

Mungers Butte trail

BY EVELYN ROETHER

Greetings fellow hikers! Here's a new one for you. This trail is a mid-elevation beauty that's generally accessible into the winter months, as long as you don't see snow on the ridge up there.

Now is the time to familiarize yourself with this semi-roadless area that straddles the watersheds of the Applegate and Illinois valleys. It is one of many unprotected wild lands that are under threat by the BLM's 800,000-acre Integrated Vegetation Management Project that proposes, among other things, to cut large holes in our remaining fire resistant old growth forests. This project is currently in the planning phase, and the "Late Mungers" old-growth forest is on the cutting block. We need to defend these places where we recreate and find solace in nature. So please, go up there, fall in love, and work to protect Mungers Butte.

Mungers Butte

Difficulty: Moderate

Distance: Option 1 - 1.2 miles round-trip

Option 2 - 2.3 miles round-trip

Elevation gain: 660 feet

Open: Almost year-round unless there's snow on the ridge

Map: Murphy Mountain USGS quad

Directions: From Water Gap Road in Williams, turn onto Upper Powell Creek Road and continue nine miles up the Powell Creek drainage, the last 1.3 of which are on a gravelled road. Go right at the 'T' (Road 38-5-15) and park at the wide spot in the road a few hundred yards from the intersection. Just past the parking spot look for an old roadbed steeply ascending on the left. This is the unmarked trailhead.

Mungers Butte, named after Josephine County's first government land surveyor, is an out-and-back trail along old skid roads, with some exploratory off-trail options for more adventurous hikers. Intriguing boulder outcrops dot the ridgeline, some with perches that open up to fabulous views. Witness the grandeur of the sugar pines, ponderosa pines, knobcone pines, incense cedars, and tanoaks along the way. Oregon grape, evergreen huckleberries, bear grass, and huckleberry oak carpet the ground.

Begin the hike with a steep ascent up the rocky skid road just past the first wide spot on the road. Note the red peridotite and green serpentine rock underfoot. After 0.3 mile there is a spur road off to the left.

Option 1: Turn left and head southwest, climbing to the ridge among the knobcone pine, then through a bear grass-carpeted, old-growth Douglas fir forest. After 0.3 mile you'll hit the ridge

and see an old camp and many boulder outcrops. If you follow the track to the northeast (right) and scamper along until you get to the end of the ridgeline, you'll arrive at a rocky outcrop that overlooks Grants Pass. That is the terminus of this trek. There are great views and beautiful rock gardens all over the place up there.

For adventurous souls: Back at the old camp, you can hike cross-country along the fairly open ridgeline to the southwest and reach another knob of Mungers Butte after another mile or so. There are more great views over there. Or, at the Grants Pass overlook at the north terminus of the ridge, you can hike cross-country down the ridge and hook up with the Option 2 track.

Option 2: Go straight and continue 0.2 of a mile to a 'T' skid-road intersection on the ridge. Turn right here. You will soon get views of Murphy Creek and the mouth of the Applegate River on the left and Mt. McLoughlin and the tip of Mt. Shasta on the right. Continue along the ridgeline as the track heads northeast and downhill a bit. After about a half mile, the



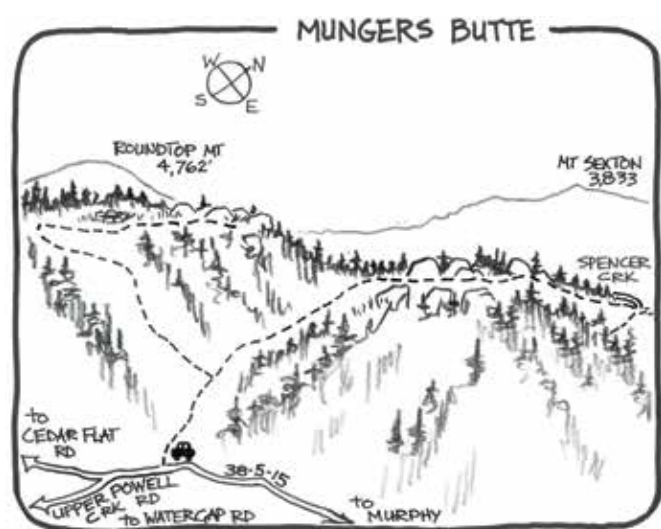
A steep ascent leads to fabulous views from the Mungers Butte ridgeline.

Photo: Evelyn Roether.

ridge narrows. On the left, you can follow a faint trail to a hanging rock overlook with a view of Murphy Mountain, Round Top Mountain, the New Hope Road area, and Mt. Sexton in the distance. Just beyond that you'll reach a four-way intersection with a gravelled road on the left (Spencer Creek Road, which goes down to Murphy) and two other old tracks to the right and straight. This is the terminus of this hike. Explore on your own from here or return the way you came.

Hiking Trails of the Lower Applegate, a trail guide describing 20 trails in the Lower Applegate area, is available at the Williams General Store and Takubeh Natural Market in Williams, Provolt Store and Whistling Duck Farm and Store in Provolt, Rebel Heart Books in Jacksonville, Oregon Books and Games in Grants Pass, and Northwest Nature Shop and Bloomsbury Books in Ashland. Trail guides can also be purchased directly from the author at lowerapplegatetrails@gmail.com.

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Map by Ann Gunter.

