

OPINIONS

Behind the Green Door | Losing our forests 32,249 trees at a time

BY CHRIS BRATT



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Recently, efforts to increase timber cutting in the Applegate's public forests have accelerated. In September the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) advertised 32,249 merchantable trees to be auctioned off from the Nedsbar Timber Sale. It seems that the BLM, the supposed guardian of these public lands, has given in to political and economic interests that value commodity extraction over protection of irreplaceable resources.

After working cooperatively for over two decades trying to put these local public forests back in good working order, we're again faced with increased forest degradation. BLM has returned to a maximized and dominant logging approach to forest management. They have dropped the Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA) plans that were "intended to be prototypes of how forest communities might be sustained." It also makes a mockery of our two-year effort to work collaboratively on a Citizens Alternative for the Nedsbar Timber Sale.

Needless to say, BLM's unwelcome action to bring back an excessively narrow timber-dominant interpretation of the 1937 Oregon and California

Lands Act (O&C Act) has raised strong objections in our community. Many of us feel that the BLM is evading the multiple- and sustainable-use mandate of the O&C Act by no longer giving equal consideration to "protecting watersheds, regulating streamflow, and contributing to the economic stability of local communities and industries, and providing recreational [facilities]" despite the multiple- and sustainable-use mandate of the O&C Act. These original mandates for O&C Act forestlands have been further strengthened by the Clean Air and Water acts, the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and BLM's Federal Land Policy Management Act. All these laws contain additional mandated responsibilities that the BLM must adhere to and enforce.

It seems the BLM has now been forced (from many quarters) into an unsustainable management plan. Numerous politicians, representatives of Oregon's timbered counties, the forest products industry, and some BLM managers are clamoring for huge increases in the number of trees to be cut from our public forestlands in western

Oregon. Some O&C counties are demanding that 500-million board feet of timber be cut annually in perpetuity. Cutting this massive amount of timber every year could wipe out hundreds of species and eventually destroy the forest itself. But these folks continue to believe this overcutting is the cure-all for putting money into county coffers and providing the timber industry with logs and jobs.

I think these people who support the BLM's overcutting scheme are looking for pie in the sky. Their economic and timber goals are questionable, especially here in the Applegate. BLM's maximum timber production plan not only comes at the expense of the environment, but it also has some technical and economic questions that need addressing.

Take, for example, the Nedsbar Timber Sale mentioned earlier. The BLM put their timber sale plan (alternative 4) out to potential bidders, but didn't receive one bid. Could it be that selling over 32,249 trees for only \$231,014.60 (that's \$7.16 per tree) still isn't a moneymaker for loggers and that any county proceeds will end up being chicken feed? I find it very disturbing (and hope you do too) that our valley's magnificent, towering

Douglas fir trees (32,249 of them with an average diameter of 12.8") are offered at the giveaway price of \$7.16 each. These trees are definitely worth more left standing in place, still growing and absorbing carbon as part of a warming climate solution.

Because the beautiful, unique, and slow-growing forests we have here in the Applegate are experiencing greater fire danger than ever, as well as drought, warming temperatures, and insect outbreaks, they require responsible management. Management is made even more difficult here because these BLM forestlands are checkerboarded with other landowners' lands in difficult terrain. These and other factors make logging in the Applegate harder to deal with—and less lucrative.

The BLM has discarded adaptive management and their own mission to "manage and conserve the public lands...under our mandate of multiple use and sustained yield." Certainly there is no justification for BLM's backsliding and putting extreme emphasis on cutting more trees while all other resources go begging.

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Concern about Nedsbar rhetoric

BY KEN CHAPMAN

From the outset, I have been concerned about the rhetoric surrounding the proposed Nedsbar logging sale. Before any final decision had been made, signs appeared simplistically stating "Stop Nedsbar." Early posts about the project included unsupportable conclusions about logging. One post from a group in Williams talked about the forest being "destroyed" and claimed that the project area represented "the last best older forest." Really? Did they mean anywhere, or just in the Little Applegate?

Later in the summer, the rhetoric heated up and the civility trended down. At an informational tour of the Nedsbar project area, an opponent of the project asked the BLM representative how she could justify her humanity, thus proving that the question should have been asked in front of a mirror. Later, after the BLM announced its decision, the spokesperson for the Applegate Neighborhood Network, a person I know and respect, said that decision represented a "middle finger" to residents. Obviously, a person could read the decision and disagree with it. A fair reading of the document, however, would not conclude that it was a "middle finger" to anyone.

More important than the factual misrepresentation of the decision, however, was the fact that the rhetoric was inflammatory. The "middle finger" is often the start of road-rage incidents

and fights of all varieties and venues. It is, whether intentional or not, a dog whistle to the unbalanced and/or the unprincipled.

So it was probably not coincidental that shortly after the inflammatory reaction, some wannabe criminals, with all of the courage of Internet trolls, anonymously announced that they had spiked trees within the project area. Better forest health through tree spiking—that's definitely thinking out of the box!

Having made an inflammatory response to a BLM proposal that did not include tree spiking and the implication of violence against opponents of their plan, you would think that the spokesperson for the Applegate Neighborhood Network would have been purple with rage at the serious implications of a tree-spiking incident. You would be wrong. Acting like an understanding parent of a rascally child, the spokesperson made a statement to the effect that while anger was justified, violence was not.

It is unfortunate that the moderate language used against the tree spikers was not used to characterize opposition to the BLM's decision. While there is no obligation to agree with BLM, responsible citizenship would seem to include the belief that a differing opinion is not itself proof of bad intent.

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Veterans' outreach program comes to the Applegate

Josephine and Jackson County Veterans Service Offices offer assistance to veterans and their dependents in obtaining benefits provided for them by county, state, and federal law. In an outreach program that began in November, veterans service officers are now available in the Applegate to help veterans from 11 am to 2 pm on the first Wednesday of every month at Applegate Valley Fire District Station #1.

"We are excited to bring our services to the Applegate to support the local communities. I'd like to thank the fire chief and the board for allowing us to utilize Station #1. It's an ideal location," said Lisa Pickart, the Josephine County Veterans Service Office program manager.

Applegate Valley Fire District Station #1 is located at 18489 North Applegate Road, next to the Applegate Library. For more information, contact the Josephine County Veterans Service Office at 541-474-5454 or the Jackson County Veterans Service Office at 541-774-8214.

Pacifica Arts Guild's Winter Arts Festival
Saturday, December 3, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
 Pacifica, 14615 Water Gap Road, Williams
 25 local artists with High-Quality Handmade Jewelry, Ceramics, Fiber Creations, Leather, Photographs, Paintings & more.

Live Music, Good Food, Children's Activities
Tours of Historic Pond House
FREE Admission

Contact peg@pacificagarden.org or 541-846-1100. www.pacificagarden.org

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE UNLIMITED
www.apwc.info

Contact us today we may be able to offer technical assistance, project development assistance, assistance in procuring funding resources for fuels reduction, irrigation efficiency, riparian restoration, and stream habitat improvement projects to landowners in the Applegate Watershed.

Look for more information on our Lecture Series in January on our Facebook page or our website.

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"promoting ecological, economic and community well-being in the Applegate watershed through on-the-ground projects and strategic collaborations."

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY