

From founder to emeritus: New role for longtime Applegate Partnership activist

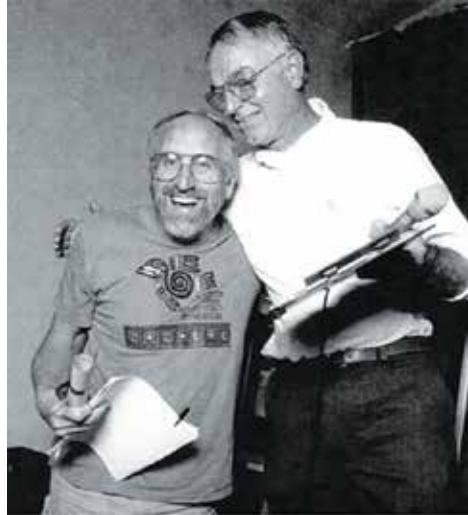
BY BARBARA SUMMERHAWK

As the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) celebrates 30 years of community-based environmental work, one person stands as a bridge across the decades of activity: Founder and Executive Board member Jack Shipley. Although the 84-year-old had indicated he may want to retire from the monthly meetings, the board voted in March to grant him “emeritus” status, a new, unique position to keep Jack’s name on the rolls, while allowing him to attend meetings as he wishes, with a vote that will count if he is present.

Present at the very beginning, Jack recalls sitting down on his deck in October 1992 with eight others to craft the first Applegate Partnership vision statement that read:

“The Applegate Partnership is a community-based project involving industry, conservation groups, natural resource agencies, and residents cooperating to encourage and facilitate the use of natural resource principles that promote ecosystem health and diversity.”

At that time, there was an “Us vs Them” mentality in the area with drastic reductions in logging to protect endangered species, such as the spotted owl, which brought on harder economic times along with an environmental consciousness of the species that were threatened with loss of habitat. The early partnership used as one of its mottos “Practice Trust. Them is Us” as it brought to the table the agencies that managed the forests—the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Forest Service—and the timber industry, as well



Jack Shipley (left) in the 1990s with the late Chris Bratt, a partnership board member.

as activists in environmental groups and local residents.

The partnership meetings in the '90s would see 50-60 people gather for loud, raucous discussions. Later meetings were facilitated. Out of these meetings came such innovations as the *Applegater* newspaper, first edited by J.D. Rodgers. When Jack talks of the partnership’s biggest successes, he points to the development of that community-wide link still vital today.

Another memory he often mentions is the Old Blue timber sale on Humbug, which was the first time that the Partnership worked with the BLM to mitigate how logging would proceed, resulting in no new roads being built because of the use of helicopter logging, and a reduction on the number of big trees removed. This sale began a process of the agencies opening up to resident input. President



Jack Shipley by his bench at the 2016 Cantrall Buckley Park celebration of his leadership and community devotion.

Clinton became aware of the partnership’s activities, and when he visited Portland, he invited Jack up to talk with him about this new kind of response to the forest crisis.

With the concept of watershed councils catching on in the early 1990s, the Oregon governor contacted Jack and asked if the partnership would become a watershed council for the region of the Applegate. With some legal wrangling, the partnership donned its dba, the Applegate River Watershed Council, which continues today as the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council.

Another project that Jack is proud of is the acceptance by Jackson County for the community to manage Cantrall Buckley Park when the county ran out of funds to operate the park and was planning to shut it down. Jack and the partnership helped formalize the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation that led the community-based efforts to manage the park for two decades. This park has become a community gem and a great location for art, recreation, outdoor education, and restoration projects.

Many other historical projects float around in Jack’s memory, including the Applegate Fire Plan, “Balancing Act: Living with Fire in the Applegate,” drafted

by Jack and Sandy Shaffer. The document was one of the first in the country and was made available to every resident in the valley. It provided information to private landowners on how to evaluate fire risk and reduce fuels on their properties that is still relevant today.

That activity around fire prevention continues today as the partnership sponsors the Rogue Valley Prescribed Burn Association (RVPBA), which works with local landowners in carrying out controlled burns. In considering how the partnership has evolved and what it is becoming, Shipley mentioned the RVPBA and the Outdoor Education program at Cantrall Buckley Park, saying the partnership is taking on more projects and continues to be a vibrant, community-based organization aware of the valley’s diversity both biotically and socially and encouraging the activities that build a better valley. Jack is proud that the partnership is part of his legacy and appreciates the new emeritus status that allows him to be involved at whatever level he wishes.

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