

SCIENCE TALK:
Geological record tells much about climate

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“There’s really something heady about being able to look out at the landscape and see how things came to be,” writes geologist Marcia Bjornerud of Lawrence University. “I think most people would love to have a rational explanation for how the world around them got to be the way it is.”

It’s important to understand that we are embedded in geologic time, Bjornerud writes. “There isn’t a geologic past and the future. We are on a continuum of processes that have been going on for millennia, and our activities feed into those processes in ways that are sometimes surprising – but shouldn’t be if we have a better understanding of the way the Earth has unfolded in the past.”

In addition to providing geologic history as context for current and future climate changes, Dr. McKay will talk about fossil fuels: how much we have used, how much is left, and the implications of sticking with fossil fuels as our main source of energy.

Dr. McKay is an adjunct instructor in the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Oregon. She lives in Bend and teaches online geology courses throughout the academic year, and field courses in Central Oregon during the summer. Her research background is in physical volcanology with a focus on recent mafic eruptions in the Central Oregon Cascades.

She is also interested in how societies prepare for and respond to natural disasters, especially volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. She has worked with Deschutes County, the Oregon Office of Emergency Management,



PHOTO PROVIDED

Dr. Daniele McKay will speak on climate change.

Oregon Partnership for Disaster Resilience and the Red Cross on natural hazard preparedness and mitigation in Central Oregon.

The evening lecture, sponsored by the Sisters Science Club, starts at 7 p.m. at The Belfry.

Social hour begins at 6 p.m. with light fare, beer, and wine available. Admission is \$5; teachers and students are admitted free. The Belfry is located at 302 E. Main Ave., Sisters.

For information on this topic and on Sisters Science Club: www.sistersscienceclub.org; scienceinsisters@gmail.com.

FIRE: Burn piles have to be dead out down to mineral soil to be safe

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“Make sure that you’re not complacent,” he told *The Nugget*. “Just because we had a really good fire season and didn’t see any significant starts in the area doesn’t mean that we’re completely safe. We always need to be fire-wise and fire-smart.”

Craig described the fire as “escaped burn piles that were lit legally, with a permit,” three days before. Due to air stagnation, burning was not legal over the weekend and at least through Tuesday.

The property-owner thought the fires were completely out, according to Craig, “but unfortunately they weren’t. They crept through the duff—the light understory, biomass, burnable materials that are lying across the ground—until they got to the pine needles.

“Ultimately it got into a larger pile of needles, pine cones, and flammable materials. It started burning the fence and scorched a couple



PHOTO BY TL BROWN

Firefighters responded to a report of fire catching hold of pine needles and a fence on Graham Court last Sunday.

of trees,” Craig continued.

He noted that burn regulations require that the ground surrounding a burn pile must be “scratched down to mineral soil,” to prevent these sorts of fires.

“Central Oregon is always at risk and always at threat,” Craig said. “Just about any time of year in Central Oregon we really are dry. Keep your mindset in a preparatory manner. You should always have an evacuation kit, always be prepared.”

He also suggested hauling off pine needles and debris rather than burning them.

Residents of Sisters Country should possess “a good understanding of how

fires burn in the wildland-urban interface,” Craig said, “and an understanding that as long as we don’t have snow on the ground, there is always the possibility that fires can start. If fuels are in direct contact with homes or with buildings on your property, that can be of concern.”

More information can be found at www.sistersfire.com. *The Nugget* regularly publishes articles that help readers make sense of fire regulations, safety, and preparedness. In the upcoming months, look for several stories describing small, easy steps that residents can take during the cooler seasons to prepare for summer.

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