

DEFUND THE MILITARY

The summer of 2020, an extremely hot, dry one, was precipitated by decades of drought caused by rising world temperatures. The result was massive, sobering destruction in rural Oregon and our beautiful forests. And what might be the world's largest emitter of CO2 and therefore the largest driver of climate change? The U.S. military.

Though firefighters worked bravely to put out fires, a bloated military budget funneled off tax money that could have been better spent to hire more firefighters.

Federal and state funds to help people rebuild or relocate are stretched thin. Wouldn't funds to help all people have a home be a better use of our tax dollars than more funds to the military?

Due to the climate catastrophe we again did not get enough rain and snow this winter, and so far this spring we have had very little rain. I worry when fire season will start this year and how much more of Oregon will be destroyed. I have been a war tax resister since the 1970s since I do not want my money supporting murder. The money I resist to the military I give to local groups that actually help people and the environment. Now I am also a war tax resister because

I don't want my money supporting the biggest contributor to the burning of our planet: the U.S. military.

Sue Barnhart
Eugene

ASK THE HOMELESS WHAT THEY NEED

Ten years ago I was homeless in Corvallis. Slowly I changed my life and am in stable housing and living a life I could not have imagined.

My philosophy is: Imagine you are in a boat (we are all in the same boat). I set a direction. And I decide to move the steering wheel 4 degrees either right or left. I stick with it long enough and I will end up somewhere else.

People have a lot of compassion for the homeless. It has been my experience that people have given me what they think I need, not actually what I do need.

Ask a homeless person what is one small thing he can do to change his life 4 degrees? Ask yourself what small thing you can do to help and support him. When you see him again ask him again what you can do to help and support him.

From my experience, getting housing right then would not have been helpful. There were numerous things I needed

to do before I was in the right place to be ready for housing. I had numerous obstacles to overcome.

I was able to take small steps. I had a lot of support from the community, and Corvallis had the resources I needed.

I have a lot of gratitude for all I have been given.

I do not want to draw the wrong conclusion, Corvallis has its own homeless problem. Many resources back then are not available now, nor were there so many homeless. I do not want to give anyone the impression that Corvallis has greener grass. We are as stretched as far as Eugene in our ability to get the homeless off the streets.

Beth Kiester
Corvallis

STOP RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

When you look at the east side of the Willamette River compared to the west side you see very different landscapes. The east side is developed with malls, three-story apartments and private access developments. Fertilized grass grows close to the river's edge near the apartments. It's tamed and citified.

The west side has a few rural proper-

ties, maple and white oak trees, a native prairie restoration area and habitat for raptors and ducks. It has a wilder feel that provides for a relatively quiet experience just a short distance from the hubbub of River Road.

Several brave neighbors challenged Evergreen Housing's proposal to build a three-story, 93-unit apartment building on the west side. The Home Building Industry Association's lawyer succeeded in pointing out that the Greenway Permit will allow whatever type of housing the land is zoned for because there are no "clear and measurable standards" that the permit can be defined by. And if this continues, the west side will eventually look just like the east side. It's the wild part of our natures that will pay the price of this conversion, not to mention the birds and animals. The Home Builder Industry Association will continue to win unless the Greenway permit gets some real definition. We need to establish clear criteria to preserve the character of the west side Greenway. Please oppose Evergreen Housing's out of state market rate, unaffordable housing development. There may be a chance to change course if we act now.

Juliet Thompson
Eugene

VIEWPOINT BY PAM DRISCOLL AND ROBERT EMMONS

McKenzie Recovery

THE MCKENZIE AND ITS BANKS CAN BE RESTORED
IN HARMONY WITH THE RIVER'S NEEDS

Rebuilding along the McKenzie River after the Holiday Farm Fire provides an opportunity to promote, establish and enforce measures that will protect and enhance the McKenzie and its riparian zones. Before the fire, houses in much of the burn corridor encroached on the river, altering its native ecosystem by outright removal of riparian vegetation and replacement with tiled patios, lawns and English ivy.

