

APPLEGATE TRAILS ASSOCIATION

ATA seeks community help creating trails

BY SCOTT PROSE

The Applegate Valley boasts numerous trails that our community members use every day to hike, walk, and explore the valley's charming beauty. The Applegate Trails Association (ATA) works to expand and improve our valley's nonmotorized trails.

The ATA consists of a diverse group of volunteers like you who work towards improving and expanding trails in the Applegate Valley. COVID-19 is impacting many of our usual activities, such as interactive hikes, work parties, and fundraisers. Nevertheless, ATA's brand-new board is hard at work, outlining trails, writing grants, and lining up areas that need maintenance.

One of the ATA's current projects is creating the central section of the Center Applegate Ridge Trail. This "Center ART" will connect the popular East Applegate Ridge Trail (East ART) to one or more new Humbug Creek trailheads. The new section of trail will have a breathtaking view of the Wellington Wildlands, stunning oak savannas, and many panoramas of the Applegate Valley and surrounding mountains.

We all know our valley is memorably beautiful, and the participation of community members is invaluable in creating trails that best serve our valley. For example, volunteers with ATA are assisting the Provolt Volunteer Team in

building a riverside trail at the Provolt Recreation Site.

The ATA is currently recruiting folks to help with various initiatives, including trail maintenance, newsletter creation, fundraising, photography, hike leaders, volunteer organizing, grant writing, graphics, public relations, and website design. As mentioned, some of these tasks will need to wait till we can gather in large groups, but many can start this spring, and the office work is ongoing.

If you'd like to get involved with the ATA or support our mission of improving the Applegate Valley's trails, please contact us at info@applegatetrails.org. Being able to meet in person may take longer



ATA volunteers scout possible Center Applegate Ridge Trail routes in January. Photo: Tom Carstens.

than we wish because of COVID-19 and the restrictions that come with it, but we plan to do a few socially distant events in the coming months. Join us! See our spring schedule at our website, applegatetrails.org.

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Work on upper watershed restoration to begin

BY DONNA MICKLEY

After many years of planning and effort from the community, the Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District and the Rogue Forest Partners are excited to begin implementation of the Upper Applegate Watershed (UAW) Restoration Project. Over the past year, the US Forest Service and the Rogue Forest Partners have been busy collecting data, developing prescriptions, laying out unit boundaries, and marking trees to guide implementation.

In 2019, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) granted funding to the Rogue Forest Partners to conduct dry forest restoration in

the Rogue River Basin. As part of this effort, the Upper Applegate Watershed Restoration Project is one of six projects being implemented under the initiative. Funding from OWEB will go to support vegetation treatments, monitoring, and public engagement.

The plan is to begin implementation of vegetation treatments in spring 2021. Crews will work on noncommercial thinning of small-diameter material to reduce stand competition, improve overall structure, and reduce wildfire risk. During the first phase of the project, we expect to complete 300 acres of this noncommercial thinning.

Also planned for the spring, Klamath Bird Observatory will be conducting pretreatment surveys for songbirds within the planning area. Bird counts and associated vegetation surveys will occur in units planned for treatment, as well

as in adjacent forest patches where no treatment will occur. Surveys in these same sites will follow treatment to measure changes in bird species composition in response to harvest-related changes in vegetation.

The bird community provides a good indicator of ecosystem health because birds are relatively cost effective to monitor, they respond relatively quickly to habitat change, and individual species respond differently to changes in their environment. Measuring birds' response to restoration provides a more meaningful and multidimensional assessment of restoration success than traditional vegetation metrics alone.

We anticipate implementation of commercial thinning in the fall of 2021. The forest service and the Rogue Forest Partners will be using a stewardship agreement to conduct this and other restoration work. This arrangement differs from traditional timber sale contracts with the forest service in that revenue generated by the sale of timber will fund other restoration work in the project area.

Restrictions on gatherings over the past year have kept us from conducting



The Western Tanager's song can easily be mistaken for the more common American Robin's, but by sight, they are unmistakable to any onlooker. This species is expected to benefit from a less dense, patchy forest canopy following restoration. Photo: Frank Lospalluto.

community meetings and field trips that we would typically offer before implementation of the UAW project. We will be providing more information in a virtual format in the coming months and hope to be back in the field with you all soon. Please visit go.usa.gov/xAzrg for more information on the Upper Applegate Restoration Project, or contact me at 541-899-3810. For more information on the Rogue Forest Partnership, visit rogueforestpartners.org.

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Tree thinning will improve stand health and vigor in the Upper Applegate Watershed, according to project partners. Photo: US Forest Service.



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Severe wildfires and persistent smoke are a threat to the lives and livelihoods of our communities. We offer a science-based, practical, long-term approach to forest management – rooted in the belief that the connections that tie all of us to the forest are more powerful than our differences.

We are working to make our forests more resilient and our communities safer.