

## Revitalizing the Applegate Adaptive Management Area

BY DON BOUCHER

The Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA) is one of ten AMAs that were part of the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan. AMAs were established to allow innovative and creative approaches to resource land management. The learning from these new approaches was to be exported to other areas to help them be more efficient and responsive. Adaptive management describes an approach to land management, and an "Adaptive Management Area" refers to a specific place. The Applegate AMA refers to most of the Applegate River watershed, which totals approximately 500,000 acres. Roughly 66 percent of the watershed is federally managed.

**In 1998, after an extensive amount of analysis was completed,** the US Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) developed the Applegate AMA Guide, intended to initiate and guide the planning process. The document was highly visionary and forward-thinking for its time. Now the Applegate AMA has come to another exciting point as we pick up where we left off, utilizing over a dozen ecological assessments that were completed between 1994 and 2012.

Though various projects on the Applegate Ranger District (now part of the Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District) were implemented in the late 1990s, there is renewed interest to use the AMA Guide to develop a collaborative AMA strategy to implement needed restoration projects, such as vegetation management, wildlife and aquatic habitat improvement, hazardous fuels reduction in the interface area adjacent to homes, infrastructure maintenance, and other projects that will help maintain a more resilient ecosystem able to withstand major disturbance agents such as fire or insects or a changing climate.

"The forest service is excited to utilize the analysis already completed in the Applegate AMA to develop an implementation strategy for restoration work in the near future. We will build on the great work that has come before and work toward an all-lands collaborative approach," said Siskiyou Mountains District ranger Donna Mickley.

**Many land managers, organizations and individuals recognize the importance** of working together to manage this complex ecosystem including USFS, BLM, the Oregon Department of Forestry, Jackson

and Josephine counties, local rural fire departments, the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council, and Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative, to a name a few.

**Natural ecosystems are enormously complex.** We recognize and assume that we cannot know everything about the Applegate watershed and its ecosystem. Choosing to use adaptive management provides us with an approach that allows us to:

- Be proactive and anticipate new information, explicitly recognizing the uncertainties.
- Design management as an experiment.
- Use information gained from implementation and monitoring to improve management practices.

**Recently, USFS formed an interdisciplinary natural resource team** to compile existing data and information from the 1990s as well as from current analyses, to become familiar with current management and public values, to reach out to local communities for assistance with establishing priority treatment areas, and to identify what type of partnership and collaborative opportunities will be most effective. The intent is to look at the AMA Guide through a new lens and implement an all-lands approach that includes not only federal, state and county lands but also private lands from landowners interested in doing land restoration. This approach

acknowledges the many benefits that nature provides as well as the challenges that we collectively face in today's rapidly changing ecological and sociopolitical environments, regardless of jurisdictional boundary lines.

**The next steps** planned for the Applegate AMA between now and the fall of 2015 are:

- USFS/BLM begins engagement with communities and potential partners and collaborators.
- Natural resource specialists complete additional field reviews to refine management needs and objectives consistent with the vision described in the AMA Guide.
- We begin work on a strategy for the entire AMA, focusing on high-priority restoration needs.
- We engage with communities to collaboratively develop site-specific projects to address restoration needs.
- We initiate the environmental analysis process.

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**Note:** For a map of the Applegate Adaptive Management Area, please go to the home page of our website at [www.applegater.org](http://www.applegater.org) (under "Latest Issue").

## Open range: A history of questions and controversy

BY HEATHER MURPHY

For over a century, the phrase "the American West" has evoked images of cattle browsing on a hardscrabble landscape. The region's cultural heritage is so inexorably linked with livestock that it's effortless to make the association. "Open range" might conjure the same image, but most people are unfamiliar with the term "grazing allotments" and more familiar with the fact that "open range" is a phrase that has long been fraught with drama and intrigue.

Except for incorporated cities, Jackson and Josephine counties are designated open range. This means that livestock are allowed to graze anywhere in those counties on privately owned lands unless those privately owned lands are fenced.

