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**Blue Mountain EAGLE**



# 'MEGAFIRES' WHAT TO DO ABOUT

Presentation highlights risks, actions

By George Plaven  
EO Media Group

**W**ildfires are getting bigger and hotter across the West, threatening communities and causing billions of dollars in damage as forests become more cluttered and prone to disease. That's according to a presentation by Paul Hessburg, research landscape ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service, documenting how the landscape has changed and what effect humans are having on fire behavior.

Hessburg's talk, titled "Era of Megafires," is equal parts cautionary tale and call to action, mixing decades worth of research with short video clips to show how and why large fires erupt, the devastation they cause and what people must do to contain them in the future.

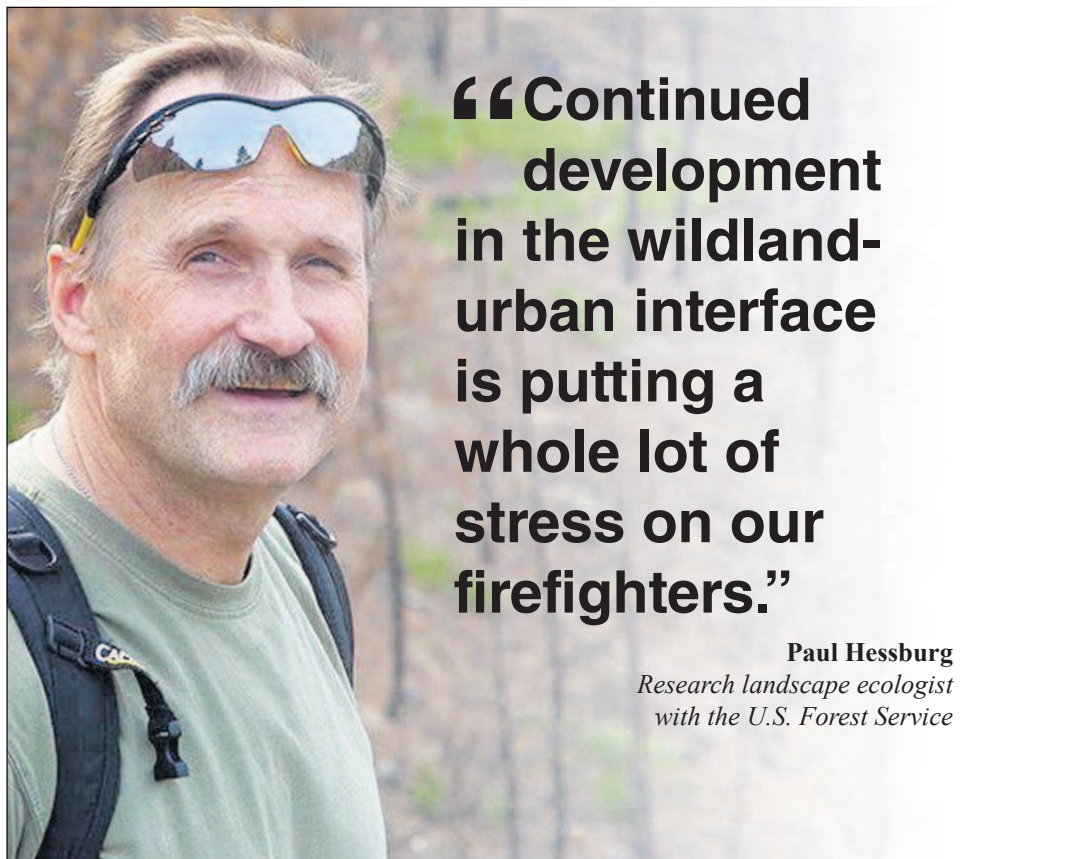
On Wednesday, Hessburg spoke before a mostly full house at Maxey Hall on the campus of Whitman College in Walla Walla. The community had its own brush with the destructive Blue Creek Fire in July 2015 that burned 6,000 acres, 12 structures and nearly crept into the Mill Creek watershed.

While the prospect of megafires is a scary thought, Hessburg said it wasn't his goal to make people afraid — quite the opposite, actually.

"I want you to feel more powerful," Hessburg said. "We need to work toward making our forests fire-resilient again."

Hessburg, who lives in Wenatchee, Washington, relayed the experience of his own hometown battling the massive Sleepy Hollow blaze during the same 2015 wildfire season. That fire morphed into a nearly

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**“Continued development in the wildland-urban interface is putting a whole lot of stress on our firefighters.”**

Paul Hessburg  
Research landscape ecologist  
with the U.S. Forest Service

TOP PHOTO: The Canyon Creek Complex wildfire is seen from downtown John Day, during the dark days before hundreds of firefighters wrestled it into submission with help from the weather. That did not happen, however, until 43 homes were lost to the fire. Contributed photo/Jennifer Walmsley

## Maintaining local dispatch center comes with a cost

Cost-sharing, local option levy among solutions until possible 2019 legislative fix

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Maintaining the local dispatch center until a possible legislative fix in 2019 will come with a price tag of about \$200,000 per year.

While the state 911 tax provides about \$250,000 each year, operating the dispatch center 24/7 year-round costs about \$450,000 currently. The dispatch center is managed by the city of John Day and cov-

ers all of Grant County, and although the county is paying about \$80,000 this fiscal year for sheriff's office dispatch services, the city is covering most of the rest of the deficit.

John Day City Manager Nick Green said he believes the local dispatch center is beneficial, but the city cannot afford to subsidize the service for the rest of the county.

"There is no rational basis

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Cammie Haney, one of the dispatchers at the John Day dispatch center, takes a call in April 2016. Eagle file photo

Your Taxes: Additional revenue

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle

With voter approval, taxing districts have two options to bring in additional revenue.

Although all taxing districts that have levied taxes have a permanent rate that cannot be changed by any action of the district or voters within it, some districts can request voter approval for local option taxes and general obligation bonds.

These programs have different pros and cons for the districts.

**Local option taxes**

Most taxing districts, with the exception of education service districts, can request voter approval through a ballot measure to levy a local option tax, according to Oregon Department of Revenue documents. These taxes are a

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## Local artist, international businesswoman



The Eagle/Rylan Boggs  
Brynn Elizabeth, 23, paints in her home studio in John Day Thursday, Feb. 23.

John Day painter uses social media to attract a broad audience

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Brynn Elizabeth sells and shows her art internationally, all without leaving John Day.

Despite being a full-time artist, the 23-year-old spends a large amount of time networking and marketing her work through online platforms like Etsy, an e-commerce site for entrepreneurs.

"A lot of people have this misconception about full-time artists

where all we do is paint all day, and there's so much more that goes into it," Elizabeth said. "... You don't really have weekends anymore because you just constantly have to work."

Elizabeth sells internationally and relies heavily on social media and networking to get new customers and share her art. As a professional, she has sold about 300 pieces, 200 of which have been through Etsy.

She does sell locally, but shows much of her work around the country with a collective of almost 30 international artists called Copycat Violence. Though she's put on roughly 30 shows across the United States and in Europe, she has never attended one. She specializes in a style of

painting called contemporary romanticism.

"It means my work has a lot of emotional qualities," Elizabeth said. "That's what romanticism is. It's about human emotion."

Most of her work are portraits of women. She uses family, models and herself to work from.

"I have to have reference. You kind of have to when you're doing portraiture. It's hard to just make a person's face up," she said.

She's drawn to pre-Raphaelite artists, such as John William Waterhouse and their romantic, dreamy style of painting.

She works in acrylic, oil and pencil and starts a piece by laying down the base color then sanding it down.

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