



## Worried about the water you are drinking?

with Tami Quinn Hollenbeck

There have been several cities in the past that had to go on a Boil Drinking Water notice due to E. coli contamination. This prompted me to write to those of you who don't currently drink tap water.

Bottled Water cost 1000 times the cost of tap water. Drinking 2 liters of tap water per day cost 50¢ per year. These are interesting facts when considering adding an Ultra Violet Light System to your tap water.

A Ultra Violet Light system ensures you have safe drinking water. The system provides a simple and quick means of inactivating bacteria, viruses, and cysts without the use of harmful chemicals. It can be installed on a home that has city water or well water. Not only will this take care of any potential bacteria problems it can help with taste and odor issues.

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Water is a geological cocktail, so DRINK MORE WATER!

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## Fuels reduction in the Applegate Valley

BY NATHAN GEHRES

The Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) has a long history addressing issues related to wildfires, having developed the first fire plan in the nation in 2002. Recently, APWC has partnered with several organizations, contractors, and landowners on projects that work to reduce the fuels that feed wildland fires. One such successful effort has been the Prescription for Safety Project, developed and led by the Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative (SOFRC). This project focused on evacuation routes for private landowners by treating (cutting and piling) fuels within 150-foot buffers on private lands. The buffer will also allow better access to firefighting equipment and enhance the ability of the road to serve as a defensible line during holding actions or other firefighting activities. Another fuels reduction project, which you may have noticed if you travel Highway 238 through Provolt, is funded through a grant from the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and has removed over 20 acres of blackberries along the highway and nearby structures, while also treating dozens of acres of brush and standing dead trees in a neighboring woodland. Tommy Maddox, 4M Timber, is our project contractor. He and his crew have been diligently toiling away to get the work completed before the grant closes in June.

Wildfire has been a constant concern for the residents of southern Oregon, but the threat of an unusually destructive conflagration has increased dramatically as our region changes and continues to experience drought. A variety of different factors have contributed to this escalation.



Aaron, a local sawyer, surveying the dead trees and brush he has just cut, in Provolt.

Decades of fire suppression have resulted in the buildup of brush and other fuels. Dead trees proliferate in our forests due to drought, insects, and disease. Max Bennett, a forester at the Oregon State University Extension Service, has documented that southwest Oregon has the highest concentration of Douglas fir mortality in the state. This extensive die-off of fir trees not only has a negative effect on the ecology of local forests, but also contributes dry fuels to a region that is progressively more vulnerable to destructive fire events. Two other elements that heighten the danger of catastrophic wildfire are population growth and the increasing number of homes in the wildland urban interface (WUI), the area where the wilderness meets human habitation. In 2018, the Miller Complex (17 miles east of Cave Junction) burned 38,000 acres, and in 2020, the Almeda and Obenchain Fires burned 36,000 acres. Oregon's wildfire season is now 78 days longer than it was just 30 years ago, and we need to prepare for this new reality.

## Rewild yourself How do we become 'People of Place'?

BY CHRISTINA AMMON

If forest restoration was an engineering problem, Tomi Hazel Vaarde's new book could have been titled, *Three Ways to Heal the Land: Salmon, Beaver, Fire*. It might have made for a breezier read, but it wouldn't have honored the breadth and depth of the task. Instead, Hazel's 512-page opus is titled *Social Forestry: Tending the Land as People of Place* ([synergeticpress.com](http://synergeticpress.com)). While the book *does* include plenty of practical advice, it does so in the context of something decidedly unstraightforward: Reconnecting people to place. This "rewilding" is at the heart of Social Forestry.

At a time when it seems like the best we can do for nature is leave it alone, Hazel's book urges the opposite. "The forests, woodlands, prairies, brush fields, stream sides, and ridgelines miss us," Hazel writes.

Human disturbances can be good—essential, even—so long as they are ecologically appropriate, balanced, and reciprocal. Well-timed coppicing (cutting) enhances biodiversity while supplying construction material for baskets, fences, and homes. Same goes for intentional burning: It reduces the risk of catastrophic fire while producing charcoal and enriching the soil.

