

OPINIONS

The rape of North Applegate Road

BY KRISTI COWLES

This past year, we Applegaters have witnessed one of the most heartless atrocities since I moved here seven years ago: the devastation of a huge portion of what once was a beautiful, pristine winding green forested road. Corporate agribusiness has entered the Applegate Valley and it's not going to stop until these soulless, land-grabbing billionaires are allowed to gobble up all the available land they can possibly acquire here. That is their goal. It appears that the state and counties have no laws in place to stop them from destroying North Applegate Road's scenic landscape! Huge, tall old trees have been hacked down carelessly. Long rows of high fences have been constructed that prevent our wild animals from getting to the Applegate River for shelter and water. The rest of what they bought has been basically flattened, with barriers dangerously close to the already narrow North Applegate Road.

Just beyond our Applegate Library, one sees nothing but wasteland—a dust bowl where grapevines will be planted and no doubt sprayed with Roundup and other chemicals, the runoff polluting our Applegate River. These new corporate owners have shown no sign of becoming members of our rural community—nor have they even shown any interest in who we are! The higher-ups will probably never even set foot in our valley, or, if they do, it will be to ogle their new kingdom, boosting their already humongous egos. Word on the street out here is that almost all of the harvested grapes will be shipped out of this valley.

A leisurely Sunday drive along North Applegate Road will reveal what these amorphous elites are up to—so far they

have easily scooped up 350 acres—with nothing to prevent them from bulldozing everything they bought. I've also heard through our Applegate grapevine that the intention is to purchase at least another 750 acres along our river. I sure hope that's not true! Acres upon acres of barren, flattened, brown, dusty, ugly terrain, with long deer-proof fences next to the road, have replaced green pastures, beautiful stands of trees and lush, wild greenery. Even trees standing near the road have been chopped down, for absolutely no reason except to make it easy for miles of fencing to go up in their place. Devoid of any conscience whatsoever, eschewing consultation with our community as a whole, they have but one obvious goal in mind—huge future profits!

A disaster of this magnitude should never have been allowed to occur and will likely cause flooding during the rainy season—putting our Applegate Library in jeopardy. Obviously much stiffer zoning laws in both Jackson and Josephine Counties are necessary to prevent this unscrupulous disruption from ever happening again. Our gentle way of life in this valley, not to mention all of southwestern Oregon, has clearly been threatened. I've always loved driving past the small vineyards and wineries, owned by local people who care, who are involved members of our community, and who have chosen to really live here!

This greedy action raises a quintessential question: Is sweeping corporate agriculture what we want to see happen throughout the Applegate?

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Rogue energy consciousness

BY ALAN JOURNET

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute, and the US Department of Agriculture Climate Change Program released reports recently underlining the conclusion that climate change is happening here and now, we are responsible, and it is destined to compromise the livability of our planet for future generations unless we address it promptly. Collectively, they confirm conclusions that could be disputed only by someone ignorant of science or exhibiting malicious intent. On this issue, it is impossible to be too alarmist.

Rogue Valley residents should understand what we are doing to cause climate change and how we might reduce our contribution.

One 2011 analysis revealed that Rogue Valley greenhouse gas emissions originate from three general activities:

Fully 44 percent result from materials we buy that are produced elsewhere and shipped here, the energy cost of making them and shipping them to us being assigned to us. The famous Earth Day motto, "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle," is germane here; the less we buy, the more locally made materials we buy, the fewer emissions we cause.

Our transportation in private or commercial vehicles and public transit along with the transport of locally made materials results in 32 percent of our emissions. Reducing our fossil fuel-based travel and employing more energy efficient modes will reduce this component.

Finally, energy production results in 24 percent of our emissions. About three quarters of this (equaling 18 percent of total emissions) is public utility or industrial power plant production of electricity consumed in our residences and businesses. It also includes natural gas we use for heating. Any reduction in our use of utility-generated electricity will reduce our carbon emissions.

Another 2011 report evaluated how our region might increase reliance on clean energy while reducing our reliance on electricity generated from fossil fuel sources. Focusing on Jackson and Josephine Counties, this study indicated that we used about three million megawatt hours (MWh) of electricity in 2005. Of this, less than a third was derived from renewable sources (largely hydropower), leaving over two million MWh derived from carbon polluting fossil fuels. The study also concluded that using a combination of increased biomass burning, wind, solar, hydropower, and anaerobic digestion could reduce our fossil fuel needs, and thus our greenhouse gas emissions by an additional 229,000 MWh.

This study also concluded that increasing our energy efficiency could have a far greater impact than all these renewable energy generation techniques combined. While increasing energy use efficiency does not generate energy, this analysis suggested that increasing efficiency could reduce our fossil fuel consumption (currently 2.1 million MWh) for electricity by a little over a third. Furthermore, if we added the renewable energy generation potential suggested here, we could reduce the fossil fuel electricity need by 43 percent.

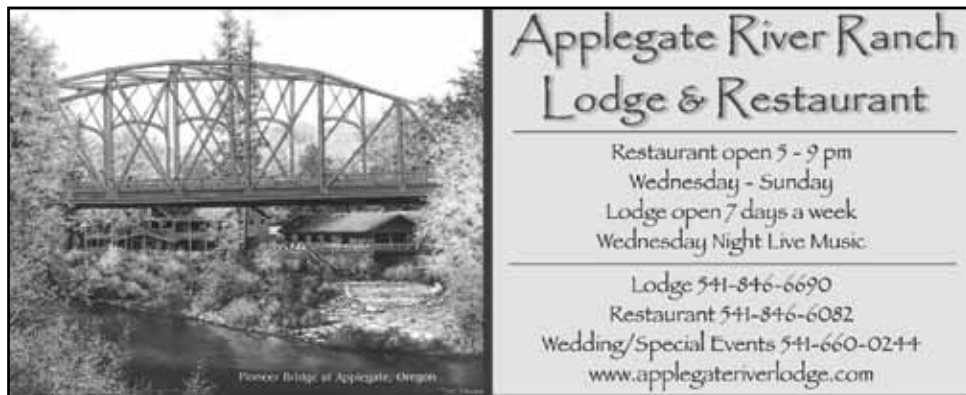
Since electrical energy generation accounts for about 18 percent of our regional greenhouse gas emissions, undertaking these steps could reduce our emissions by 43 percent of that 18 percent, or nearly 8 percent overall. While not all of us can install solar or wind generation to substitute for fossil-fuel-generated electricity, we should do it if we can. However, we all can address what is called "the low-hanging fruit," namely, increasing our energy-use efficiency. The most effective ways to enhance our individual residential energy-use efficiency are (in rank order): improvements in space conditioning (heating, ventilation and air conditioning or HVAC) such as improved insulation with reduced leakage, followed by water heating, and consumer electronics. These are followed by enhancing home office equipment, increasing home lighting efficiency, and improving refrigeration.

Meanwhile, in the industrial/commercial arena, the most effective targets for improving energy efficiency are lighting and HVAC, followed by office equipment, food processing, external lighting, and refrigeration.

While these residential and commercial efforts certainly require investment, ultimately they all save money.

What each of us does individually will not make a colossal dent in saving the planet for future generations. Even if regionally we all do the maximum we can do, the impact will not be sufficient. But, we are all, individually and collectively, confronted with a serious moral and ethical challenge. Should each of us take the moral high road and do the maximum we can do to protect this planet for future generations, or should we do nothing and just contribute further to the problem? The same question applies collectively at the city, county, state, and national levels. The US should not be lagging, but should be leading the world to solve this problem.

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