

Applegate Neighborhood Network is evolving

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

The Applegate Neighborhood Network (ANN) is a coalition of local residents, landowners, and conservation-, community-, and recreation-based nonprofit groups. Its members have been working on public land management issues in the Applegate Valley for over a decade, advocating for community and conservation values. Our mission is to “sustain the integrity of the environment and human communities in the Applegate Valley through collaboration, community activism, stewardship, and science. We promote wildland conservation, ecological restoration, a sustainable rural economy, and community engagement in land management planning.”

Over the years, ANN has evolved from an informal community association into a more organized, watershed-wide organization. Our goal is the promotion of conservation- and community-based values in federal land management within the Applegate Watershed. We are creating a forum for the various conservation and community-based organizations in the Applegate Valley to promote shared visions and goals. The concept is to create a network of residents and advocates for the Applegate Valley that will share resources and support grassroots community activism. We look to support a sustainable rural economy and to promote a long-term vision for land management in our watershed.

For too long, local residents have been compartmentalized and isolated in mountain canyons. The ridges have divided our communities into watersheds. The watersheds are all connected, but often the human communities have been isolated by the mountains that surround them or the distance between them. ANN works to bridge that divide by connecting and protecting watersheds and providing local residents with a network of support and solidarity within the Applegate watershed as a whole.

For some time, ANN has worked to address community concerns with the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) large Nedsbar Timber Sale in the Little and Upper Applegate Valleys. We have created the Nedsbar Community Alternative, a conservation-, restoration-, and fuel-reduction-based strategy steeped in local knowledge and perspective. The Community Alternative has been widely supported by area residents and will be analyzed alongside the BLM’s own alternatives in the upcoming Nedsbar Environmental Assessment (EA). ANN’s proactive work on the Community Alternative has empowered local residents and provided a template for community supported, environmentally responsible land management in the Applegate.

Our work has not stopped there. We have also conducted extensive monitoring of Nedsbar Timber Sale units and the BLM’s tree removal mark. And we have paid special attention to units in late seral or old-growth stands, in roadless areas, and other sensitive habitats. Our results have been publicized on the Siskiyou Crest Blog at www.thesiskiyoucrest.blogspot.com.

Using the knowledge gained through these monitoring efforts, ANN has advocated for the cancelation of inappropriate timber sale units along with more sustainable and ecologically appropriate treatments in areas that currently need restoration thinning. ANN has many concerns with the BLM’s proposed action (Alternative 4) for the Nedsbar Timber Sale, and we hope to see them addressed before release of the EA. We also hope to organize rigorous and substantive public comment when the EA is released. The EA is scheduled for release in May 2016.

On US Forest Service (USFS) land, ANN has also begun working collaboratively on the Upper Applegate Road Project, a commercial timber sale in the Upper Applegate Valley, and on projects within the Applegate Adaptive Management Area. We are also engaging in the Williams IVM Project, a timber sale and fuel-reduction project on BLM lands in the mountains above Williams.

ANN is also preparing to begin conducting off-road vehicle monitoring in the mountains surrounding Ruch and Little Applegate on BLM lands, as well as botanical areas, roadless areas, Research Natural Areas, and backcountry non-motorized areas on USFS land. Our goal is to document and address environmental impacts associated with off-road vehicle use.

ANN intends to continue monitoring, advocacy, and collaboration on future federal land management projects. We also intend to address other issues of concern to the community, including fire safety, pollinator conservation, inappropriate target shooting on public land that is threatening the safety of local communities, off-road vehicle damage, and non-motorized trail construction and maintenance.

As issues arise that create conservation and community concerns, ANN will be addressing them and offering solutions. Join us on the first Wednesday of every month at 7 pm, usually at Applegate Library, 18485 N Applegate Road. Visit our website at www.applegateneighborhood.net.

Luke Ruediger

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Applegate community makes presentation to agencies

BY JACK DUGGAN

Opposite Day is January 24, but a reversal of sorts took place in the Applegate on March 30 of this year.

