

OPINIONS

Applegate's community: Solving problems through partnerships

BY JAMIE MCLEOD-SKINNER

I had the good fortune of attending the Cantrall Buckley Park Golden Jubilee on July 14. I was struck by how Applegate Valley has changed since I was a kid in Ashland in the 1980s. I was particularly impressed by the examples of positive change that came from members of the Applegate community stepping up and taking action when government was unable or unwilling: a park, a bridge, a scenic trail. These grassroots efforts created win-win private-public partnerships—critical for community and economic development. Government should provide a healthy foundation for our communities and know when to help and when to get out of the way.

The story of Cantrall Buckley Park powerfully illustrates how citizens can lead and how sometimes government eventually follows. When Jackson County contemplated closing Cantrall Buckley Park in the late 1990s, private citizens and the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation (now known as A Greater Applegate) stepped in to keep the beloved 88-acre park open.

Similarly, a group of dedicated locals kept historic McKee Bridge from being demolished after rot was discovered in 2011—raising tens of thousands of dollars to fill in the shortfall after a federal grant. McKee Bridge Historical Society continues to preserve this beautiful piece of Applegate history for future generations. I've taken my kids to McKee Bridge, and they've marveled at the structure.

Ever consider how great it would be to hike 50 miles across the ridge above the Applegate Valley? That dream is on its way to reality thanks to the vision and work of Applegate Trails Association, in partnership with the Medford District Bureau of Land Management. My dogs love hiking in the Applegate, and I'm looking forward to taking them on that trail.

I believe in our Oregon values—that we all care about our families and communities, that we have a concept of building partnerships and of stepping up when government falls short.

When government fails to provide something more critical than a park—like full Social Security and Medicare

benefits—citizens should take charge to secure the result they need and deserve. Studies commissioned by A Greater Applegate forecast that Applegaters age 65 and older—retirees counting on Social Security and Medicare to make ends meet—will swell from 23 percent in 2010 to over 32 percent by 2022. These programs that you've invested in for years by paying taxes are under attack by the current Congress. If successful, "entitlement reform" campaigns will leave one third of Applegaters with less than they've earned, sending negative ripple effects throughout the valley's economy and culture.

At the other end of the age spectrum, we have our kids. The White House and Congress propose to cut federal programs that provide children with health care, nutritious food, and stable housing. Josephine and Jackson counties are in the top 20 percent of counties with households in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Are you okay with government turning its back on our less fortunate kids?

Does our government have a responsibility to study and address changing weather patterns? Applegate River offers some of the cleanest water in Oregon, but temperature standards to support fish are routinely violated, especially with this year's drought. A hotter, drier climate is the undeniable

trend. We need to get serious about doing our part to reduce the trend.

We've got some pretty smart folks graduating from the Oregon Institute of Technology who can help us develop renewable energy systems that will stimulate our economy and reduce our consumption of fossil fuels. The federal government can help by shifting subsidies from the fossil fuel industry to incentives for renewable energy.

Many high school graduates don't believe that additional education or training is financially accessible. Without that access, how can they pursue their dreams and how do we maintain a healthy economy? It seems to me that an exchange of public service for college education or trade school would be a win-win solution.

Applegaters have a solid tradition of stepping up and taking action when government fails to deliver. I applaud your efforts. But none of us can do it all alone. We're all at a disadvantage when Washington, DC, works against local interests.

We must build partnerships between the people in our district and the federal government. That way, the government can provide the resources, and the people on the ground can provide the local wisdom.

Jamie McLeod-Skinner
info@mcleod-skinner.com

Protecting the Siskiyou Crest and its botanical diversity

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

The Siskiyou Mountains are known for their incredible botanical and geological diversity. The region is a complex patchwork of geologic strata supporting some of the most diverse conifer forests in the world. The region represents the climax of biodiversity on the West Coast of North America, and the Siskiyou Crest is the conduit through which biodiversity flows. This continuous high-elevation ridgeline connects the Coast Range to the Cascade Mountains near the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. It is important both locally and regionally as a climate refuge and as a connectivity corridor for dispersing wildlife and shifting plant communities. This function will become increasingly important as the effects of climate change become more pronounced. The more intact our forests, meadows, and plant communities are, the more effective they will be at providing climate refugia, dispersal corridors, and habitat resilience.

