

Applegater

Photo by Dakota Kappen www.applegater.org



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Applegate Valley Community Newsmagazine
Serving Jackson and Josephine Counties — Circulation: 10,500

Celebrating
20
Years

Family Fun & Food!

Joint benefit for
the *Applegater*
and Cantrall Buckley Park

Sunday, May 31
3 – 6 pm
Applegate River Lodge



LIVE MUSIC
Lora Lyn Band
Rainy and the Rattlesnakes

FACE PAINTING
and other kids' activities

FOOD & BEVERAGES

BBQ hot dog, cowboy beans and potato salad \$1
Complimentary chips and lemonade
Wine and beer
available for purchase



\$15 Adult
\$5 Kids

RAFFLE PRIZES

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
Applegate Store • Hidden Valley Market
Ruch Country Store • Ray's in Jacksonville

Joshua Morton: Hard-working artist-teacher gives back

BY DIANA COOGLE

A Williams resident since 2007, Joshua Morton, artist and wrestler, Grants Pass High School art teacher and wrestling coach, is proof of Jimi Hendrix's declaration: "If there is something to be changed in this world, then it can only happen through music."

The status of art scholarships was something that needed to be changed, at least in the world of Joshua's community. The few art scholarships available were of \$100 or \$150 value. It was music that made Joshua act on that need.

Joshua loves live concerts—the crowd, the waiting in the parking

lots, the people he meets before the show, the festival atmosphere: "the whole amazingness of it all," as he puts it. "It's like Christmas—everyone is in a better mood. Everyone is more helpful, nicer." That atmosphere of generosity at the music concert made him want to be like that in the real world.

So three years ago he started the One Sweet World Fund, under the umbrella of Josephine County Educational Fund, for an annual scholarship to be given to a Grants Pass High School graduating senior who has taken an art course from

See JOSHUA MORTON, page 23

Look Who's Reading the Gater!



Dinner at Tony's Taverna in Malibu, California, was followed by a leisurely and thoroughly enjoyable read through the *Applegater* by none other than, left to right, Tony, the owner of this Greek restaurant, Josh Bratt, Greg Bratt, and Benjamin Bratt, movie and television star (seen recently in *Modern Family* and *Private Practice*).

High extinction risk for Applegate coho

BY JAKOB SHOCKEY

In November 2014, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) released their final recovery plan for our region's coho salmon. These southern Oregon and Northern California coastal coho, often referenced as the "SONCC Coho" to avoid top-heavy sentences, inhabit only the watersheds of our mythical State of Jefferson. The plan is heavy with nomenclature and population recovery modeling, and I've already had to use two acronyms in as many sentences just to introduce it. However, it is also the story of a survival struggle—within our watershed, on our properties, and by a neighbor whose family has lived in the area much longer than we have.

Talk to an old-timer or read historic field journals on the Rogue Basin, and you will hear the stories of salmon "so thick you could walk on their backs and fish with a pitchfork." As this Final SONCC Coho Recovery Plan states: "Not long ago, these watersheds provided conditions that supported robust and resilient populations of coho salmon that could persist under dynamic environmental conditions." However, both inadvertently and by design, we have changed the conditions of our region's watersheds over the past 150 years, and today these populations have reached a tipping point.

This point, labeled a *deposition threshold* in the NMFS plan, can also be called an *extinction spiral*. This is when a species goes from "limping along" to a dramatic decline, when the numbers of returning coho spawners are so few they can no longer find each other in our tributaries to mate. The deposition threshold for the Middle Rogue and Applegate Rivers is estimated at 734

spawners, while a healthy run would be at least 2,400. Two of the last four years surveyed have been well below that 734 spawners threshold, and there has been an 11 percent annual population decline for the past 12 years. These and other data led NMFS to classify the Middle Rogue/Applegate River population of SONCC coho as at "high risk for extinction." We are witnessing the tipping point for this region's native coho salmon.

What went wrong? Salmon, after all, are known for being tough, resilient, and independent. In this, they have come to signify the spirit of the Pacific Northwest. Yet salmon are dependent on a functioning riparian habitat, and therein lies the problem.

It's hard to visualize how much we've changed this habitat as we have settled into this watershed—how much our baseline for what a creek looks like has shifted over the generations of settlement. The native Takelma people once called the Applegate River valley "the beaver place." These beavers were trapped out and their ponds, once grouped along our streams like beads on a thread, disappeared.

Gold mining further altered the hydrology of our streams, and conifers were cut away from the creeks as the most accessible timber. With agriculture came levees to straighten and contain our river and streams, and dams to divert water.

Woody debris was cleaned out of the creeks to prevent logjams, while invasive species slowly crept into the riparian forests, choking out young trees and thus eventually increasing sunlight on the creek. The water heated up. Nitrogen runoff from fertilized fields, septic systems and cattle

See COHO EXTINCTION RISK, page 2

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