

# Forests in state of emergency

There is a tendency among many in the environmental community to regard salvage logging and forest thinning as thinly veiled ways to allow unacceptable harvest levels in U.S. national forests. Long-term drought in the West coupled with related factors like insect damage should force a reassessment of this attitude.

**EDITORIAL**

*Voice of the Chieftain*

The U.S. Forest Service spent 56 percent of its budget last year on firefighting, compared to 16 percent in 1995, according to a June 23 story by the Christian Science Monitor. Sixty-six million trees have died in California alone since 2010 due to drought, higher temperatures and an infestation of beetles that are ravaging forests from Mexico to Alaska.

The Forest Service is begging Congress to address firefighting expenses as a separate budget line item, in order to avoid starving the agency of funds desperately needed for other purposes. There isn't enough money left to pay the substantial costs of restoring burned areas and keep up with the many other priorities that deserve to be top-of-mind for our manager of more than 300,000 square miles of America — the size of the nation of Turkey.)

Twenty-first century fires are a natural disaster of the first order and deserve to be treated as such. This means finding federal funds specifically to fight them. The \$2.6 billion spent by the Forest Service in 2015 could have a dent in long-deferred property maintenance.

Logging is the logical way to generate funds for firefighting, as well potentially being useful in creating fire breaks around residential areas that have encroached upon forestland. Forest thinning, although not an efficient way of commercially harvesting, might also improve forest health while reducing fire danger.

Logging opponents are understandably skeptical when it comes to Forest Service harvest plans. For decades, wildfire prevention served as a convenient excuse for timber sales. In many cases, these sales cost taxpayers more than they brought in. The Reagan administration was particularly notorious. It was the backlash against its malfeasance that ushered in forest management crafted by litigation.

But it now is time to treat dying forests as the emergencies they are. Reasonable, scientifically sound harvests can improve forest health while providing funds for fire suppression. It's time for a meeting of minds on this complex and emotionally fraught issue.



SPIRIT OF '16

## Bell's musical homecoming

You can take the boy out of Wallowa County but you can't take the sting out of getting scalded. That's an old saying, right? Well, if nothing else it's a young saying now. Matt Bell is from these here Wallawas but makes his living playing music these days. He's based down in New Orleans but goes out on the road with his wife Joy every year, playing shows all over the map. Matt and Joy were on the East Coast a while back on a music tour and got a rare couple days off to rest up at Greg Krolick's house in North Carolina. Greg's another longtime Wallowa Countian who a lot of you know. Heckuva musician himself and does some real spiffy artwork, too, including posters for Matt's different bands.

So Matt is in the home of his Wallowa County buddy and feeling good. Wakes up to an idyllic morning. Birds a-chirping, sunbeams coming in at a slant, all that jazz. He brews him some coffee. Goes real strong on the blend. Joy is still asleep. As the coffee sits there steeping, Matt opens the cupboard and the first coffee mug he sees is a Ted Juve Olaf mug. Just perfect. It's some of Ted's early work and an Olaf mug is also kind of an old friend, so the Wallawas are strong with Matt on that North Carolina morning as he pours the coffee and goes for his first sip.

I should mention this was not iced coffee. That comes into play here directly. Also, quick disclaimer. What we're about to hear does not, in any way, re-



**AND FURTHERMORE**

Jon Rombach

flect on the craftsmanship of Ted Juve. Ted knows his stuff. Olaf pottery is about as durable as it comes. I've driven off with a Juve mug on the roof and had it bounce out fine. Just keep in mind that Greg Krolick is a Wallowa County guy from way back and this particular coffee cup had been well-loved and used and maybe even had undergone a spot of repair on the handle sometime in the past. Pre-existing condition. Keep that in mind. OK. Back to Matt and the morning and all that.

Yeah, so, Matt goes to take his first sip of this perfect cup of coffee on a beautiful morning, filled with thoughts of home and good friends and that is the moment, as he brings it to his lips, when the handle breaks. Matt was not wearing his fireproof pajama pants at the time, so the scalding coffee exits the free-falling cup and splashes this very hot liquid onto, let's see ... how about we call it Matt's "lower torso region." Yeah, let's go with that.

I enjoy this awful, terrible story so much because I had a similar turn of events one idyllic Wallowa County winter morning. Fresh snow. The mountains looked a couple hundred feet taller in

the crisp, clear air. It was just a privilege to be alive and beholding such a glorious day. Two minutes later I was whistling a merry tune while getting in some wood, slipped on ice, cracked my tailbone and a chunk of wood rolled out of the upset wheelbarrow and broke my pinky finger. Just like that. I still stop occasionally and realize just how beautiful it is out here. Then I look around for potential hazards.

Go hear Matt Bell make music while he's in town. You can thank me later. His band, The Wasted Lives, will blow sweet sounds from the Enterprise Courthouse Gazebo at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, July 7. On Saturday the 9th you almost can't miss hearing one of his bands. Wasted Lives play the Bowlby Bash at 3 p.m., then magically turn into The Bad Penny Pleasurers for the "All That Jazz" fundraiser concert at the Josephy Center, starting at 7. Wear your best 1920s garb for that. Then Matt will presumably drink some coffee — carefully — because they go play the Hurricane Creek Grange late shift at the community dance. That's a lot of melodies in 24 hours. He'll be teaching at the Wallowa Fiddle Tunes camp starting July 10, then those Bad Pennies show up at Terminal Gravity at 7 p.m. Friday, June 15.

