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from Tami Quinn Hollenbeck

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OPINION

Public safety on and around Anderson Butte

BY NEAL ANDERSON

Almost three years ago, in January 2016, a bullet from the direction of Anderson Butte went through the bedroom door of neighbors who live a mile from a popular target-shooting site on Anderson Butte. A sheriff's deputy investigating the incident took the bullet. Since then, bullets have whirred over the heads of hikers on Anderson Butte, gunfire on Anderson Butte has been heard after dark, and homeowners have been pinned down in their homes as stray bullets fly overhead.

Meanwhile, the sound of semiautomatic weapons is not uncommon, and a high-powered rifle has been set up to fire illegally down and across roads. In mid-October this year, a bullet landed 15 feet from a homeowner working on his land. A significant and terrifying public safety risk exists on and around Anderson Butte arising from activity on land managed by our Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The danger is real. In January 2018 a pregnant hiker was killed on BLM land in Arizona by a stray bullet from target shooting. We wish to stress that our concern is *not* a Second Amendment issue, but a common-sense issue driven by significant public-safety risks for those on and around Anderson Butte.

Residents met with BLM at Anderson Butte in 2016 two weeks after the bullet passed through the bedroom door. But this problem is not new; unsafe target shooting on Anderson Butte was raised with the BLM as long ago as 2007. Residents have attended four public meetings with BLM management since the 2016 meeting.

The BLM has stated that their ultimate goal is to manage for multiple usage of public lands while ensuring public safety for all. They have taken some actions to curtail unsafe target shooting on the butte: concrete barricades have been positioned to discourage parking and shooting at various sites, but many of these are crumbling, perhaps from shooting, and visitors simply step over them to shoot. Patrols by the Jackson County Sheriff's department seemingly have had some effect, and household trash, which encourages shooting, continues to be removed from various shooting sites. The BLM has talked with members of the Shooting Sports Roundtable, as required by a 2007 Memorandum of Understanding, seeking support with BLM outreach on this safety issue. Additionally, BLM has



Anderson Butte trailhead sign used for target practice.
Photo: Joy Rogalla, September 2018.

installed signs asking shooters to self-regulate, but signs are often removed or used for target practice.

While we all wish the problem would solve itself, this has not happened. Clearly more concerted action is needed. Despite BLM's efforts, people on and around Anderson Butte continue to be at significant risk due to unsafe target shooting. More signs need to be erected, maybe with more appropriate wording. Many shooters need to be informed about the danger of shooting into empty space, when people and houses are below.

Future actions planned by BLM include scoping for an environmental assessment seeking temporary closure of shooting sites on Anderson Butte, as NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) requires. BLM anticipates this process will take about three months once it is initiated. Unfortunately, continued coordination with BLM's Washington office is needed prior

to issuing a decision on a temporary closure. The BLM has added funding to continue law enforcement support by the Jackson County Sheriff's department. BLM recreation staff has been requested to review and replace damaged signs and will discuss with law enforcement our recommendations for additional signage.

Residents living near Anderson Butte and recreation visitors to the butte trails have reached out to the public to help eliminate this problem, as BLM requested of us. We have met and discussed the issue with Commissioner Strosser, Representative Marsh, Sheriff Sickler, the Medford Rifle and Pistol Club, Jackson County Parks & Recreation, and local representatives of Senators Wyden and Merkley and Representative Walden. We have written articles published in local papers. This issue has been covered in interviews on radio and television and in local papers. Our outreach continues.

While we are frustrated and losing patience, we continue to cooperate with the BLM to facilitate closure of Anderson Butte. We will also continue to alert BLM and local police to incidents arising from unsafe target shooting on Anderson Butte.

Concerned Applegate residents on Griffin Lane and Sterling Creek Road
Neal Anderson • 541-899-5555
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Frank and Evie Ault

Kathy Conway

Bjorn and Cecile Everson

Richard and Dana Gangnes

Alan Journey

Garry and Olivia Kappel

Dana Kristal

Peggy Martin

Jim and Leslie Perkins

Hope Robertson

Joy Rogalla

Christine Savory

Casey Slezak

Voices of the Applegate Concerts & Rehearsals



Under the direction of our new choir director, Shayne Flock, Voices of the Applegate will present its usual eclectic selections of international songs (German, Indonesian, Israeli, African), Christmas ballads, and even doo-wop at its winter concert at the Applegate River Lodge on December 2. Shayne is taking us to the next level with our music, both individually and as a group, with this concert, which will include some sing-alongs for the audience.

Shayne grew up in the Rogue Valley, where his father was the choir director at Hidden Valley High School for many years. Shayne attended Crater High School, where he is now the music director. He also was the music director of the Corvallis Community Choir for three years, so he came to us with a lot of experience.

The first rehearsal for our next session will be held on Tuesday, January 8, at the Ruch Library meeting room. Registration begins at 6:30 pm. Concerts are on April 5 and April 7.

Registration cost is \$60 per session, which includes payment for the director, the accompanist, the music, and concert venues.

For more information, call Joan Peterson at 541-846-6988.



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