

OPINIONS

The BLM’s categorical exclusions and the 2016 RMP

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

This summer, while fires burned in the mountains of southern Oregon and smoke filled the region, the Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was busy approving the first two timber sales under the controversial 2016 Resource Management Plan (RMP). These timber sales included the Clean Slate Timber Sale outside Selma and the Griffin Half Moon Timber Sale near Howard Prairie. Both timber sales were designed to maximize timber outputs and reinstitute clear-cut logging (rebranded as “regeneration” and even “restoration” logging) on public lands. They were specifically approved to produce timber for the BLM’s annual O&C (Oregon and California Railroad Revested Lands) timber quota, while admittedly increasing fuel loads and future fire severity.

Both timber sales propose to convert a currently mature, fire-resistant forest into a young, regenerating forest that is both highly flammable and susceptible to high-severity fire effects. Perhaps for this reason, both timber sales contain the exact same language in their environmental assessments regarding fuel loads and future fire severity. The BLM states, “For the first one to five years after harvest, these stands would remain a slash-fuel type until the shrubs, grasses, and planted trees become established. After the establishment of regeneration, these stands would move into a brush-fuel type. Brush-fuel types are more volatile and are susceptible to high rates of fire-caused mortality. Stands could exhibit higher flame lengths, rates of spread, and fire intensity. Fires started within these stands could be difficult to initially attack and control...For 5 to 20 years following planting, the overall fire hazard would increase in these stands.”

According to the BLM, implementation of the 2016 RMP “will contribute to restoring fire-adapted ecosystems in the dry forest landscape of southern Oregon by increasing fire resiliency. The Proposed RMP will increase stand-level fire resistance and decrease stand-level fire hazard from current conditions.” Despite these claims the BLM has yet to deliver and is instead proposing to increase fuel loads adjacent to rural communities. After the smoke and fire of 2018, we should expect something better from our public land managers. We also sincerely hope such reckless logging activities are not implemented in the upcoming Middle Applegate Timber Sale on BLM land near Applegate communities.

Here in the Applegate Valley, implementation of the RMP has also

meant elimination of the widely popular Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA). The AMA was meant to encourage public involvement in the land-management planning process and a localized approach to managing Applegate Valley watersheds. Despite continually promising to “work in the spirit of the AMA,” BLM land managers have instead chosen to circumvent the public involvement process by publishing categorical exclusions (CX). Categorical exclusions are often utilized to either eliminate or minimize public involvement, environmental analysis, and the public comment process. Essentially, public input and detailed analysis of a project’s potential impacts are eliminated from the process. This procedure creates a lack of transparency, a lack of accountability, and only minimal public disclosure of potential impacts.

The publication of CXs to implement land management projects is the opposite of collaboration, especially when controversial projects are being pushed through without adequate public input. Since the approval of the 2016 RMP, the BLM has largely removed itself from the collaborative process surrounding the Upper Applegate Watershed Restoration Project (UAW), and they have stopped attending UAW community meetings. They have also implemented five separate CXs, including highly controversial proposals to legitimize over 60 miles of previously unauthorized and environmentally damaging OHV (off-highway vehicle) trails and numerous commercial logging projects. These projects have included OHV trails in the Ruch area, up Forest Creek, and in the Wellington Wildlands. Logging projects up Little Applegate, on Woodrat Mountain, Ferris Gulch, Spencer Gulch near Murphy, and on BLM land near Wilderville have also been approved using CXs. In fact, nearly 300 acres have been either logged or proposed for logging in CXs in the Applegate Valley without adequate analysis of the environmental impacts, meaningful opportunities for public involvement, or consultation with our local community.

Applegate Neighborhood Network is working to encourage community-based collaboration in the land-management planning process in the Applegate. We welcome the BLM back to the table and object to the agency’s use of CXs. The future of land management is collaborative, transparent, and restorative in nature; however, the BLM is living in the past.

Luke Ruediger
siskiyoucrest@gmail.com

The problem is worldwide population growth

BY ROBERT BENNETT

The dueling articles on climate change by Alan Voetsch and Alan Journet in the fall edition of the *Applegater* treated the reader to a long list of facts, figures, and opinions, but both letters failed to mention the 800-pound gorilla in the room: the growing catastrophe of worldwide population growth.

A study compiled by Our World in Data, an online publication, reveals that earth’s population doubled to 1.65 billion people between 1750 and 1900. It doubled again by 1960. Population numbers doubled once more by the year 2000, and earth’s population is expected to surpass 11 billion by 2080. It is estimated that over seven billion folks occupy the surface of the planet today. So if Alan Journet thinks climate change is being caused by people, he might rationally conclude it would make sense to concentrate on controlling the numbers of people.

On the other hand, Alan Voetsch seems to imply that market conditions and advancing technology will guide mankind to a safe use of fossil fuels well into the future. But can we bank on that if world populations continue to double every two or three generations? Parts

of the planet are already experiencing shortages of food and potable water.

The city of Portland, for instance, embarked on an effort to reduce each resident’s carbon footprint in the early 2000s. Public awareness programs, alternative fuels for vehicles, along with the encouragement of carpooling, bicycles, and mass transit were used in the city’s efforts.

After five years city officials proudly announced a reduction in the individual carbon footprint by five percent per capita. The trouble was, during the same period the city’s population grew by eight percent, which left them three percent further in the hole.

They were clearly trying to solve the wrong problem.

If mankind is going to survive on the planet with any kind of a meaningful existence, some humane way of controlling population growth must be developed, and if Alan Journet and Alan Voetsch really wanted to help mankind and the planet, their energies might be better spent in trying to solve the real problem—the population problem.

Robert Bennett
trombone2@hotmail.com

■ PRESENT WITH PAWS

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is a good break away from the X-Box or TV screen. Children who have pets are less likely to miss days of school due to illness. Children with autism or other developmental conditions can sometimes engage more easily with animals than with people, so having a pet helps them learn to interact with people.

How about teenagers? A study of schoolchildren showed that pet owners were more popular and empathetic. Adolescents who have pets have higher self-esteem. Teenagers who own pets have a more positive outlook on life in general and report less loneliness, restlessness, despair, and boredom.

Animals improve the well-being of older people too. Pet owners report less depression than non-pet owners and are better able to cope with grief, stress, and loss. Alzheimer’s patients have fewer anxiety attacks if there is a pet in the home. And, for someone who lives alone, a pet is a constant friend to count on when sick or feeling down.

If you would like an adoption gift certificate to give to a friend or family, stop by Jackson County Animal Services at 5595 South Pacific Highway in Phoenix and shelter

staff will set you up. You can learn about the adoption process and the wonderful animals waiting for their fur-ever homes at jacksoncountyor.org/hhs/Animal-Services/Adoption.

Laura Ahearn
laura.ahearn@stanfordalumni.org



 **Grants Pass Water Lab**

Eric Schaafsma
Technical Director
eric@gpwaterlab.com

541-476-0733
Fax 541-476-8132

964 SE “M” Street
Grants Pass, OR 97526

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ORELAP # OR100033
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Ramsay Realty

541-899-1184

Cell 541-973-9105

 **Jayda Wood**
Licensed in Oregon • Principal Broker

7604 Hwy 238 • Jacksonville, OR 97530
Fax: (541) 899-1772 • E-Mail: jayda@ramsayrealty.com
Web Site: <http://www.ramsayrealty.com>

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166 South Main
Phoenix, OR 97535
535-3080

224 SW “G” Street
Grants Pass, OR 97526
955-4446

Mike Kohn
Owner
Lisa Stricklin
Sales & Service
• Wood, Gas & Pellet Stoves
CCB#157587