The future of our forests

BY ALAN JOURNET

The two primary factors determining the distribution of our natural terrestrial ecosystems (forests, woodlands, grasslands, deserts, etc.) are average annual temperature and climate (ib.bioninja.com.au/options/option-c-ecology-and-conser/c2-communities-and-ecosyste/ecosystem-analysis.html). If temperature shifts just a few degrees, or precipitation a few inches, current climate conditions across the globe will shift such that the viability of natural ecosystems currently supported will be seriously threatened or totally compromised. Not surprisingly, the individual tree species comprising forested ecosystems are controlled by the same two variables and will be compromised under similar small shifts in conditions.

Gerald Rehfeldt and Nicholas Crookston, formerly with the U.S. Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station in Idaho, developed models depicting how western tree species are likely to handle forthcoming climatic conditions. The principle of their analysis is elegantly simple. First, they input data on the locations where each tree species currently is found. Then they considered the range of models projecting future climatic conditions throughout the western United States through this century. Finally, they identified where in the region climate conditions appropriate for each species are likely to occur in 2030, 2060, and 2090 (charcoal.cnre.vt.edu/climate/species/).

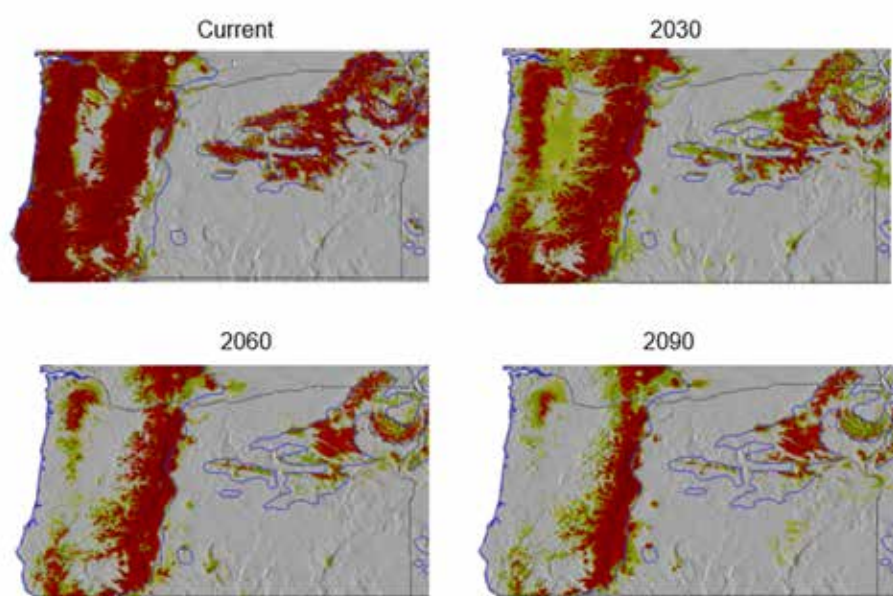
The projections they produced covered a wide array of scenarios, but the most interesting are the projections employing what is generally termed the 'business as usual' future. This scenario assumes we continue our current pattern of accelerating

fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions and our climate adjusts accordingly.

If we look at the species found in the Applegate Valley and SW Oregon generally, we find that the range of climate appropriate for Douglas fir, Ponderosa pine, white fir, and Pacific madrone will likely be substantially reduced. Meanwhile climatic conditions supporting the California black oak and Oregon white oak will probably adjust substantially, those supporting incense cedar and sugar pine will be reduced, and those supporting Jeffrey pine will be non-existent. Climatic conditions supporting the more coastally common tanoak and the California laurel will also likely be substantially reduced.

If we consider species found elsewhere in Oregon, these analyses suggest conditions appropriate for the following species will be reduced: western hemlock, western larch, and western red cedar. Even more troubling are the projections suggesting Oregon's climate will be outside the range for Sitka spruce, Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and Western juniper.

One weakness in this analysis is that the locations where tree species are currently found are merely an indication of their physiological tolerance for climatic conditions and the range under which they have the ability to survive. Possibly some species are able to tolerate a wider range of conditions but are out-competed elsewhere by other species. In ecological terms this is the difference between the realized niche (where they currently occur) and their fundamental niche (where they could occur absent competition). It is worth noting also that an increase in atmospheric carbon



Distribution of climatic conditions appropriate for Douglas fir through the century assuming a business-as-usual trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions and consequent climate shifts (charcoal.cnre.vt.edu/climate/species/). Burgundy signifies optimal conditions, while green and yellow signify sub-optimal conditions, and grey signifies inappropriate climatic conditions.

Map data from USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

dioxide allows vegetation to become more efficient at water use and thus tolerate slightly dryer soils. However, these shortcomings notwithstanding, the analysis provides a valuable guide for potential problems our forests will face in the future absent our concerted efforts to solve the climate crisis by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and sequestering carbon dioxide in our forests and farms.

While our dry forests are certainly fire adapted and fire dependent, these projections provide a warning that we cannot assume that future climatic conditions will be appropriate for the current combination of forest species. This suggests that as we pass through the century, recovery from fire or logging may not result in the same mix of species. Additionally, these

projections suggest that forest management and reforestation plans should acknowledge that current species may not be appropriate for our region in the future.

All Oregonians, whether rural or urban, should be alarmed at the impact our current pattern of greenhouse gas emissions will impose on our forests, whether we value them for wildlife, recreation, or timber. Meanwhile, those of us in the Applegate owning woodlot or forest land will need to incorporate these concerns into our planning for the future.

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