

## WALDEN: Congressman talked about fire's impact on community

*Continued from page 1*

companies eager to buy the timber, which includes large ponderosa pines.

At this time, the Forest Service can legally remove hazard trees from fire areas along highways immediately following the fire's containment. However, removal of any of the rest of the burned timber requires time-consuming environmental assessments, which can take several years if there are appeals, leaving the timber to degrade and become salvageable only for firewood.

Because the Forest Service could conduct rapid post-fire recovery efforts along 242, they were able to complete work prior to the onset of winter. Had that not occurred, 242 would not have opened to the public next spring.

Walden would like to see legislation passed to change the wilderness regulations. Due to environmental protection regulations, any burned timber in the wilderness cannot be removed, leaving dead trees to conceivably fuel future fires.

Chris Wilder of Sisters Log Furniture, and president of the Chamber of Commerce Board, said, "There is value in the timber burned in the wilderness," but not if it can't be harvested.

The general consensus around the table Sunday afternoon was more "commonsense" regulations could help reduce fire danger from unharvested fuels by allowing the cutting of fire-damaged timber in both wilderness and non-wilderness areas in

a more timely fashion, before the timber loses its value as marketable lumber.

Walden reported there is a proposed bill in the House that would reduce the amount of time it takes for the Forest Service to harvest fire-damaged timber, and it doesn't eliminate environmental safeguards.

When asked if he supports the Senate bill introduced by Oregon Senator Ron Wyden (D) and four other western senators, called the Wildfire Mitigation Assistance Act, he responded, "Yes." The act would provide resources to assist communities recovering from damaging wildfires.

However, Walden contended, "You can't buy your way out."

He believes there need

to be changes to the policies governing the management of the nation's forests, calling for more active thinning in order to reduce fuel loads that feed the fires in the first place.

He pointed out that in Eastern Oregon, healthy ponderosa forests should have 20 trees per acre, but due to fire suppression and reduction in logging, there are now 1,000 ponderosas per acre.

On the tour of the Milli Fire, Walden said he was told by Forest Service personnel, "If I could just do what I am trained to do," such as increased post-fire salvage, the risk of catastrophic forest fires could be reduced.

Fifty percent of the entire Forest Service budget is for fire suppression, and another

46-48 percent has to cover all other programs of the Forest Service, including preventive measures.

Roger White, owner of the Camp Sherman Store, queried Walden on the cost of preventive maintenance of the forest versus the cost to fight a fire. Walden said it depends on the land but generally it cost \$3,000 an acre to thin and four to five times that amount to fight a fire.

Besides the obvious public safety concerns and value of the property at risk that go into prioritizing fires for asset allocation, Walden would like to see additional considerations such as health impacts

on surrounding communities from carbon emissions and particulates in the air, and damage to local watersheds impacting drinking and irrigation water.

Walden told the attendees the CDC and EPA are doing a study on the difference between smoke from forest fires and smoke from prescribed burns. Prescribed burns can be scheduled when wind and air conditions are favorable for reducing the impact of the smoke. Forest fire smoke tends to be denser and, of course, can't be scheduled for favorable

See WALDEN on page 25

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**Communicating with Your Siblings About Money and Aging Parents**

Many adult children are called upon to help their aging parents as life changes set in, yet only 65 percent of siblings report talking about money with one another, according to research by Ameriprise Financial. While only 15 percent of siblings have conflicts over money, when siblings do spar over finances, it's usually about their parents' situation. Financial conversations between siblings become inevitable, as brothers and sisters manage their parents' money matters, including estate planning, healthcare, retirement income and wills.

In the event that you have shared responsibilities with your siblings down the road, it's important to make sure your family is on the same page. Here are some tips to help you and your siblings have civil conversations about money-related family matters.

**Set aside your differences.** When your parents need help, don't waste your time re-hashing old family feuds. Keep yourself in check if you are tempted to fall into old patterns of behavior that may alienate grown-up siblings. You may not be able to control how your siblings behave, but you can control your own actions.

**Determine key priorities.** You'll accomplish more – and potentially spar less – when everyone is committed to common goals. Assess what financial matters you and your siblings will need to manage together. If your parents' safety is a primary concern, find agreement about the support and services they need to remain safely in the family home. If it's time for your parents to move to an assisted living facility, put your energy into seeking a solution.

**Schedule time to talk.** Schedule regular check-ins with your siblings to discuss pressing topics related to your parents' care, including how finances are being managed. Frequent conversations can help diminish anxiety and improve collaboration. Ongoing dialogue will help prevent misunderstandings from blowing up into full-fledged battles and help keep your parents' best interest top-of-mind.

**Divide and conquer.** It's important to set responsibilities, with the understanding that each sibling may be able to contribute different amounts of time, money and expertise. Be forthright about what you can reasonably handle and open to taking on more tasks if you have the capacity. Keep in mind that responsibilities may shift over time, as circumstances change for you and your siblings.

**Be open to advice.** Bringing outside sources into your inner circle can help provide unbiased guidance as you enter this new phase of life. Your parents' tax preparer, financial planner and other trusted advisors could provide an important bridge to understanding their current financial situation. Once you're ready to plan the next steps for your family, consider working with a single financial advisor. This approach allows the advisor to help you create a comprehensive plan that addresses everyone's needs and concerns.

Money conversations can be emotional and hard to initiate, but keep in mind that there are benefits to having open communication. Families who are willing to tackle money-related topics are often more confident about their ability to handle financial challenges and work toward their goals.

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