The eastern portion of the Siskiyou Crest includes the headwaters of the Applegate River, many of the range's highest elevation habitats, and

a significant concentration of rare and endemic plant species. In fact, both the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest (RRSNF) and the adjacent Klamath National Forest (KNF) have officially designated Botanical Areas along the Siskiyou Crest. In total, 12 Botanical Areas have been designated in the Applegate watershed on RRSNF land, with an additional nine Botanical Areas on the KNF side of the Siskiyou Crest.

According to the Land and Resource Management Plan, which provides land management direction to the RRSNF, Botanical Areas are designated to "protect and enhance exceptional botanical values [and] encourage compatible scientific, educational and recreational use." The agency is also directed to resolve conflicts in the area "in favor of the botanical resource." The KNF is directed to do largely the same in their designated Botanical Areas.

The Siskiyou Crest is also traversed by the region's premiere nonmotorized trail, the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). For over 55 miles, from near the Red Buttes Wilderness to Mt. Ashland, the trail crosses the rocky ridges, high mountain meadows, and beautiful high-elevation

forests of the Siskiyou Crest. The PCT attracts visitors from around the region and around the world. The trail highlights the region's scenic beauty and is well loved by local residents for hiking, botanizing, birding, and other outdoor recreational activities.

Unfortunately, many of these Botanical Areas and the PCT are being impacted by illegal off-road vehicle use. Motorized enthusiasts are driving into wet meadows, across arid grasslands, and over flower-filled rock gardens, killing rare plants, damaging vegetation, compacting soils, disrupting hydrology, and spreading noxious weeds. Under current US Forest Service (USFS) management protocol, the unauthorized routes on the Siskiyou Crest are illegal and, according to the environmental analysis for the USFS Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM), should be closed to off-road vehicle use. To date, USFS has only fulfilled a portion of the MVUM. They have allowed an expansion of official motorized trails in the Applegate, but have failed to implement any of the closures, enforcement measures, or protections envisioned in the environmental analysis.

The impacts associated with unauthorized off-road use are unacceptable in our Botanical Areas and other sensitive habitats on the Siskiyou Crest. Motorized vehicles are

particularly damaging in Botanical Areas where intact plant communities and rare plant populations are common. Unauthorized off-road use is also illegal according to current land management mandates; therefore, use of motorized vehicles off designated routes should be treated as the crime that it is.

Applegate Neighborhood Network (ANN) has been documenting the impacts of off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on the Siskiyou Crest and in our designated Botanical Areas. The impacts are widespread, pervasive, and at times exceptionally severe. We encourage the USFS to close illegal OHV routes immediately and enforce that closure to protect the world-renowned botanical resources in our region.

Botanical Areas were designated to protect particularly important sites with rare and unusual plant populations, and they should be adequately protected across the Siskiyou Crest and throughout the Applegate Valley. We ask that the USFS work with ANN to ensure that current off-road vehicle regulations are enforced. This collaboration could start with off-road vehicle closures that protect the PCT and our botanical diversity on the Siskiyou Crest.

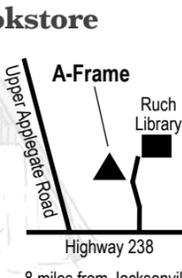
Luke Ruediger
ANN Program Coordinator
luke@applegateneighborhood.
network

Visit the A-Frame Bookstore
@ Ruch Library

Used books from \$1 to \$1.50

Tuesdays 12 - 4
Thursdays 1 - 5
Saturdays 12 - 4

Managed by Friends of Ruch Library. Join us!



Rural Security Solutions

We are Locally Owned and Operated
Commercial & Residential
Affordable OLCC Compliant Systems
Instant Alerts to your Phone
Remote Access by Phone or Computer
24 Hour Monitoring Service Available
Customized Solutions to your needs

Enjoy the peace of mind knowing what is going on around your property.

Siskiyou Security
541-846-1248
Applegate Valley, OR
CCB # 166059

alhua
STATE OF THE ART EQUIPMENT
www.SiskiyouSecurity.com



OPEN 7 DAYS
A WEEK

**ACE
FIELDS
HOME CENTER**

PH: (541) 862-2111 • FAX: (541) 862-2474
5285 Williams Hwy. • Grants Pass, OR 97527

