

MY OPINION FROM BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR

Taking liberties

BY CHRIS BRATT

Our senior senator from Oregon, Ron Wyden, is a lawyer with a 30-year career helping to make laws for our state and country. Everything considered, I think he has done a good job over those years representing the interests of the people in Oregon as well as introducing some fair and important environmental legislation. So it comes as a surprise and a great disappointment to me that the senator's latest proposed bill, the Oregon and California Land Grant Act of 2013 (his top priority in 2014) is such a disaster.

Last year, when drafting this bill, the senator stated, "It is not going to ignite an ideological war." But with extreme pressure mounting from all sides (members of Congress, the State of Oregon, timber interests, rural counties, scientists, environmentalists, etc.), the senator has decided to abandon the science-based management now employed on our public forestlands.

In addition, the new law that Wyden is proposing will restrict the public's right to protest and to petition the government for redress. Because he has resorted to these extreme measures, I foresee a firestorm building over the shortcomings of his

plan. If this or a similar bill is approved by Congress, I believe it will fan the flames of the environment-versus-economy debate once again.

I believe that by limiting citizen participation and judicial review and withdrawing the existing protections on 2.6-million acres of public forestland managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the environmental community nationwide will mobilize. Do we really want to go back to the polarizing arguments pitting struggling counties, job growth and doubling timber cuts up against existing laws, science and environmental protections?

I hope we don't try to return to the failed management and forest policies of the distant past. We have progressed far beyond managing our public forests exclusively for timber production, and "logging without laws" won't work anymore. There are too many other scientific, economic and social values that a forest provides that now need to be considered.

I'm further dismayed by the senator's expressed frustration with environmental activists. While stating that all the parties involved will have to

compromise under his plan, he singles out the environmentalists to do most of the compromising. Wyden calls some of us "The Stop Everything Brigade." He continues, "I don't believe every tree in America has a constitutional right to a lawsuit." (The proposed bill shows that he apparently doesn't believe a citizen has that right either.)

In the same harsh tone, he announces, "This bill stipulates that you get one bite of the apple," which means that a citizen or group will have only one chance (at the beginning of a ten-or-more year period) to challenge BLM's Final Forest Management Plan (Environmental Impact Statement). Thereafter, all individual timber sales will take place without any further environmental assessment, protest, appeal, legal challenge, or administrative or judicial review. Anyone concerned about BLM's timber sales or other actions will have to rely solely on BLM's management judgments (good luck with that).

The senator's bill and others being put forward are troubling echoes of the past with the same hostile tone and drastic solutions directed toward people who are trying to ensure that

our public forests and resources are safeguarded for future generations. The

fate of our forests can no longer be subjected to the whims of a dysfunctional Congress and angry politicians.

I do agree with Senator Wyden when he says, "Forest policy should be dictated by science, not lawyers." (He has just dictated a 180-page bill, apparently forgetting that he is a lawyer.) So let's suspend further action on these negative bills before Congress. Let's begin to draft a long-term science-based forest plan for these BLM lands with negotiated solutions that create the jobs, revenue for cash-strapped counties and a viable wood-products industry we would all like to see.

There can be a bright future for Oregon and our forests. All we need to get there is a focus on solutions that can bring us together. Rather than compromising the legacy of our unique resources, we will need a shared responsibility to maintain and improve our forests, counties and rural communities.

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Applegate Valley Community Grange news

BY JANIS MOHR-TIPTON

The Applegate Valley Community Grange (AVCG) hall was decked out in green this March for the return of the St. Patrick's Day Dinner. One hundred community guests and Grange members enjoyed a fine meal of corned beef, potatoes, carrots and cabbage, and tasty "lucky green" dessert cups, with most of the food provided through local sources. We had instrumental guitar music provided by Grange member John Unger, and local singer-songwriters Christina Duane and Butch Martin of Sons of the Oregon Trail.

We had a great crew of dedicated Grange members and community volunteer supporters working hard to prepare for the event, which made it a success. The Grange hopes to make this community event and other events grow so that the community can come together to share a good locally produced meal, visit with neighbors, and hear our talented local entertainers. We all know these community events take lots of hands working together, so consider joining the Grange and being a part of the Grange's commitment to serving our community. If you missed the event, check out our website at www.grange.org/applegatevalleycommunityor839/ events for more fun events to come this year. Or let us know if you'd like to be

on our contact list about future volunteer opportunities and events.