The Applegate community is familiar with meetings presented by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service (USFS), or both. But on March 30 the community, in the form of the Applegate Neighborhood Network (ANN), held a meeting at the Applegate Fire District’s new community building, inviting the USFS and the BLM to listen to Applegate residents present their experience and perspectives on public land management.

Community presenters included Luke Ruediger, who outlined ANN’s vision, scope and mission. He also presented on behalf of Klamath Forest Alliance, showing an incredible series of slides portraying both good and bad forestry practices. Luke has been walking the ground throughout the Applegate Valley for many years.

For the next hour, agency folks heard from David Calahan, Applegate Trails Association; Hope Robertson, Siskiyou Upland Trails Association; Chant Thomas, Threatened and Endangered Little Applegate; Cheryl Bruner, Williams Community Forest Project; Jack Duggan, Forest Creek; Lydia Doleman, Speak for the Trees; Amy Schlotterback, Klamath-Siskiyou Wild; Suzie Savoie, Klamath-Siskiyou Native Seeds; James Kramer, Silver Springs Nursery; and Tom Powell, representing small farms and the Siskiyou Co-op. That hour covered more than 200 years of boots-on-the-ground knowledge of the Applegate Valley.

After a short break, Chris Bratt presented an extensive history of forest

management, agency agreements, and planning documents in the Applegate. Chris was followed by Hope Robertson with a well-documented presentation on the recreation economy in the Applegate. (Spoiler alert: quiet recreation wins!)

Following this wealth of information, Chant Thomas provided some perspectives on the Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA), Chris Bratt having provided a comprehensive background in his history presentation.

Chant then summarized the meeting. He asked the folks from BLM and USFS to look around the room at the community members who had given their day to help illustrate the history, status, and needs of public lands where they live. He pointed out that these people are well-educated, a few doctorates among them, that they have decades of on-the-ground experience, and that they want the public land managers to utilize that community knowledge in developing their plans.

Government employees were then given an opportunity to comment and ask questions. At first there was little response, then a series of brief comments along the “food-for-thought” line. Dayne Barron, BLM Medford District manager, offered an impromptu speech about how important it was to BLM to collaborate with the community and how much he appreciated the opportunity to hear from the Applegate.

Hopefully this will not be the last time the Applegate community comes together to invite our largest absentee landowner neighbors to come—not to speak to us, but to listen.

Jack Duggan • shanachie@hughes.net

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Applegater,

I have lived in Grants Pass/Josephine County most of my life. Last summer we attended a wedding out in the Applegate Valley. I had not been out that way for a long time. It was shocking to see so many wind machines ruining the lives of such a peaceful area. How very sad.

As you talk of “Grow with respect” in your recent issue, we are dumbfounded at what many consider normal. Wow! From wind machines rattling every acre to growing pot, the once remarkable valley is turning into a place I would be wary of.

Unfortunately, wind machines have invaded our area of Helms Road in the Jerome Prairie area. What was once a peaceful dairy, then bulb farm, has become a chemical polluter with the noise of five hovering helicopters at night ruining land values.

Reap what you sow, dear Applegate Valley. Profits are not always the bottom line. Terri Zeutzius, Grants Pass, OR

Voices of the Applegate

Voices of the Applegate, our community choir directed by Blake Weller, ended the spring session with two concerts: the first one on April 1 at the Old Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, and the second at the Applegate River Lodge on April 3. These concerts were well received by the audiences, and the choir was full of enthusiasm in presenting the programs. The music selections were: four madrigals from the 15th and 16th centuries; two contemporary spirituals, “Festival Sanctus” and “Oseh Shalom”; and two Beatles songs, “Blackbird” and “Here Comes the Sun.”

Voices of the Applegate will begin another session in the fall with the first rehearsal on Wednesday, September 7, at Ruch Library. We welcome new members. Sessions are 12 weeks long, including the concerts, and the cost is \$55 per session, which pays for the director, the cost of the venues, and scholarships when available.

For more information, call Joan Peterson at 541-846-6988.



Burn reminder

Before burning outdoors any time of year, check with your fire district to make sure that day is an official burn day and not a *NO* burn day.

No illegal burning!

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