

Request for dialogue on forest issues

BY TRISH MALONE

Kevin Preister, Luis Ibanez, and Trish Malone are cultural consultants at the Center for Social Ecology and Public Policy (CSEPP) in Ashland, Oregon. CSEPP has an eight-month contract to work with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Forest Service to provide community engagement in the Applegate Valley that reflects the diverse resident population making up this beautiful valley. If you'd like to read up on who we are and how we do things, please find us at csepp.us.

We are in your community to listen to and talk with you about community life and the public lands that are in and around the Applegate Valley. We want to know why you live here, how you use public lands, what you would change to make life here better for you and your family, and what forest issues you have. We've talked with people in their homes, attended community meetings, frequented local gathering places, and talked with people from local, state, and federal agencies to hear about current issues challenging the community.

As we listen to you, we hear patterns of emerging, existing, and disruptive issues. The more people we talk with, the more we find and look for possible management action plans and

opportunities for collaborative projects. Some of these issues and questions from residents so far are:

- Widespread frustration with BLM's Nedsbar decision. It is unclear at the moment whether this decision can be revisited, but it has resulted in strong skepticism that dialogue can make a difference. We hope that this is not true and that we can hear the unheard voices!
- How can the federal agencies, with the support of residents, develop approaches driven by forest health, with harvested trees being a by-product?
- Residents have expressed numerous issues about BLM leaving slash behind after its projects, particularly the "lop and scatter" after pre-commercial thins, contributing to fire risk and promoting unsafe behaviors, such as youth having parties and lighting fires.
- Is there a way to expedite the administrative procedures of the agencies in approving hiking trails requested by residents?
- Residents near Anderson Butte report unsafe shooting in a multi-use area with an extensive trail system.
- There is an interest expressed across diverse community constituents about developing a recreation strategy for economic development, including a public land component.

• What can the agencies do to support the small timber mill in Ruch?

Our work began in September, and we've talked with hundreds of valley residents. They in turn have talked to their friends, and their friends have talked to others, and the ripple of interests and conversation grows.

But that's not nearly enough. We want to talk to you! So for the next few months we'll have small intimate gatherings that we hope you'll stop in for. Some will be in neighbors' homes—yours if you'd like. Others will be at your favorite restaurants and wineries throughout the valley, from Ruch to Williams.

We'll let you know where and when via Jo's List, Ruch Valley Roots Community, the *Applegater* and various other business Facebook pages, smoke signals, word of mouth, and fliers posted on bulletin boards. But for now, when you see us around, stop us and talk story, or call and set a time to talk.

Your voice, your concerns, your input are important to the greater well-being of the Applegate Valley.

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OPINION

Support the science-based expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument

BY SUZIE SAVOIE

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) recently released its *Living Planet Report 2016*. The sobering statistics in the report show that the world is on track to lose two-thirds of all wild animals by 2020. Using the most comprehensive worldwide data, WWF's Living Planet Index shows that animal populations dropped by 58 percent between 1970 and 2012, and predictions show that losses will reach 67 percent by 2020.

The report cites habitat loss and degradation (e.g., the destruction of wild areas for farming and logging) as the largest contributor to wildlife decline. Humans have now impacted the majority of earth's land area, with just 15.4 percent of land included in protected areas.

Additionally, joint research recently published in the journal *Nature* clarified the largest threats to wildlife. Research from the University of Queensland, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature assessed near-threatened and threatened species and found that overexploitation, agricultural activity, urban development, invasion and disease, pollution, and ecosystem modification ranked as the top threats to wildlife.

Seventy-two percent of the studied species were affected by overexploitation—in other words, logging, overhunting,

overfishing, or gathering at rates beyond natural reproduction capability. Sixty-two percent were threatened by plant and animal agriculture alone.

Yet, if we choose to manage our public lands for biodiversity, with the proposed expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument we have an immense opportunity to help safeguard our region from future wildlife and biodiversity decline.

Established in 2000, the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument is the only national monument specifically designated to protect an area because of its outstanding biological diversity. In 2011, an independent, interdisciplinary group of scientists evaluated the land surrounding the monument and found that an expansion of the boundary is necessary in order to safeguard the area's biological values into the future.

The Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument acts as a land bridge at a convergence where plants and animals from distinct ecoregions—Great Basin, Cascade, and Klamath-Siskiyou mountains—intersect to create unusual plant and animal assemblages and diversity. Some have called the monument area the Noah's Ark of biodiversity and the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument the loading dock.

The monument is renowned for species richness and biodiversity, a place where you can find an outstanding 120 butterfly species alone, including the rare Mardon skipper. The existing monument is home to more than 300 animal species, and the watershed in the proposed monument expansion is home to rare and endemic species such as Tunnel Creek's population of the Oregon spotted frog. In Upper Jenny Creek are two fish that are found nowhere else on earth: the Jenny Creek redband trout and the Jenny Creek sucker.

Expanding the monument will further protect a necessary wildlife corridor into the Siskiyou Mountains and the Applegate Valley, facilitating migration and movement for Pacific fisher, gray wolves, spotted owls, and Roosevelt elk, to name a few.

The monument has become a bastion of ecotourism and an outdoor laboratory and study area for Southern Oregon University students and scientists. This is why the Ashland and Talent City Councils, Chamber of Commerce boards, and mayors have endorsed the monument expansion—it's good for both the economy and ecology of the region.

In August 2016, Senators Merkley and Wyden sent a letter urging Sally Jewell, secretary of the US Department of the Interior, to endorse monument expansion. In October, Senator Merkley and Michael Connor, deputy secretary of the Department of Interior, hosted a public hearing in Ashland where 80 percent of the 500 people in attendance supported the expansion. Don Gentry,

Poetry Corner

After Stafford
by Anna Elkins

Ask me what the snow holds.
Ask me the shape of my own hands
as I've held the promise of spring.

I have chosen to live with winter
in the naked trees.

Ask me how these trees
hold still enough
to live, and I will climb them.

See that lowest branch?
It could carry
the weight of childhood
a tropical continent
a sister and brother
playing seven-hand Rummy.

Ask me what the sky sheds—
rain, days, maybes.

Maybe we fall like snow,

or maybe we fly.



White Wonder
by Linda Kappen

White wonder out of the sky
Dancing through tree limbs and
branches so high
Each falling separately but at
the same speed
A downward fall twisting, rocking,
spiraling
Some straight and some free
Different sizes and shapes as
they move to the ground
Where they gather as one
A blanket so sound

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chair of the Klamath Tribes, spoke in favor of the expansion within ancestral tribal land.

President Obama will ultimately decide the fate of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument expansion before he leaves office on January 20, 2017.

If you care about the survival of imperiled animal and plant species in the Applegate and surrounding region, if you love outdoor recreation, and if you like to get out and view wildflowers and butterflies in a place where they can thrive, you should support the science-based expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.

It's important that our senators hear your support for the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument expansion. Give them a call: Senator Merkley's office at 541-608-9102 and Senator Wyden's office at 541-858-5122. You can also send the senators emails through their websites. Make your voice for conservation heard now.

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