

OPINIONS

*Behind the Green Door***Commitment to place, commitment to the news**

BY CHRIS BRATT



Chris Bratt

As a young teenager in San Francisco, I searched for paying jobs after school and on Saturdays. My older brothers and I were always trying to find work to help make ends meet for our family during those economically depressed times. One job I had was delivering the *Mission Merchants News*. This was a free newspaper delivered to every household in the large outer Mission District area, which included our smaller specific neighborhood.

My job was to fold about 200 newspapers weekly and deliver them up the long, steep walkways to all the houses along my prescribed route. It was a huge effort and commitment to get those newspapers to every hilltop front door, but it was important that the merchants made the connection with our community and that the community got the news.

Today, I still have a delivery job for a free newspaper. Only now, the job is more important to me and I do it for no pay. I am one of many volunteers for our quarterly local newsmagazine called the *Applegater*. Undoubtedly, if you live in the

Applegate, you've probably at least seen a copy of the paper since it's mailed to every household and business in the Applegate Valley. We also make the extra effort to hand deliver the *Applegater* to federal, state, and local agencies, local libraries, and area merchants.

As a 23-year volunteer for the *Applegater*, I have come to realize how important a local community paper can be to area residents and to the health of our entire southern Oregon region. It's part of a joint commitment to a special place we all treasure and call home.

Let me give you a few reasons for joining me in making a firm ongoing commitment to becoming a steady financial contributor to our indispensable nonprofit *Applegater* newsmagazine.

The 500,000-acre Applegate River watershed is a unique place with a high density of vegetation and animals. It is one of the most biologically diverse areas within North America. We have 100 plant species considered rare and over 21 species of trees that have commercial value. Many of these

species are at high risk of extinction in the foreseeable future.

We also have a lot of unique people (the *Applegater's* circulation is 11,500). We are home to a dynamic human component consisting of Native Americans, loggers, miners, ranchers, foresters, artists, farmers, retirees, wine grape and cannabis growers, people working on computers from home, and in many other trades and professions. This diverse group of residents mixing with our unique landscape suggests that social, economic, political, and ecological changes are happening on a regular basis. The question is, will these changes continue to promote the vitality and healthy progress of our community, sustaining it over time? Only time and the *Applegater* will tell.

Approximately 70 percent of the land in the Applegate watershed (341,378 acres) is public land managed by the US Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Many residents have concerns about the management practices of these two federal agencies and how their activities and timber sales affect the

landscape and their lives. The *Applegater* continues to urge these agencies to take an active role in community-developed proposals and ideas.

Our community, with help from the *Applegater*, has a successful four-decade history of a willingness to collaborate with these agencies regarding both private and public land management in the Applegate. In fact, we are an original model of how forest communities in the Northwest can be sustained while community members promote vitality, build resilience, and make a commitment to a place.

The *Applegater* newsmagazine continues to play a significant role in promoting this collaboration between all participants to resolve problems. The *Applegater* also provides a discussion platform for all parties to participate in public forestland decision-making processes.

Help spread the word, along with the money. Make a donation today. (See page 5 for more information.)

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Smart meters are coming, smart meters are coming!

BY JIM FARVER

Reminiscent of the rides of Paul Revere and William Dawes in April 1775 and Sybil Ludington in April 1777, it is time to warn Applegate residents that Pacific Power is marching on the valley to install smart meters. By the time you read this, you may already have one installed, but what you may not yet realize is that most people will not want one affixed to their house.

A so-called smart meter is an electronic, pulsed-radiation device that replaces your existing analog meter and tracks power consumption by the minute, transmitting this information back to the power company. There are cost savings for the utility but little to no benefits to us. Indeed, smart meters present many significant concerns for consumers in the areas of health, safety, privacy, security, and cost.

EMF (electric and magnetic fields) radiation from smart meters can cause dozens of health symptoms, and the World Health Organization classifies wireless radiation as 2B ("possibly carcinogenic to humans"). Over 2,000 papers have been

written on the health and environmental effects of electromagnetic fields.

The new meters do not contain surge protection like our old analog meters, and smart meter fires have been reported throughout the US, Canada, and Australia. Several related lawsuits have been filed against PG&E in California.

There are also many privacy issues concerning the security of the data transmitted along with its use by Pacific Power. A hacker could open your smart locks or turn off your power, lights, or alarms, and even alter your bill. Some utilities are already planning to sell this data, which can be used to determine daily routines—when you are home, what you are doing, etc.

