

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opinion Pieces and Letters to the Editor represent the opinion of the author, not that of the *Applegater* or the Applegate Valley Community Newspaper. We are a community-based newspaper that receives diverse opinions on different topics. Letters should be no longer than 450 words, and may be edited for grammar and length. Opinion Pieces should be no longer than 600 words. All Letters and Opinion Pieces must be signed, with a full street address or P.O. Box and phone number. Individual Letters may or may not be published in consecutive issues.

Address Opinion Pieces and Letters to the Editor to:
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All-night floodlights

Dear Editor:

The power went off one night in the Applegate area. We sat with candlelight wondering what we could do for entertainment.

The suggestion was to dust off the big ten-inch scope and take advantage of the complete darkness without conflicting floodlights.

Imagine our disappointment when it was discovered there was a complete cloud cover.

There was a time we could really appreciate the country atmosphere without all-night floodlights. My suggestion would be to utilize motion-activating lighting. It would be most effective controlling thievery, plus it would save energy.

Please will someone point out the Milky Way for me?

Jack Van Syoc, Applegate

OPINION

Roles and responsibilities in the Wildland Urban Interface

BY SANDY SHAFFER

In early March I was in Reno for a three-day conference of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. The focus of this conference was the Wildland Urban Interface or WUI, and it truly was a national and international conference.

One topic kept coming up over and over again in various contexts, and it's something that might directly affect everyone in the Applegate. You may have heard of the term before: Appropriate Management Response or AMR.

A few weeks ago our own Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest asked for comments from the public about this concept. Per the Forest Service, AMR "encompasses a range of possible responses to unplanned fires, from monitoring (watching the fire burn to ensure objectives are being met) to full suppression (putting the fire out)." They want to produce an environmental assessment for the forest this coming May. But if you think that AMR would affect only the wilderness areas, read on for a surprise.

In Reno, I listened to at least six talks by six different people on employing AMR in more of our nation's wildfires. To me, part of the reasoning seems to be to shift some of the fire suppression costs from the U.S. Forest Service to other entities, mainly state and local. But there are a host of other concerns that completely muddle up the concept. One thing that resonated with me in all this mud was that the private landowner is not impervious to this issue. We are in the middle of it, even if we don't live next to a wilderness area.

Many agree that not every wildfire in the wilderness or roadless areas needs to be fully suppressed immediately. (Fire is a natural process in our forests, but a century of fire suppression has caused significant levels of fuels buildup.) So, how long do you keep watch over a wildfire, making sure it doesn't destroy valuable resources or private land? And who defines "valuable resources"? Do state or local firefighters stand ready for weeks or months on end while the feds watch a wildfire creep slowly toward the WUI? If so, who pays the bills to wait? Could private lands be considered fuel breaks by federal firefighters? Is point-protection around a home adequate for private property? These are all questions that were raised during this conference.

However, one BIG issue thrown onto the discussion table caught my attention—that of the roles and responsibilities within the WUI (where you and I live). Who should be responsible for what? What I read between the lines of this oft-asked question is: how much should private landowners and residents be held accountable to care for their lands—all of their acres, not just a defensible space? Because we're all (federal, state, local and private) land managers of a sort, or at least we should be. So, in our checkerboard ownership patterns of southwest Oregon's forests, how might the liability for wildfire get divvied up?

Just something to think about as you go about preparing your rural property for this summer's fire season. And keep reading the newspapers because one never knows when one of those seemingly inconsequential articles just might affect us some day soon.

Sandy Shaffer • 541-899-9541

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Howdy - #K0677
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Chops - #K0681
 an 8-week-old Shar Pei mix who needs training.



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