Phew. Gonna need a lot of coffee for that schedule.

Check the handle, Matt. Check the handle.

Jon Rombach is a local columnist for *The Chieftain* with a crooked pinky.

## Our street of a thousand flags

It was an honor to witness and participate in a spectacle that was truly a fantastic sight to see. From the length and breadth of Wallowa, people converged July 4 for a sight that brings a smile to your face and always lifts you up — the American flag.

Standing at Cougar Field and looking east, the street was packed with flags for our 10 whole blocks. There had to have been 6,000 (accuracy of number was a guess) flags waving in the breeze. But, for one thousand more people (mostly kids) 1,000 American flags were given out to honor and thank the 1,000 veterans who reside in Wallowa County. Every hand that held those colors high had a smile beneath it. I only regret that I ran out of flags before the end. My reward was seeing 1,000 faces light up with a smile when they took hold of and waved Old Glory.

So vets, on Monday we gathered to honor this holiday and wave our flag. Know that for one hour, someone in Wallowa was waving a flag for you. Thanks for your service, remembering that some gave all, all gave some for God and country.

The turnout and the weather were both incredible. The street through downtown was shoulder-to-shoulder and in places

**GUEST EDITORIAL**

Scott Taylor

three deep. The early birds snagged the best spots in the shade on a truly gorgeous day with the snow-capped peaks smiling down on us.

At 11 a.m. members of the VFW led the parade, carrying the colors with dignity and honor that brought tears to the eye of many — OK, a lot. And that was the start of Wallowa's Community Fourth of July Parade.

Following the colors was our beloved grand marshal, Vera Henderson, riding comfortably in a beautiful, antique convertible piloted by her son Elwane. I've never been good with numbers, but the 800-plus residents of Wallowa watched their town grow by about 6,500 people. So, if all of Wallowa County wasn't here, it sure looked like it. You missed an extraordinary day if you weren't able to attend. And believe me, you'll never see Peggy Gentil coming out a birthday cake except in Wallowa.

So floats, bikes, horses, cars, groups, individuals and entries of all shapes and

sizes were on hand to celebrate. Even one very cute pink pig and some good looking hogs, too. To give credit to a few would not give credit to all the imagination and hard work to everyone who participated — well done! And the parade went on for an hour, at least. With bells, whistles and sirens going full blast, the end was coming closer with the Fire Department getting ready to do some serious cooking. And the band played to a welcoming crowd. A good time was had by all.

Well, the food has been consumed, the fire hall cleaned and the engines put back in their bays. The crowd has walked our street, and most were heading to Shake the Lake after a short walk or siesta.

I walk up to First Street and look east and then back west. The sidewalks are now empty, the traffic is light and we're back to "normal". I stand on the corner and smile with arms outstretched to a future that holds promise, security and freedom.

Wallowa aimed high and hit the mark. For me, this day was better than anything Disneyland had to offer because it's our town, with a street of a thousand flags. I'm proud of it and always will be.

SMSGT Scott Taylor, USAF (ret), resides in Wallowa.

## Slow down, watch for animals on the road

Today started out like a normal, beautiful summer morning. As we sat on the deck, a number of vehicles passed our house on Dobbin Road just outside of Joseph. Anyone who drives by where we live knows that the dogs who live here have a tendency to chase vehicles now and then. However, they continue to drive by our house very fast.

Living in a rural setting, everyone knows that dogs run, horses get out, cows end up in the road and deer cross whenever.

Should the dogs be in the road? Of course not. But it is known that these labs do that from time to time. Yet the neighbor down the road, who has driven by this house 100 times or more, came

**LETTERS to the EDITOR**

speeding by this morning and hit and killed one of the dogs that lives here.

This is a senseless loss, caused by a driver too ignorant to slow down when he knew about these dogs. I

f I had not run out to the dog in the road, I doubt this driver would have even stopped. It was 200 yards down the road or more as it was, by the time he finally got stopped. This driver got out and started yelling at me that "he tried to slow down, and miss the dog." I told him to get out of here, as he didn't even make any effort to slow down. No skid

marks, no swerve marks — nothing but deadly speed that killed an animal that could not have been more loving and loved more.

Our hearts are broken, the tears fall, but Lily is gone, due to a driver with no regard for life of any kind, it would appear.

Drivers, just don't go down a rural road at 60 mph and expect to miss or avoid a damn thing. Animals especially will dart out in the road at a moment's notice around homes and buildings. This was senseless. Your irresponsibility killed someone we loved more than we can say.

Doug Dutton  
Joseph

### Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor are subject to editing and should be limited to 275 words. Writers should also include a phone number with their signature so we can call to verify identity. The Chieftain does not run anonymous letters. You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail to P.O. Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828; by email to editor@wallowa.com; or via the submission form at the newspaper's website, located at wallowa.com.

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