

OPINIONS

Behind the Green Door | Make America green again

BY CHRIS BRATT

The Sierra Club recently sent us (my wife, Joan, and I are members) two separate mailings. One was a "Certificate of Appreciation," which honored our "45 years of outstanding leadership preserving, protecting and enjoying America's great outdoors, wildlands, and wildlife." The certificate reminded me that our family has been on the right side of environmental causes for ages, and that protection of our precious natural resources continues to require a long-term commitment from concerned individuals, families, and communities. It also reminded me that future generations, including our grandchildren, are relying on all of us to leave them a healthy, peaceful, and functioning world environment. A planet that right now requires what a past Sierra Club executive director called "CPR" (conservation, protection, and restoration).

The second Sierra Club communication was a call to action for their 2.7 million members to defend our natural legacy of public lands and waters. The message outlined possible threats from the Trump administration and Congress to our amazing national and natural holdings that include:

- More than 400 national parks, 560 national wildlife refuges, and nearly 250 million acres of other lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).
- 154 national forests (Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest and the BLM Medford District manage 66 percent or 324,669 acres in the Applegate.)
- 873 federally recognized National Conservation Areas encompassing almost 32 million acres.
- 129 national monuments, of which two are in the Applegate's backyard.
- 680 wilderness areas protecting over 106 million acres in 44 states, including 16,709 acres in the Red Buttes Wilderness in the Applegate.
- National historic sites, battlefields, recreation areas, national preserves, memorials and more.

All Americans are the heirs to these magnificent places, so let's not allow private economic interests to carve up our public lands for profit.

If you want to ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy them as we do, become an active Applegate stakeholder and volunteer for a local or regional environmental organization.

Most frightening are President Donald Trump's executive orders, which negatively affect social-justice issues and threaten to end the government's role in protecting the environment. He has proposed cutting the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget by 31 percent and EPA jobs by 20 percent (3,200). He also wants to end EPA programs and regulations that would help reduce the effects of climate change (which he believes is a hoax).

Another executive order requires a review of the Antiquities Act of 1906 to look for what Trump's administration calls "government overreach." After this review, it's possible that our local Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument designation could be removed or diminished, along with other national monuments.

Further, the Trump administration has inspired lawsuits by Oregon timber companies and associated groups to challenge the BLM's failure to sell more timber, which is what they believe is called for in the Oregon and California (O&C) Lands Act of 1937. Other timber-industry lawsuits assert that the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, managed by the BLM, has improperly allowed

O&C lands to be included within its borders. This new administration is gearing up to cut a lot more timber by lowering protections on a lot more local public land.

The Donald Trump presidency has popularized anti-environmentalism through its support for more conservative family values, private-property rights, and political self-determination for rural communities. This has attracted disgruntled people who are fearful of their economic future and suspicious of government, which has used these anxieties to compromise environmental laws, ethics, science, and public participation.

All concerned people, especially environmentalists, must develop a smarter approach to solving these economic and social problems. We need to come up with proposals to keep rural areas viable, create local jobs, and organize these alienated folks. In the meantime, we must face these threats to a sustainable environment head-on and continue to give America CPR, making it green again.

Let me know if you're on board.
Chris Bratt • 541-846-6988



Chris Bratt

Unsafe shooting on Anderson Butte

BY NEAL ANDERSON

Anderson Butte is an increasingly popular recreation area for hikers, equestrians, bicyclists, hunters, motorcyclists, and people just out for a scenic drive. Located in the Little Applegate watershed, south of Jacksonville and just west of Medford, Anderson Butte totals 11,742 acres, most of which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Generations of people have grown up learning to shoot and hunt on Anderson Butte, and it has been a remote escape for many. However, as Medford and the wildland-urban interface (WUI) have expanded, Anderson Butte is no longer secluded. Many homes now surround Anderson Butte, and hundreds of people are regularly out in the woods or on the trails that crisscross the area.

When Anderson Butte was logged, roads were constructed by cutting into the ridges; landings for logging were created by leveling land on the outside curves of the roads. Now these areas are often used for target shooting. The land drops away

from these staging areas, and bullets not stopped by targets can go out into the trees and land below.

What may look like unpopulated forest often has a house or a trail only a few hundred feet away. Today, 70 homes—inhabited by people, their pets and livestock—are situated within one-mile radii of popular shooting sites. Bullets fired from some of these landings have a range as far as five miles, based on shells collected at the sites. In January 2016, a bullet coming from a popular shooting site on Anderson Butte went through the door of a home about a mile away.

That hasn't been the only incident. The complex of ridges and valleys of Anderson Butte creates short sight lines, making it challenging to see or hear where shooting is coming from and trapping motorcyclists and equestrians on public trails for fear of being hit if they move.

Bullets from Anderson Butte target-shooting sites have whizzed by hikers on the Sterling Mine Ditch Trail, hit trees on

private land while people were working outside, and hit outbuildings.

Instead of shooting out into space from those landings, some people have shot at targets across or down the roads. This illegal activity is dangerous for those driving vehicles and their passengers, especially since there are many blind curves on those roads. Sometimes people have shot across roads using the banks uphill of those roads as backdrops; shooters may not be aware that many trails for recreation are above those banks.

A group of people, including homeowners near Anderson Butte, recreationists, and members of the National Rifle Association, has contacted the BLM, our elected representatives, and the sheriff's department about unsafe target shooting on Anderson Butte. Recognizing the danger, the BLM positioned concrete barriers and posted signs to discourage unsafe shooting. The BLM continues to communicate to those participating in recreational target shooting that firearms must be discharged toward a backstop sufficient to stop a bullet's forward progress.

The BLM and the sheriff's department will increase patrols on Anderson Butte to help curb unsafe shooting. These efforts are not trying to curtail Second

Amendment rights, and no one wants to limit the actions of those who follow safety principles while enjoying public BLM land. Most of those shooting from those Anderson Butte sites simply don't realize how many people they are putting at risk.

Unsafe target shooting affects people who enjoy recreation on Anderson Butte and people who live nearby. We hope that people going to Anderson Butte for target practice will obey these basic gun-safety rules:

Shoot only if you know what is beyond your target and if you have a sizeable backdrop that will catch any bullets missing your target—otherwise, you are putting other people at risk.

Don't shoot across or down a road—such shooting is illegal, and others use these roads.

Some local organizations offer free gun-safety courses. Shooters can also become members of the Medford Rifle and Pistol Club in Central Point or the Jackson County Sports Park Shooting Complex in White City, with one of the best shooting ranges in southern Oregon.

Thank you.

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OPINION PIECES AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opinion pieces and letters to the editor represent the opinion of the author, not that of the *Applegater* or the Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc. As a community-based newsmagazine, we receive diverse opinions on different topics. We honor these opinions, but object to personal attacks and reserve the right to edit accordingly. Opinion pieces and letters to the editor **must focus on the Applegate Valley.**

Opinion pieces are limited to 700 words; letters are limited 450 words. Submissions will be edited for grammar and length. Opinion pieces **must** include publishable contact information (phone number and/or email address). All letters **must** be signed, with a full street address or PO Box and phone number. **Anonymous letters and opinion pieces will not be published.** Individual letters and opinion pieces may or may not be published.

Email opinion pieces and letters to the editor to gater@applegater.org or mail to *Applegater*, Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc., PO Box 14, Jacksonville, OR 97530.

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If you're willing and able, email gater@applegater.org by July 1.

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