



TIMBRE OF BUSINESS GOOD - A rejuvenated Rough & Ready Lumber Co. in Cave Junction is doing well, thanks to a good market and good product, not to mention a fine group of employees, according to co-managers 'Link' and Jennifer Phillippi. They hosted a

one-year celebration for employees at the mill on Thursday, June 3. The celebration included Taylor's Sausage hot dogs and birthday cake. The company closed last year for several months due to lack of available timber, and now has 80 employees vs. 225.

### R&R comments on Biscuit Fire plan

(Editor's Note: Following are comments by Jennifer and 'Link' Phillippi, of Rough & Ready Lumber Co. in Cave Junction, regarding the Biscuit Fire Final Environmental Impact Report released last week by the U.S. Forest Service. It calls for harvesting 4 percent of the fire-damaged timber [370 million board feet, down from the draft figure of 518 mbf] plus adding 64,000 acres of wilderness.)

First, we need to go past the drama and emotion that have become so widespread on this issue, and consider some less exciting, but more scientifically compelling points.

Number one, when considering fire restoration, it is critical that we understand that the Biscuit Fire was a human-caused event. More than 60 years of efficient fire suppression has been conducted on the Siskiyou National Forest, which historically experienced fire every 15 to 20 years.

Several fire cycles were missed since Smokey Bear became popular; and consequently, natural tree thinning did not occur and tremendous fuel built up on the forest floor. In 2002, Southwestern Oregon forests were "waiting" to burn, and to burn big. The frequent, low-intensity fires of the past were healthy, natural events, but the manmade condition that led to the Biscuit Fire

was neither natural nor healthy. The subsequent "abnormal" fire left us with a mess that needs human intervention to help restore it to a forest we recognize any time soon.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) should have come out boldly with a strategy to regenerate our forest. Its belated and apologetic announcement of a plan that addresses only 4 percent of the Biscuit burn frustrates those of us who would argue that forest restoration and utilization of burned trees are not mutually exclusive.

It's a shame that our focus and our restoration dollars are being directed toward a plan dictated by politics rather than one that will help re-establish our forest and wildlife habitat.

The 64,000 acres proposed as additional Wilderness is clear evidence of the political nature of the decision. After years of well-intentioned, but ultimately disastrous "hands-off" policies that caused the Biscuit Fire in the first place, it makes no sense to increase the acres that would be handled in that benign fashion.

It is confusing to hear that our forest can suffer such a massive, devastating conflagration and at the same time be considered too

fragile to endure cautious, constructive restoration efforts.

USFS should take advantage of the synergy that timber salvage from the Biscuit could provide. Salvage could provide funds to help pay for the restoration effort; allow the production of useful wood products created from burned trees not green trees; and provide important economic support to the local community. To take advantage of this opportunity, the salvage needs to be sold in an economic fashion. Temporary spur roads would allow loggers to remove the deteriorating wood profitably, whereas requirements to use expensive helicopters could result in no-bid timber sales.

USFS needs to show leadership and courage in implementing its plan. A year ago, it could have declared an emergency and categorical exclusion to the NEPA rules and prevented the salvageable wood from diminishing so severely. That opportunity is past, but now the forest service needs to show confidence and strong support for its decision.

A timid, hesitant approach will result in delays, ultimately ineffective restoration, and a tragic waste of scarce tax dollars.

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