

OPINIONS

Protected federal forestlands and scenic values improve our economy and home values

BY STUART HEASLET

There is growing public concern that traditional logging harvests in our local mountains may be limiting growth of our local economy, including tourism, jobs, personal income, and property values.

It's a legitimate worry.

A statistical study called "The Effect of Environmental Factors on Real Estate Value" concludes that residential property values are higher "in areas of high environmental (scenic) value," compared to values "in regions with a lower scenic attractiveness rating."

And according to studies released by Headwaters Economics, a national nonpartisan economics research firm funded in part by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other agencies:

- "Protected natural amenities—such as pristine scenery and wildlife—help sustain property values and attract new investment."

- "[C]ounties with national parks, monuments, or other permanent protections on federal land support above-average rates of job growth and are correlated with higher levels of per capita income. In 2010, per capita income in western non-metropolitan counties with 100,000 acres of protected public lands is on average \$4,360 higher than per capita income in similar counties with no protected public lands."

- "[Rural] counties with more than 30 percent of the county's land base in federal protected status such as national parks, monuments, wilderness, and other similar designations increased jobs by 345 percent over the last 40 years. By comparison, similar counties with no protected federal public lands increased employment by 83 percent."

- "[S]cenic landscapes are increasingly valued more for the aesthetic and recreational amenities they provide

than for their stocks of precious metals, timber, or forage. Entrepreneurs and talented workers are choosing to work where they can enjoy outdoor recreation and natural landscapes."

- "High-wage service industries also are using national parks, monuments, wilderness areas, and other public lands as a tool to recruit and retain innovative, high-performing talent."

- "Wilderness is associated with rapid population, employment, and personal income growth relative to non-wilderness counties."

This is not a signal to logging companies that their businesses are being targeted. If anything, their services would be needed more than they are now, as many in the timber industry are some of the most knowledgeable and skilled individuals in our forests. A sustainable way forward could consist of a partnership of scientists and timber professionals who can restore and care for forests that will support the new economy and rebuild the old-growth ancient forests of the future.

Update: The BLM is preparing the Bear Grub Vegetation Management project that may include commercial logging in areas visible to residents and visitors in and near Ruch and Jacksonville. Hopefully the BLM will implement their scenic evaluation criteria, Scenic Management System, to evaluate visual impacts to homes and recreational trail systems. Public comments will be invited by the BLM soon.

For more information, go to savewildlands.org, applegateneighborhood.network, and kswild.org.

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Discover Stories on the Land

Below is another excerpt from the unpublished 1996 book, *Stories on the Land: An Environmental History of the Applegate and Upper Illinois Valley*, by George McKinley and Doug Frank. The Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc. plans to publish the book in its entirety in 2020.

First roads in Applegate

After the gold rush of 1849, northern California was brimming with would-be and has-been gold-seekers flowing in, out of, and around San Francisco.

The possibility of taking ship passage to the Crescent City area and joining the next gold rush to Sailors' Diggings and Jacksonville made the development of a western route, from Crescent City to Jacksonville, attractive. By 1853, that route was developed up the Smith River and over the divide into Oregon. In very short order, the route was extended to Kerby, where it veered east and then north over a low divide into Deer Creek. From there it ascended Crooks Creek below Mooney Mountain and descended Cheney Creek to the Applegate River. It crossed the Applegate by way of a ferry service that operated near the present Fish Hatchery Bridge.

With the activity in the Jackson Creek, Jackass Creek and Sterling Creek mines at full tilt, this first southern Oregon thoroughfare was very soon extended all the way to Jacksonville. In its earliest form, it followed the north bank of the Applegate River upstream about 28 miles before crossing the divide into Jacksonville. For several years, this was an important travel artery for the study area. It brought miners, settlers, and supplies eastward from travel routes on the Coast, and it carried agricultural goods to the port at Crescent City for shipment to San Francisco. For most of that first decade, it was not much more than a broad trail used for foot and mounted traffic and mule trains. By 1855, between fifty and two hundred pack mules may have traversed this route daily.

Some of the drivers on the Crescent City-to-Jacksonville route were professionals. Often Mexicans in the early years, Indians in the later, they represented a western breed who followed the rising demands for packers across the expanding frontier. Others were exhausted or failed miners. One of these was John Tice, an immigrant from Indiana. Tice first passed through the Rogue Valley in 1851, at the age of nineteen. He had little success in mining, so he began packing. Letters he

sent back to his parents offer a glimpse of life among the early packers.

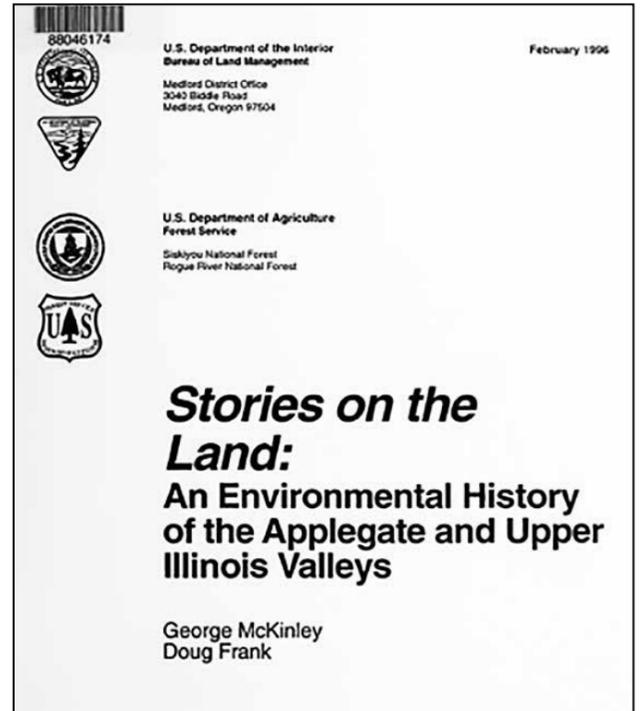
Tice ran a pack train of about fifteen mules on the route from Crescent City to the gold fields. "It is a little over one hundred miles from here to Crescent City," he wrote from Jacksonville, and the round trip took him two or three weeks. With mules running "very high now, from \$100 to \$200 a head," Tice apparently focused on the wheat trade as a means to achieve sufficient return. "There is a great deal of wheat going to be sowed in this valley this season and that makes wheat in good

demand. We bought ours for \$4.00 per bushel and sold most of it for \$10.00."

Trusting in the potential profitability of the wheat market, Tice sowed some of his own in the Illinois Valley on shares. By July of 1854, he was looking forward to the return on these shares—"an average crop," which he hoped would yield "say twenty bushel to the acre." He also packed flour. He bought it for between six and nine cents per pound in Crescent City, and his costs for packing it amounted to not less than six cents per pound. Tice figured he had to sell it for twelve to fifteen cents per pound to make a profit. All told, Tice was able to clear "about twenty-five dollars on a mule." This suited him, though it didn't lead him to overstate the amenities of his chosen trade: "Packing is dirty, disagreeable work," he wrote in 1853, "but it pays us good wages."

A pack route would not long suffice for the transportation needs of the growing community in the gold fields. By 1857, merchants and others at both ends of the route were advocating its improvement. A road commissioner was appointed in April, 1857, and by 1858 a new improved way was opened. This stage road ran farther to the west than the previous pack trail, generally following the route of today's Redwood Highway between Selma and Wilderville, over Hays Hill and down along Slate Creek.

Excerpted by Diana Coogole from pages 63-64.



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