

MY OPINION FROM BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR

Whacking the woods

BY CHRIS BRATT

The BLM (Bureau of Land Management) is living in an illusion. BLM’s Washington, D.C., office, along with Oregon’s state managers and directors, didn’t realize their anti-environmental policy bubble had burst along with our over-inflated economy under the Bush administration. No longer will the majority of Oregon’s citizens allow the BLM to trash our public forests solely for political and economic reasons. This is especially true for BLM’s ill-fated Forest Plan Revision of 2008.

But the legacy the Bush administration has left us with is more than just a deficient partisan Forest Plan Revision. They have left us with the question, “Can the BLM ever be trusted to manage our public forest lands in Oregon?” My answer is no, as long as the law governing BLM’s actions is open to the present lopsided interpretation. Except for a short period under the Clinton administration in the 1990s, the BLM has maintained the perverse view that they are obligated by law to cut excessive amounts of timber first and only consider protecting all other resources as a secondary duty.

This corruption of the language outlined in the California and Oregon Lands Act (O and C Act), the law under which BLM operates, is driven solely by political and financial interests. There is constant pressure from 18 Oregon counties and private timber companies that benefit financially from this unreasonable position, to continually boost logging levels on our public forest lands.

Together these folks have made a mockery of protecting our public forest resources in Oregon and disregarded most citizen concerns in the process. BLM ignored the best available science, their own legal mandates and the extensive

meaningful public input they received when they recently decided (December 30, 2008) to implement their Western Oregon Plan Revisions (Revisions). This decision proposes to increase logging volume by 87% on BLM-administered land throughout Oregon by mostly clearcutting old-growth stands of trees. This Revision also will move many endangered species closer to extinction and increase the amount of BLM land dedicated exclusively to off-road vehicle use by 266% with no substantial analysis of the adverse impacts.

BLM managers and spokespeople believe that their Plan Revision has no flaws and say the Revision complies with all applicable laws. (They always say

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that even when they continually lose in courts.) But BLM’s Forest Plan Revision is so preposterous, many people including science, industry and environmental groups, think it is in danger of ending up in the garbage pail. Many of the nation’s environmental groups believe the Revision is so flawed and in violation of so many environmental laws that BLM will be unable to implement any of its proposed actions. Just the decision to approve BLM’s Revision Plan last December already has sparked citizen outrage and a flurry of lawsuits. It seems if BLM continues to pursue further actions under the provisions of their Revision Plan, they will become more unwelcome and powerless to accomplish anything positive in our

communities.

The prime example of BLM’s intransigence that irks me the most in their Revision is their Off-Road Vehicle Action Plan for Southern Oregon and the Applegate, in particular. In case you haven’t heard them coming, there are a lot more motorcycles and four-wheelers coming soon to a neighborhood near you. BLM’s Plan Revision has provided for seven new local (Medford District) Special Recreation Management Areas called Off-Highway Vehicle 2.

Emphasis Areas

Approximately 68,000 acres of BLM public land has been allocated

the west is rampant and unrestrained with off-road enthusiasts making their own trails willy-nilly throughout the forest. These unchecked practices by off-road users will continue as long as they still have approved access to these millions of public acres.

BLM claims that within the next five years, they will have “limited” off-road vehicle use to specific roads and trails on all 2.4 million acres outlined in their plan revision. The BLM also claims at other times they don’t have to accomplish everything they promise in their management plans. Since our local BLM hasn’t designated any off-road trails or roads on 17,000 acres they promised 15 years ago, I’m not too hopeful they will manage to do it on 2.4 million acres in five years.

It’s clear the BLM has ridden roughshod over any opposition to these seven local (68,000 acres total) Emphasis Areas for off-road vehicle use. They have never considered the public outcry for an opportunity to influence where off-road vehicle activity will occur. Instead, BLM has chosen their Emphasis Areas for management where off-road vehicle users have established hundreds of miles of illegal trails, caused severe damage to the land and increased conflicts with private landowners who are now within or adjacent to those Emphasis Areas.

In refusing to allow the public a say as to where off-road activities should be allowed, the BLM has failed to meet the specific directions outlined in their own planning documents and goals.

Let’s hope the new administration in Washington can rectify this widespread mismanagement by the BLM and get them back to their mission of caring for the land and resources of our nation.

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Applegate Fire District Awards Banquet

The Friends of the Applegate Fire District hosted a wonderful evening of camaraderie and pride on March 6, as the Applegate Firefighters celebrated another extraordinary year of serving this diverse community. It was an evening to recognize the accomplishments and acknowledge the spirit that guides the future of this fire district.

The banquet, held at the Applegate Community Church on North Applegate Road., is one of four annual events hosted by the Friends to support the firefighters. A dinner of superb tri-tip and chicken was provided to the volunteers and distinguished guests. The annual awards and video containing rare photos of the past year is looked forward to with anticipation. Firefighters Tailse and Cody Goodnough have the opportunity to collect photos from training and emergency scenes throughout the year to produce this great entertaining contribution through New Focus Productions.

Accolades and awards in recognition of 2008 were given to the following individuals:

- Spouse of the Year - Brenda Van Leeuwen
- Marc Chaput Spirit Award – Jack Lynch
- Hall of Flame – Gary Sciocchetti
- Chief’s Award – Chris Wolfard
- 20 Years of Service – Brad Barnes
- Firefighter of the Year – Ron Slack
- Rookie of the Year – Daniel Boyajian
- Junior to Firefighter – Anthony Ryan
- EMT of the Year – Jeff Vinyard
- First Responder of the Year – Greg Paneitz
- Instructor of the Year – Rob Underwood
- Most Alarms – Fred Secco
- Most Drills – Bill Dunlap & Daniel Boyajian
- Officer of the Year – Cody Goodnough
- District Employee of the Year – Darren Bucich

Below from left:
Back Row; Gary Sciocchetti-Hall of Flame, Jeff Vinyard-EMT of the Year, Cody Goodnough-Officer of the Year.
Middle Row; Brad Barnes-20 Years of Service, Chris Wolfard-Chief’s Award, Bill Dunlap-Most Drills District Wide, Greg Paneitz-First Responder of the Year, Bob Ziegler-Safety Committee Recognition, Jack Lynch-Marc Chaput Spirit Award, Rick Koppen-Most Drills, Daniel Boyajian-Rookie of the Year, Ron Slack-Firefighter of the Year, Jeff Hoxsey-Most Drills, Rob Underwood-Instructor of the Year.
Front Row; Carey Chaput-Safety Recognition, Bob Ettner Most Drills, Brenda VanLeeuwen-Mary Ziegler Spouse of the Year Award

