!), or reaching out to new residents to help assist in preparing their homes. We can’t be too busy to attend collaborative wildfire committee meetings (some federal, state and local agencies think they are). We can’t cut funding for fire prevention or lower home safety building codes for those who’ve lost their home to a wildfire (like a town in Colorado did!). Helping agriculture shouldn’t mean allowing a dry crop next to private homes to be mowed on a 100-degree afternoon during high fire danger! And, Congress and the GAO (Government Accountability Office) need to allow the US Forest Service to *stop borrowing from fuels reduction funds* to fight wildfires! Duh, *so* counterintuitive (not to mention they had an agreement)!

Fire-Adapted Community (FAC)

The various components of an FAC are:

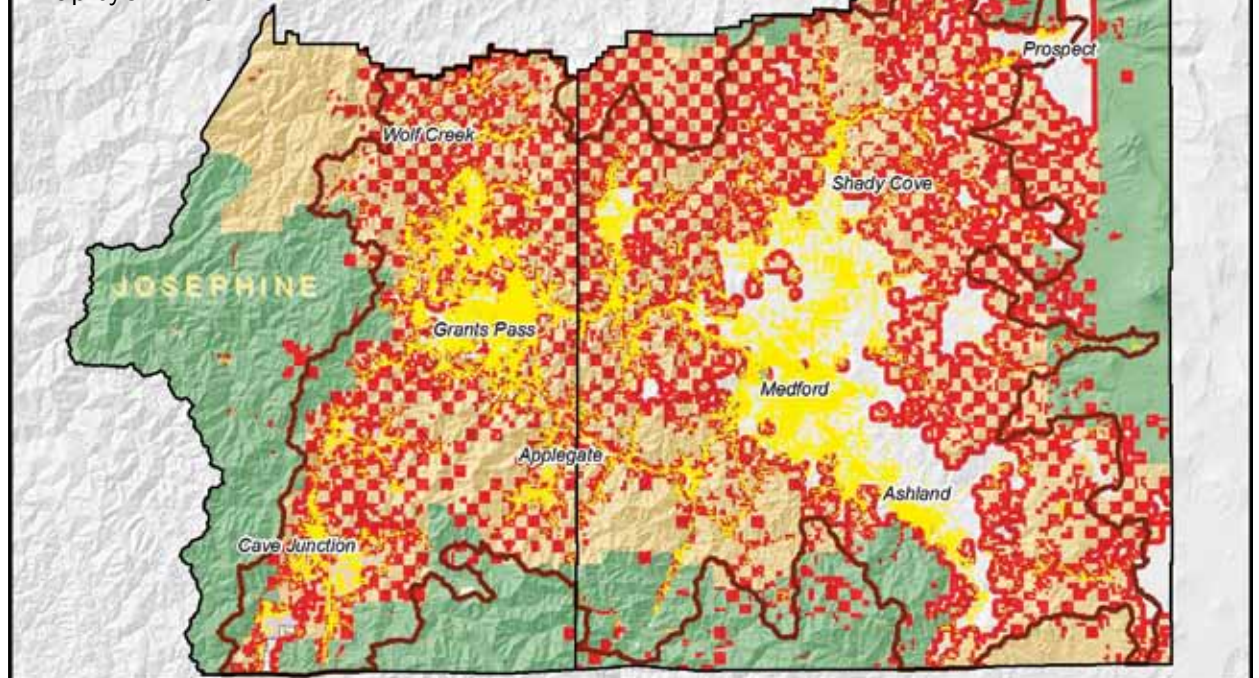
- Fuel reduction
- Forest management
- Cooperative fire agreements
- Community fire plans
- Defensible space
- Internal safety zones
- External fuel buffers
- Evacuation planning
- Local capacity
- Codes/ordinances
- Education and prevention efforts

I say we’re all in this together, and we need *every partner* to keep up their share of the workload here in southwest Oregon. Doing nothing will be very costly, so please help by putting more pressure on all of our partners to continue our local FAC efforts!