On May 24 and 25, the Grange hall was filled with a multifamily yard sale organized by Grange member Mary Ann Gum and community member Sandy Reynolds. It was a good event for the community to be able to shop for great deals under one roof. The proceeds from booth spaces benefited the Grange and the McKee Bridge Historical Society.

You may have noticed some changes in front of the Grange building. After the septic system was pumped, we made some upgrades by replacing worn parts and then planting new grass. We also recently added large boulders to prevent compaction from vehicles in order to protect the drain-field area and add longevity to the system. Grange members Jack Duggan, Paul Tipton, Peter Sturm and John Unger with his tractor provided all the labor of moving and setting the boulders in place.

Be sure to contact Janis Mohr-Tipton about volunteer opportunities. See you soon at our next event!

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Jack Duggan, Paul Tipton, Peter Sturm and John Unger (on his tractor) created a rock barrier to protect the drain-field area in front of the Grange building.

Update from the Applegate Food Pantry

BY ARLENE AND CLAUDE ARON

Our regular volunteer driver, Steve Weaver, will no longer be available to pick up our weekly food allocation from ACCESS after May, so we are looking for someone to take over this critical job. Steve has been doing this week in and week out for many years and we cannot thank him enough for his generosity and dedication to community service.

We need someone with a large pickup who is available to drive to the ACCESS warehouse in Medford on Monday mornings by 10:30 and bring back a load of food to Ruch School. The ACCESS warehouse folks will load the food onto your truck (usually two pallets worth) and we will unload it at Ruch School. We can reimburse you for your gas, but otherwise this is strictly a volunteer position. Please contact Arlene Aron at 541-951-6707 if you're interested in this community service opportunity.

In the last issue of the *Applegater*, we announced that we were going to offer our neighbors in the Applegate a way to participate in the Medford Food Project. Starting in February, we began stocking a few locations with the green canvas bags that the project uses. We had a very enthusiastic response, with 35 individuals who signed up and took a bag. Our local forest service office took this on as a group project and filled three bags themselves—a special thanks to them for that. Perhaps there are other organizations or businesses that would be willing to take this on as a group effort? While we were very happy with this initial response, we're hoping to build on it and do even better over time. Please consider signing up if you're able to do so—you'll be helping your neighbors in need and you'll feel good about it too!

A few things to note this time around:

- Some of the pickup and drop-off locations for the green bags had little activity, so we are going to limit the locations to just two from now on: the

Ruch Country Store and the Applegate Store. This will make it convenient for those who live on either end of the valley and will also simplify things for us.

- Because we had such a positive initial response, we have decided that we will distribute all the food we receive in the Applegate through the Applegate Food Pantry rather than merge it into the Medford Food Project.

- Though we had 35 people sign up and pick up bags, a few bags were not returned. If you forgot to turn in your bag on time, that's okay—please turn it in on the next drop-off date, which is Friday, June 13. If you've decided that you can't participate for some reason, please return the bag—we have a limited supply and must pay for additional bags. We will be happy to acquire more bags if we get more participation, but we can't afford to give them away to nonparticipants.

To recap, pick up a green bag at either the Ruch or Applegate stores. If this is your first time, put your name on the sign-up sheet with your email printed clearly and legibly (so we can send you a reminder every two months). Whenever you go shopping, pick up one extra can or package of nonperishable food and put it in the bag. Every two months on the second Friday of the month (June 13, August 8, October 10 and December 12 are the remaining dates in 2014), drop your full bag at the same location where you picked it up.

A big thank you to everyone who dropped off a green bag full of food in April, to the Ruch and Applegate stores for allowing us to use their facilities, to our wonderful volunteers who enable us to keep the pantry going, to Ruch School for providing a home to our pantry for many years, and to those generous donors and growers whose cash and food donations sustain us in our efforts to make sure that no one in our community goes hungry.

Arlene and Claude Aron
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