

# Climate consciousness climbs in the Rogue Valley

BY ALAN JOURNET

“Firmageddon” may sound cute, but it identifies a serious problem in the Applegate Valley. Our experience of this condition involves the hundreds of Douglas-fir trees that we can see dying around the valley. Causes for this have been identified as drought, dry atmosphere, and insect borers. The culprit is probably a combination, but underlying these are global warming’s climate change consequences.

When we look at our climate future, we see a continuation of the trends we have been experiencing for the last few decades. A good source for historic data relevant to Jackson and Josephine counties is NOAA (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration), while the USGS (US Geological Survey) provides graphic depictions of future conditions assuming we continue the current trajectory. From these two sources and others we find the following trends and implications.

### Trends

Temperature projections, based on the current trajectory, suggest that by the end of the century Jackson County could exhibit an average annual warming of up to 10-15 degrees F above the 1981-2010 average, while Josephine County could experience a warming of up to 7-14.5 degrees F above the same average. Summers are likely to warm more than winters.

Precipitation projections suggest that both counties will experience greater variability between wet and dry years than they have historically, but, on average, no change. Seasonally, however, summers are likely to become dryer and winters wetter. Snowpack projections, assessed in terms of the water content of the snowfall, suggest that Jackson County will experience a decrease of over 90 percent while Josephine County will experience a decrease of over 70 percent.

Finally, the evidence suggests extreme weather in the valley is likely to become a more frequent occurrence.

### Implications

Applegate Valley is a rural community where most residents delight in the natural beauty of the valley and/or make a living in agriculture or forestry. The first concern many of us have is that, should the current climate trajectory continue, our habitats will be devastated. Regrettably, this applies also to our agriculture and forests. Those growing crops know that the same variables of temperature and precipitation determining where natural ecosystems thrive, also determine what crop varieties we can grow. Wine varieties provide an excellent example ([socan.eco/the-future-of-fine-wines-in-the-applegate-valley](http://socan.eco/the-future-of-fine-wines-in-the-applegate-valley)). It is probably of little surprise that the viability of our forest species is determined by the same variables. Just as Douglas firs are now suffering, so will many other tree species



Firmageddon presents itself in the Applegate Valley as a large number of Douglas firs are expiring. Photo: Alan Journet 2023.

suffer in the near future unless we address the problem, collectively and globally. In the meantime, we should adapt to those forthcoming climate trends that are inevitable as best we can.

We know that actions taken by Applegate residents to reduce emissions will not solve the global climate crisis, but we can contribute our share to reducing emissions. We can also take steps to adapt to the changing climate in order to allow Applegaters to thrive and prosper as the future unfolds.

### An Applegate effort

Consistent with its efforts to develop a series of regional working groups addressing various issues critical to valley residents, A Greater Applegate (AGA) is collaborating with Southern Oregon

Climate Action Now’s Regional and Local Project to establish a Climate Working Group.

The first meeting of this group will be at the Applegate Library, 18485 North Applegate Road, from 5:30-7:30 pm Thursday, April 11. Light refreshments will be provided. At this gathering, we will explore what might be done to address climate change in the Applegate Valley, as well as examine the skills and interests of those present to identify what an AGA Climate Change Working Group might undertake. We hope that you will join us in these efforts.

Alan Journet  
Co-facilitator, Southern Oregon  
Climate Action Now  
[alan@socan.eco](mailto:alan@socan.eco)

## HISTORY BITS

### Williams and Pacifica in the 1800s

BY PEG PRAG

The following are excerpts from a children’s book, *The Thank You Cairn: A History of Pacifica*, written by Peg Prag.

#### 1840s

The land at Pacifica is mostly forested with Douglas fir on the hills and pine, oak, and cedar trees in the valleys. There are salmon in the creeks and plentiful game in the forests. These, plus acorns, berries, and bulbs (such as camas and biscuit root) gave small bands of Native Americans, such as the Dakubetede (dah-koo-bee-te-deh) or

Applegate Indians, sustenance for hard work and family life.

Although Native Americans inhabited parts of Oregon more than 15,000 years ago, it appears that there was a more recent migration (perhaps 700-1,500 years ago) from Alaska and western Canada (originally Siberia) of Athapaskan speakers (a language group, not a tribe). This migration included, in the Rogue Valley, the Dakubetede Tribe, who lived in what is now the Applegate, Galice, and Williams areas.

Farther east in the Rogue Valley were the Penutian-speaking Latgawa and Takelma Indians from an earlier migration.

Most tribes lived by rivers and used the uplands around them for seasonal gathering.

They built round, semi-submerged houses and subsisted primarily on acorns, camas and other bulbs, berries, salmon, and hunting. We have been told that the Williams Valley, including the small valley of Pacifica at the junction of Powell Creek, Camp Meeting Creek, and Williams Creek, was considered a special place, surrounded by sacred Grayback, Sugarloaf, and Medicine mountains.

#### 1860s

In these years descriptions from the trappers and explorers were bringing

more and more settlers to Oregon looking for new land and new lives. The slowing down of the California Gold Rush brought waves of people to the area hoping to find gold. Gold was discovered on Williams Creek in 1858. “Then the scramble was on... with miners quickly showing up from all directions; by August of 1859, there were 20 buildings at the site” (Olga Johnson). Williamsburg was on a bench above Williams Creek, just northeast of the current bridge. The business section of Williamsburg included several stores for miners’ supplies and clothes, two hotels, three saloons, a public hall, and a blacksmith shop, none of which is left today.

See WILLIAMS-PACIFICA HISTORY, page 19.




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