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Private homes within a half mile of federal land in Josephine and Jackson Counties

Map by Jim Wolf



GMO Yogurt: How does your favorite brand stack up?

From *GMO Inside Blog* at gmoinside.org

While GMO Inside believes the “Precautionary Principle” to be the best approach when it comes to developing and consuming GMOs, we know that consumers may care about a number of factors when it comes to choosing food products. Here is some information on your “favorite” brands of yogurt:

Fage. Fage is a close second in the Greek yogurt market, holding 14 percent of the market in 2011. The positives to Fage brand yogurt are that no milk concentrate is used (like Yoplait, see below) and they do not add extra thickeners to their plain varieties, though they are most likely added for their flavored yogurt. On their website, they highlight the healthy benefits of Fage, including statements saying it is beneficial to vegetarians and diabetics, and gluten free for those with gluten allergies or preferences. However, there is currently no organic option.

Greek Gods. Greek Gods was founded in Seattle, Washington in 2003 and is now owned by Hain Celestial. They do not add milk protein concentrate,

artificial coloring, or rBST, but there is no organic variety available.

Yoplait. Yoplait Greek is owned by General Mills and is the second most popular overall yogurt company in the US, the first being Chobani. Yoplait Greek promotes the health aspect of their product, advertising the high levels of calcium, vitamin D, and protein, especially for their kids’ products, as well as claiming their product can help with weight loss. However, their website does admit to using aspartame (artificial sweetener), carmine (red coloring), gelatin, and milk protein concentrate in their Yoplait Greek Parfait cups. There are no organic options available. In 2012, General Mills spent over \$1 million to oppose GMO labeling in California.

Dannon. Oikos is Dannon’s Greek yogurt brand. It is not certified as USDA organic and does not mention “natural” or “non-GMO” products on their website.



They also have no statement on rBST use, or a bovine growth hormone used on cattle, so it is possible that these substances are used. They use cultured grade A non-fat milk, though fruit varieties include additives such as fructose, modified corn starch, and other products.

Stonyfield. Stonyfield is an all organic yogurt company started in 1983. Its yogurt is sold in natural food stores, national supermarkets and large retailers across the country. All of their products are USDA Organic certified (including Stonyfield Greek and YoBaby); therefore, they are audited throughout the production process to ensure that they use no pesticides or herbicides, GMOs, antibiotics, or growth hormones. They are currently in the process of

being approved by the non-GMO Project, which will test their animal feed for GMO contamination. They formally state that they believe GMO products should be labeled to guarantee consumer safety and they were a founding company of Just Label It, a nonprofit advocating for GMO labeling. Groupe Danone (which also owns Dannon) is the parent company of Stonyfield, owning 85 percent of the company, yet Stonyfield maintains

a unique partnership with Groupe Danone, with company co-founder Gary Hirshberg remaining Chairman and the company remaining true to its health and environmental mission.

Nancy’s. Nancy’s is another USDA organic certified Greek yogurt company owned by Springfield Creamery in Eugene, Oregon. Nancy’s does not add any thickeners or pectins and strains off the whey during production. They say they use all organic fruits from the Northwest region. On their website they describe their milk sources, stating they are from local dairy farms, mostly within a 50-mile radius of their creamery in Eugene. They do not use pesticides, antibiotics, or synthetic growth hormones, and their product is USDA certified by Oregon Tilth. Their website does not directly say that they are GMO free, but their organic certification prohibits GMO use.

Wallaby’s Family. Wallaby’s yogurt company is based out of Napa Valley, California, and was influenced by a trip to Australia by the co-founders, who were inspired by the sweet, amazing flavor of the yogurt. They use organic milk from nearby farms in Sonoma and Marin counties. They are organic certified by Quality Assurance International (QAI) and the USDA. Due to their organic certification, they are also GMO free.