There are also significant cost issues with smart meters, and some users have reported a significant increase in their bill. Essentially our houses become part of Pacific Power's network, and we are paying for it. Also, your meter may be sending the data for many other neighbors if your neighbors are not near Pacific Power's

antenna (their collector), in which case you will be paying for the additional electricity used by your meter.

The smart-meter rollout is being rushed—the technology and the standards associated with smart meters are immature. They are being installed without informed consent and without full disclosure of how they work and what Pacific Power can do with the personal data it collects. Customers and the media both report serious complaints about smart meters.

New Mexico, along with 11 counties and 45 towns and cities in California, has banned smart meters. Talent and Josephine County have written to Pacific Power expressing concern. There are many local efforts under way to fight the rollout, but we are behind. It is time for action. We must fight the advance and warn our neighbors—again reminiscent of the rides of Revere, Dawes, and Ludington.

Local meetings have been held throughout the valley warning our community about the hazards associated with these meters and discussing available alternatives. More meetings will happen as the community comes together.

Pacific Power does offer an opt-out option if you do not wish a smart meter installed, but it is currently charging a one-time \$137 "meter exchange fee" (for

not changing your meter, really!), plus a \$36 monthly meter-reading fee per meter *forever*. Many of us have more than one meter! This charge is excessive and is being fought by the community. Paying \$36 per month for an irrigation meter when it is used only five months of the year is just plain wrong!

Go to freedom2sayno2smartmeters.org and sign a petition to protest this charge and donate to keep this effort going. Self-funded volunteers are fighting the smart-meter advance, so please help.

Even if you already have a smart meter installed, there are still things you can do, including paying Pacific Power \$306 to remove it (and then paying \$36/month thereafter). If you must keep it, there are things you can do to mitigate some of its harmful effects.

For a more thorough discussion of smart meters and your options, please try to attend a meeting. More information can also be found at many websites.

You can also visit freedom2sayno2smartmeters.org for more local information and emfsafetynetwork.org/smart-meters for a good discussion of the issues.

Community action is needed!

Jim Farver
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**Why are we betting the farm?**

Engineers design to "fail safe" when miscalculation may result in a devastating catastrophe. If one choice saves money while another avoids the risk of serious loss, they are taught to choose the design that avoids calamity in the event of failure. We should follow that standard when it comes to climate change.

Despite scientific consensus about our effect on climate, we are recklessly ignoring the engineers' "precautionary rule" by betting that nothing will happen if we continue increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.

Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration has hit record levels in each of the past five years and is higher than at any time since humans first walked

the earth. Incredibly, the new Trump-appointed NASA director is recklessly pulling the plug on the program that monitors atmospheric CO₂. This problem won't go away just because we stick our heads in sand! Common sense demands that we continue to measure what is happening in our atmosphere. Climate scientists tell us that we are lemmings heading off the cliff. Why are we betting our only farm (indeed, mankind's very existence) that they are wrong?

The Applegate Valley sees the results of global warming from our use of fossil fuels in the form of drought and increased risk of fires. The precautionary rule requires us, and the fail-safe approach instructs us, to reduce the emissions of the greenhouse gases causing global warming. Otherwise,

the risk of devastating drought and fires in the valley will almost certainly increase.

The precautionary principle also instructs us to make acceptance of science an acid test of our choice of elected officials.

Eric Weisberg, Central Point, OR

We have met the enemy and it is us!

The bitching and moaning about the collapse of the recycling market almost always targets someone else. Maybe it's the Chinese, maybe it's the disposal and recycling companies. But if we genuinely seek responsibility, we need look no further than our own neighborhood.

We and our neighbors are not following the rules. When we throw garbage and nonrecyclable materials in the recycling bin, we contaminate the material such that

it cannot be recycled. The entire load ends up in the landfill, and it's our fault.

Recycling is great, but it is only one leg of a stool that reduces the environmental impact of our consumption. The other legs are "reducing" and "reusing." For too many years we thought that recycling allowed us to continue our obscene consumptive excesses. This was always an illusion! Until we recognize that we live on a finite planet with finite resources and a finite capacity to process our waste, we will behave unsustainably; we'll destroy the planet that future generations need to survive.

So, check that you're following Rogue Disposal and Recycling rules and check your neighbors' bins...and then advise them if they are culprits.

Alan Journet, Jacksonville, OR