



VANDALS SEVERELY DAMAGED the athletic field at Evergreen Elementary School, which will greatly affect the Illinois Valley Youth Soccer Club practices and games. The damage was reported Thursday evening, April 12 at 8:59 p.m. by the school custodian. It was stated that two vehicles with headlights off were on the field ‘doing bro-dies’ and tearing up the grass. The vehicles were not identified or subsequently located. Said Sandy Jackson, a coach, ‘It’s an injury waiting to happen.’ Added coach Paul Jackson, ‘It’s really sad to see that people choose to be destructive, especially toward children.’ He called the perpetrators cowards and noted, ‘If they have any guts, they should come forward and apologize for it.’ Kathy Holeman (right), grandmother of a player, said, ‘Kids are going to break their ankles out there. There’s holes all over the place.’ (Photos by Michelle Binker and Scott Jorgensen/‘Illinois Valley News’)

Forest regeneration occurs naturally, reports OSU

A new study of forest lands that burned during the 1990s in Northern California and Southwestern Oregon has concluded there is a “fair-to-excellent” chance that an adequate level of conifers will regenerate naturally, in sites that had no manual planting or other forest management.

The research is to be published in the *Journal of Forestry* by scientists from Oregon State University (OSU) at Corvallis. They examined the recovery of conifers on 35 plots that had burned in wildfires from nine to 19 years ago, and generally found a high level of naturally regenerating tree seedlings.

Natural Regeneration Slow, But Sure

Although the abundance of natural regeneration appeared to be variable and growth often slow, there was no evidence of recent conifer mortality or suppression leading to seedling death.

Total conifer density and the types of tree species varied quite a bit depending on elevation. But the density of surviving conifer seedlings was as much or more than typical densities in 60- to 100-year-old stands in this region, which is approximately 100 to 1,000 trees per acre. Traditional old-growth forests of this region, with trees 250 or more years old, often had as few as 20 to 40 large trees per acre.

Approximately 10 percent of the plots studied already had larger trees that were considered “free to grow” by forestry standards. The scientists said that the height of competing shrubs had “quite likely” slowed after one or two decades, and “we predict that conifer mortality will remain low

and height growth will accelerate as individuals continue to emerge above the shrub layer.”

The study also showed that trees would regenerate at considerable distances from seed sources.

“The natural regeneration on many of these sites is actually much higher than needed to restore a forest,” said Jeff Shatford, a senior faculty research assistant in the OSU Dept. of Forest Science. “We expect that the high density of young trees we observed will thin out naturally over time.”

The authors said in their report that “assertions that burned areas, left unmanaged, will remain unproductive for some indefinite period, seem unwarranted.”

Short-term delays in conifer regeneration and a broader range of recovering plant and animal species also may have benefits in terms of varied tree size, plant biodiversity, and wildlife habitat.

‘They Do Come Back’

“When left to natural regeneration in this region, it appears that conifers may come back more slowly and with more variation than with conventional forest management, but in most cases they do come back,” said David Hibbs, co-author of the report and a professor of forest ecology and silviculture in the OSU Dept. of Forest Science.

“There may be some cases, especially on the lowest, hottest, south-facing slopes, where that is not true,” he said. “But at most elevations and in most situations, natural conifer regeneration appears to be working.”

Whether lands should be planted and weed competition controlled is more a question of short-term timber production, tree species control and forest management goals than the regeneration of the forest, the scientists said.

The sites picked for this study all met several criteria: They had gone through a hot, canopy-replacing wildfire from nine to 19 years ago; more than 90 percent of the trees were killed in the fire; and there was no post-fire salvage logging or tree planting. The sites were on the Klamath, Rogue/Siskiyou or Umpqua National Forests.

Conifer trees that naturally regenerated were dominated by Douglas Fir and Ponderosa Pine at lower elevations, and true firs at higher elevations. There was considerable variation in the regeneration process. Some sites filled in immediately. Others had a few years delay, then rapid filling; some were slow but constant; and a few sites never filled.

Surprising to researchers was that up to 19 years after a fire, there was still some new and locally dominant conifer regeneration. This study was funded by the Joint Fire Science Program, a partnership of six federal wildland, fire and research organizations. Fire suppression and fuel buildups, among other possible causes, have led to an increasing frequency and severity of forest fire in the western United States, the researchers said. Between 1970 and 2004, more than 600 wildfires burned more than 20 million acres in Oregon and California.

The 2002 Biscuit Fire,

in terrain similar to where this research was done, was one of the largest fires in Oregon’s recorded history. It nearly caused evacuation of Illinois Valley.

The recovery of burned lands after wildfire, and whether active management is necessary, has become a point of considerable interest and controversy in recent years. Some studies have argued that, in the absence of aggressive management, burned areas might turn into unproductive shrub fields that could persist for decades or centuries.

Academic Masters event at Illinois Valley April 26

Illinois Valley High School will host the 23rd annual Academic Masters competition -- a “Josephine County tradition” -- on Thursday, April 26 beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Students from Illinois Valley, North Valley, Hidden Valley and Grants Pass High schools will compete. For the Cougars:

- *Nick Greener will compete in the music class.
- *Austin Hocker will compete in mathematics.
- *Mideon Hoffman will compete in science.
- *Anthony Derda will compete in English.
- *Forrest Roth will compete in social studies.

First-place winners in all categories will receive \$1,200; second place will get \$600; third place will get \$400; and fourth place will receive \$200.

Approximately \$12,500 overall will be awarded during the event.

Four finalists from each of the high schools will compete. They are the survivors from among approximately 425 students who entered initial competition.

They have gone through written and oral performance exams. All finalists are tested by Rogue Community College instructors and others who are expert in their fields. RCC staff also write the questions and serve as judges for the final event.

On April 26 each student will stand alone on stage to win or lose based on their individual merits.

In the school-level competition, schools compete for the Academic Masters trophy and for a donation spent by team members to benefit their school.

The team trophy for most competition points historically has found its home at North Valley or Grants Pass. But in the important category of audience participation, Illinois Valley and North Valley usually bring the largest crowds.

Four aid bills announced

A series of bills to help sexual assault and crime victims, streamline liquor licenses and prioritize the unpaid costs of care of former or deceased patients in state mental institutions were signed last week by Gov. Kulongoski.

*HB 2128 reauthorizes the Sexual Assault Victims’ Emergency (SAVE) Medical Response Fund, established to help pay for the medical assessments for sexual assault victims.

*HB 2130 allows the attorney general to distribute Criminal Injuries Compensation Account (CICA) funds in any amount to victims’ assistance programs

operated by a district attorney. Currently, the attorney general is the administrator of the account and can distribute only half the funds to cities and counties that maintain programs.

*HB 2164 expands the scope of the Special Events Winery License to help streamline license regulations from Oregon Liquor Control Commission and aid Oregon wineries.

*HB 2192 clarifies that claims by the Dept. of Human Services (DHS) against a decedent’s estate for the care of former or deceased patients at state institutions have priority over claims of general creditors.

Forest Edge Farm

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