

OPINION

BLM needs to start acting like a good neighbor

BY TAYLOR STARR

The Applegate Valley is a unique place—underlaid by an old and convoluted geology that supports an equally diverse collection of plants, animals, and humans. We are blessed with some of the last, best expanses of wild habitat in the west and a population of concerned citizens, and yet the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is still treating our old-growth forests as giveaways to corporate timber interests.

Despite decades of attempts at collaboration with the local community, BLM has recently embraced a new name for a tired vision of a landscape dominated by clear-cuts, roads, and destruction: Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM). IVM is BLM's latest in a long line of proposals to circumvent the government's own rules, such as listening to public comments, following environmental laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act, and taking wildfire risk into consideration when logging our public lands.

IVM seeks to circumvent these protections, proposing 800,000 acres of industrial logging across southern Oregon. If approved, IVM would allow BLM to log up to 20,000 acres and build 90 miles of roads per decade without scientific review, public comment, or the disclosure of environmental impacts. It would include clear-cutting, logging in Late Successional Reserves, and cutting large trees up to 36 inches diameter and 150 years old.

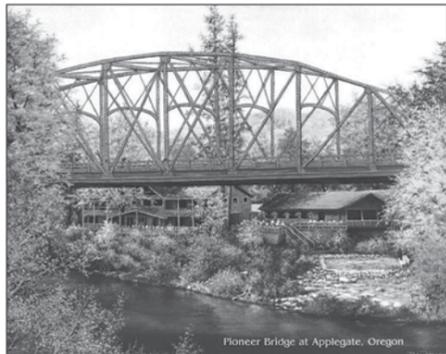
Even worse, BLM seeks to begin implementation of IVM in the Applegate before it is even authorized to do so. The Late Mungers and Penn Butte timber sales, proposed in the mountains between Williams, Murphy, and Selma, include

popular recreation areas like Mungers Butte and Marble Gulch. These BLM-designated Late Successional Reserves not only provide carbon sequestration, vital habitat for wildlife, and opportunities for recreation, but they are also some of our most fire-resilient forests around our rural homes.

In my neighborhood, in Williams, our local BLM forest is the source of water for irrigation on our farm in addition to the other ecological services it provides. Logging these forests threatens our water supply in the midst of historic drought and record temperatures that are already making farming in the Applegate an increasingly difficult endeavor. I have spent hundreds of hours walking these public lands, observing, commenting, and protesting when necessary.

Now we are all at a crossroads: the climate, our water supplies, our ability to survive the next wildfire season all hang in the balance. And yet BLM is squandering the opportunity to do the vital work that many of us do on our own properties to reduce wildfire danger and enhance forest health. Instead, they seek to give away our public lands to corporate timber interests while excluding the public from meaningful participation. Before they go down this misguided path, I call on BLM to return our calls and emails, to engage in meaningful dialog with the community, and to do real restoration and wildfire mitigation. If you agree, please pressure BLM to ditch the IVM and be the good neighbors that we expect and demand them to be.

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NEWS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Applegater community comes through—again!

BY DIANA COOGLE

To all our wonderful, loyal, and generous donors:

I and everyone else on the *Applegater* board can't thank you enough. You, numbering 251, have pulled through again with overwhelming support in November and December. Your \$17,279.20 in donations enabled us to reach the \$14,000 ceiling allowed by NewsMatch, who doubled that amount to \$28,000. Therefore, we have \$31,279.20 to put in our coffers from November and December donations. The newsmagazine is on firm footing again this year. We are rejoicing!

It used to be that we sweated just about every issue, hoping to have enough money to put it out. Thanks to our membership in the Independent Newspaper Network (INN) and their NewsMatch program, geared specifically towards small, independent papers—and thanks to our editor, Bert Etling, who brought us into INN—and thanks to our readers and donors—we breathe more easily these days.

Why then, you might ask, are we going to start tooting our horn about another fundraiser this summer or fall? Well, (1) we also want to publish *Back in Time*, a collection of Evelyn Byrne's popular

column pieces, this year. (2) We have decided to increase the stipend we give to our wonderful volunteers who take their time and gas to distribute the papers. (3) Although ad revenue is up (thank you, advertisers!), we like a little cushion in case that takes a dip, as it did during the worst of the COVID months. (4) Besides, we love putting on an event to delight the community. What we have in mind for this year—The Gater-est Show on Earth, a carnival-type affair—sounds like a barrel of fun. Nothing definite has been arranged yet, but we hope you *all* will come. Let's celebrate together!

When I'm out in the community, I hear, over and over, "I love the *Applegater*." Me too. That's why I serve on the board—and also because I love working with our great, hard-working, enthusiastic board members: Bert Etling, Lisa Baldwin, Jessica Bullard, Mike Schneider, and Dave Dobbs. (If you want to join us, let me know.)

What a great community we have in the Applegate!

Thank you for being a significant part of it.

Diana Coogle
Chair, *Applegater* Board of Directors
diana@applegater.org

We want your letters!

Email to gater@applegater.org.

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Opinion pieces and letters to the editor represent the opinion of the author, not that of the *Applegater* or the Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc. As a community-based newsmagazine, we receive diverse opinions on different topics. We honor these opinions, but object to personal attacks and reserve the right to edit accordingly. Opinion pieces and letters to the editor **must pertain to and mention the Applegate Watershed. We encourage authors to include verifiable facts to back up their arguments.**

Opinion pieces. Limited to 500 words; no images. Opinion pieces submitted by the same person will not be run consecutively. Responses to previously published opinion pieces will not be published. Must include publishable contact information (phone number and/or email address).

Letters. Limited to 200 words; must be signed, with a full street address or PO Box and phone number. Only the writer's name and hometown will be published.

Anonymous letters and opinion pieces, reprinted articles, press releases, and political campaign articles will not be published. Individual letters and opinion pieces may or may not be published. All submissions will be edited for grammar and length.

Email opinion pieces and letters to gater@applegater.org or mail to *Applegater*, Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc., PO Box 14, Jacksonville, OR 97530.

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