In response to questions about the county's role, Land County Planning Supervisor Keir Miller offered the following: "As we work with landowners [who live] along the McKenzie, we are encouraging them to relocate further away from the river. Staff has also been working with EWEB to permit a subsidy program to incentivize folks to move back from the river. I know MRT [McKenzie River Trust], MWC [McKenzie Watershed Council] and others are also working on programs to support native replanting. As far as code enforcement goes, we will investigate violations as they arise, and we will also be developing an app for river guides and others to report violations on their phones in real time..."

Research by David Pillrod, an ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, shows that the loss of riparian vegetation can lead to higher water temperatures, increased erosion and sedimentation, which negatively affect amphibian and insect larvae for several years and up to decades after a high severity fire like the Holiday Farm Fire.

Scientific studies have shown that the climate crisis has stressed fish that depend on cold water, such as

our native salmon, further threatening their survival. Restoring the McKenzie River, the source of Eugene's drinking water, and making sure the rebuilding efforts do not harm — and actually improve — the riparian areas and waterways are key if we want the river and the life it holds to survive and become more resilient. Debris, toxic ash and sediment from the fire and from rebuilding materials and activities can impact the water quality for drinking, fish and other wildlife. Many miles of the river have suffered from harmful algae blooms, induced by encroachment and runoffs of toxic materials, long before the fire added to the harm.

EWEB's Pure Water Partners program is a group of organizations, including the McKenzie Watershed Council, McKenzie River Trust, Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation and Development, Metropolitan Waste Management, Soil and Water Conservation District, U.S. Forest Service and others, that "support and reward McKenzie landowners who protect high quality land along the river." Owners may contact EWEB for an assessment of their property and proposed erosion control and replanting with native vegetation.

EWEB's water quality supervisor, Karl Morgenstern, says the utility is working with almost 300 landowners impacted by the fire. And the Bonneville Environmental Foundation has provided thousands of native plants for the restoration effort. To help pay for the recovery EWEB has assessed a residential and commercial Watershed Recovery Fee based on meter size, effective mid-2021.

Helping to ground the Holiday Farm recovery project, Northwest Youth Corps has been essential in the aftermath cleanup and in constructing measures to control the

erosion of toxic sediments. The corps is a nonprofit modeled on the Conservation Civilian Corps that, its Executive Director Jeff Parker says, offers teens an opportunity to "learn, grow and experience success" while assisting in fire recovery, trail building and other hands-on projects.

Instead of using commercial wattles — long tubular sediment catchers stretched along the riverbank — made from plastic netting and non-native plants, Youth Corps workers have constructed ones made of jute and native willow twigs and branches, and installed them. They have also set up sediment fences and have been reseeding burned areas with native species.

In the process Kris Stenshoel, an EWEB environmental specialist, has tutored these young workers, who are already, she says, "environmentally conscious and education driven," about the function and importance of native plants and riparian and watershed ecosystems.

Most would agree they want a healthy river that supports wildlife and provides clean drinking water, but many don't understand the role riparian areas with native trees, shrubs and ground cover play in a river's health. Educating people who live along the river about how to be a partner in a healthy restoration effort is essential, especially as hotter and drier springs and summers increase wildfire intensity and frequency and threaten farms, forests and wildlife.

The good news is there are tools, organizations and funding that can help restore the McKenzie and its banks in harmony with the river's needs. Landowners and other interested parties can take advantage of that windfall, begin to heal the McKenzie River and get people back in their homes built back better. ■

Pam Driscoll is a LandWatch Board member and long-time social and environmental activist and produces a radio show entitled, 'Come Together Oregon' on KEPW.org 97.3FM. Robert Emmons is president of LandWatch Lane County, a nonprofit that has worked for 25 years with neighbors to protect farms, forests, natural areas and open space.