Grazing on *federal* land is another matter. Jason Smith and his wife Liza of the Applegate hold permits for grazing allotments with both the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Forest Service (USFS). Jason, whose great-great grandfather was a McKee, has been around cattle all his life, but he thinks that the future of the business is in question as they wait to see the effects of the proposed Siskiyou Crest National Monument on their business. Jason worries that he might have to sell the cattle and "just start raising hay or whatever," though he adds, "who knows what the outcome will be."

Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center, which proposed the idea for the monument in 2010, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and fostering the health and welfare of local ecosystems in our area. It has, in the past, compensated ranchers willing to relinquish their permits. Executive director Joseph Vaile said, "What's interesting about grazing is that it's an ongoing activity, chronic, if you will—it's not one event, like a timber sale, so the damage is ongoing."

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and fostering the rights of Oregon ranchers. The two organizations clash over the monument and the permits for the allotments, but this is standard fare for the grazing issue.

The permit system's history for grazing livestock is a complicated one, marked by confusion and controversy that dates back to the late 19th century, when ranchers who were accustomed to running their cattle on large expanses of land were faced with the Forest Reserve Act.

Passed by Congress in 1891, the Forest Reserve Act allowed the president to set aside large tracts of public land in reserves and possibly exclude grazing from those parcels altogether. For several years, the ranchers' standing in the reserves was uncertain, but the milieu of the West had already been carved out by the survival and persistence of the early pioneers and by the settlers who arrived after the Homestead Act of 1862, eager to be part of the privatization of the Western frontier.

Public opinion was swayed by the efforts of John Muir, a high-profile preservationist who advocated for complete cessation of grazing on the reserves, and by conservationist Gifford Pinchot, who favored the idea of *regulated* grazing. Ranchers were held in limbo as decisions were made, reversed, amended, and fought about in court.

To oversimplify, in 1911 the forest reserves were renamed "National Forest," and the Supreme Court ruled that the Department of Agriculture could regulate grazing on the open range and collect fees. "Allotments" were established with specific boundaries, and an annual permit system was initiated for livestock foraging. Cronyism, black-market permits, and overgrazing became all the rage.



Will the Smith's cattle be able to continue to graze on federal lands? Stay tuned.

At the behest of ranchers, in 1934 the Taylor Grazing Act was passed, and grazing districts, along with grazing advisory boards, were established. The Department of the Interior was to oversee the management of the open range and issue the permits, dependent upon environmental conditions, and work with the permit holders to ensure they complied with rules and regulations spelled out by Congress. In 1946, this branch of grazing management came to be called the Bureau of Land Management.

In the Applegate, most of the federal land used for open range is managed by USFS. "We have a lot of grazing because this is one of the things we were founded on," said Mark Hocken, USFS range management specialist for the Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District. Mark works with the Smith family and other local families who hold ten-year "term grazing permits," as well as with organizations such as KS Wild, in accordance with rules specified by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA). "We constantly work on our NEPA, and that's where the public has a voice. They can speak out about their feelings and ideas about the

grazing and we consider all that input when we make our decisions," said Mark.

Jim Whittington with the Medford District BLM said there is nothing currently in the works for action concerning KS Wild's monument proposal.

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### Definitions and clarifications

**Open range:** An area wherein livestock may lawfully be permitted to run at large (oregon.gov).

**Closed range:** Not included as open range are all incorporated cities, which are "livestock districts" or "closed range" (oregonlegislature.gov).

**Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument:** The proposed Siskiyou Crest National Monument is different from the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management as part of the National Landscape Conservation System and was established in a presidential proclamation by President Bill Clinton on June 9, 2000 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cascade-Siskiyou\\_National\\_Monument](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cascade-Siskiyou_National_Monument)).

**Ed. Note:** One of our Facebook readers asked us to write this article about open range, and we were happy to comply! If you have a story idea you would like to see in the Applegater, please let us know. Email [gater@applegater.org](mailto:gater@applegater.org) or visit our Facebook page and leave us a message. We look forward to hearing from you.