The book includes plenty of "small-scale advice," but Hazel cautions that Social Forestry does not translate well into tips. That's the reason behind this trove of prose, posters, and poems that draw on a lifetime of learning—first, as a Quaker child set loose in the woods near the Adirondacks, then as a student of forestry and botany, and later as an environmental

educator at colleges and institutes. The book is also a gathering of Indigenous wisdom gleaned from her world travels.

Good Social Forestry is site-specific, collaborative, and responsive to the landscape's feedback. "Let the land guide us," Hazel writes.

### Listening to the land

Hazel lives at Wolf Gulch, an oak savannah woodland in the Applegate Valley. Each winter, students arrive for a week of Social Forestry experience, pursuing a deeply local curriculum of forest bathing, trail-making, ceremonies, basket-weaving, and, if the conditions are right, fuel-burning. The activities are carried out with hand tools according to the needs of the land that Hazel has spent two decades observing. Students leave the course with an expanded sense of connection with the woodlands, each other, and their inner selves.

In her two decades observing the Applegate, Hazel has concluded that the return of beaver, salmon, and fire is essential to restoring watershed health. She acknowledges that the urban-wildland interface of the valley has been "hammered" by decades of mining, logging, and sometimes poor farming practices, but there have been compensating factors too. The nonprofit networks set up in the '70s have helped, and the valley's complex topography has had a protective effect. The Applegate is made up of numerous creeks, gulches, and watersheds with finicky ecologies that don't respond well to industrial-scale business ventures and are better suited to responses by community

Decreasing the threat of uncharacteristically severe fires is a complex task that requires coordination and cooperation on a large scale, not to mention the considerable resources needed to tackle such a thorny issue. Adding to the difficulty of the problem, the Applegate Valley is a patchwork of ownerships, with approximately 70 percent of the land managed by federal agencies, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Forest Service (USFS). APWC is leading an effort to develop a project, funded by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), to treat fuels on private lands in the upper and middle Applegate, building on the success of previous state, local, and federal investments in neighboring fuel reduction projects. Restoration and fuel reduction activities would include tree thinning followed by slash treatments, potentially utilizing one or a combination of methods such as hand piling and burning, chipping, biomass utilization, or prescribed underburning. These activities would provide work for local contractors and off-season wildland firefighters. Aside from the important goal of reducing the risk of a catastrophic wildfire, the proposed project is also designed to (1) create conditions on the ground that will enable landowners to manage the fuel accumulation on their properties, (2) promote sustainable local jobs in this rural region where economic drivers are limited, and (3) increase the resiliency of local forests to drought, insects, disease, and a changing climate.

Contact me if you have any questions about fuels reduction in the Applegate or any other projects we are working on.

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hubs and cooperatives. Hazel is supportive of the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council but feels even it is too broad an

effort for the "wild mosaic of complexity" that defines the surrounding Siskiyou Mountains. Ideally, there would be dozens of councils, each tending to its own drainage basin as site specifically as possible. "This is a multigenerational project," she writes.

Is Hazel optimistic or pessimistic about the future? "Curious," she says.

### Regaining fluency

If you're looking for a treatise of solutions, *Social Forestry* isn't it. It is a circuitous read, with a preface called "How to Read Hazel," by Megan Fehrman. Referring to the author as a "trickster auntie," she writes, "Reading Hazel is much like having a conversation with Hazel. A long, sometimes rambling, conversation that goes on for hours. Days. Years. But don't worry, it all comes back around and begins to make sense."

It does make sense. After all, traditional ecological knowledge has normally been passed through riddles, songs, storytelling, and chants. While these more indigenous mediums may frustrate our modern, narrative-driven minds, Hazel is confident that even the most displaced among us will catch on—it's just a matter of regaining our lost fluency. So, if you're reading the book and this trickster auntie seems to be getting lost in the narrative weeds, hang tight. She's actually breaking trail.

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