

MY OPINION FROM BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR

It's all the rage

BY CHRIS BRATT

Conflicting views over environmental issues and proposals are nothing new in Southern Oregon. When our family arrived here in the mid 70s, there was a big fight going on about whether to build the Applegate and other local dams.

The extensive road building and clearcutting for "rapid liquidation" of commercial size timber from public and private timber lands has been in dispute for half a century. Recently, gravel mining proposals in the Applegate River have pitted neighbor against neighbor. Pressure from new residents, new economic realities, new federal laws, and a new environmental awareness nationwide, continues to cause troublesome conflicts among neighbors with differing viewpoints.

At the moment, there is some local, heated opposition focused on a proposed Siskiyou Crest National Monument. This monument proposal consists of further protecting 600,000 acres of higher elevation public lands (US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management) that cover the mountain crest between the Oregon Caves National Monument and the Siskiyou Summit above Ashland. A large portion of the public lands in the south-central part of the Applegate Watershed are proposed to be included in the monument including the Red Buttes Wilderness Area.

I felt a strong feeling of hostility toward the monument proposal and environmentalists when a flyer was attached to our paper box with the heading: "No Siskiyou Monument." I felt more rancor when I attended a meeting called by monument opponents at the Applegate Community Church. This group of individuals (some are my neighbors) call themselves the "Stop The Land Grab Coalition" (www.stoplandgrab.org). These folks have attracted other discontented people who want to put a stopper on any and all efforts to establish a Siskiyou Crest National Monument.

Having driven and hiked through much of the area over the past 35 years, I've seen and know the stunning qualities and resources within the proposed monument boundaries first-hand. My personal point of view is that a monument designation would not "lock up" anything and will further protect this amazing landscape. In fact, it's not a "land grab,"

(the land already belongs to all Americans) and rather than "locking it up," the land most likely will draw more people to use the area and create more jobs as well. The monument proposal has built a significant amount of grassroots support, and as you can tell, it has my endorsement.

I could go further in my describing many of the attributes, values and quality features that will make this place a worthwhile monument. But many scientific and conservation leaders have devoted decades of research into the biological, recreational and economic values of the Siskiyou Crest area. For more information on the monument, everyone should see, "The Wild American Forest," a film about the Klamath-Siskiyou eco-region. See the web site: www.AWILDAMERICANFOREST.ORG. (It premiered in Jan/Feb. on Southern Oregon Public T.V.) Also, "The Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Proposal For Future Management of the Siskiyou Crest" can be viewed at: www.siskiyoucrest.org.

Presently, emotions are running high over the monument issue, especially with opponents who seem incapable of compromise. The challenge for a positive outcome of any get-together will rest on putting forth moderate, coherent ideas with calm, wise voices without extreme views or language.

Sadly, many opponents are using the monument proposal as a focal point for venting their fears and frustrations over issues like the loss of local timber, mining and grazing operations on public lands. They have attracted off-road vehicle users and hunters by making the misleading claim that travel routes and hunting will be done away with within the monument boundaries.

Though not connected directly to the monument issue, these fearful opponents are lamenting the loss of older historic western traditions and culture. They are longing for the bygone days and ways of life that came and went with the reduction of family farms, ranching and logging opportunities. These values are being used to raise opposition to the proposed monument.

Short of dropping the monument proposal (which isn't going to happen),

I believe there is no way to satisfy the ultraconservative members within this opposition group or have them compromise on the other issues they keep raising. These are extreme take-no-prisoner folks who ignore our changing community and world. They fear that every progressive proposal is some form of surrender to socialism and fan the flames with angry responses like "Stop Them Here," "Enough is Enough," and "Stand Up and Fight." They are not interested in listening or engaging in meaningful dialogue and have a loose connection with the facts.

My modest proposal is to have both proponents and opponents interested in engaging in meaningful dialogue begin a conversation about what should happen in this back country area. They should invite the federal agencies (BLM and Forest Service) who will be in charge of planning and managing any approved monument. I'm sure the proponents would be willing to meet. If people can cooperate, listen and compromise, agreements can be worked out rather than continue with uncontrolled debating and railing.

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My experience with these larger divisive issues is that if we can't come up with local solutions to our problems, the remedies will continue to come from far away political bureaucrats or the courts. If local people can find agreement by reducing polarization and animosity, and being respectful of people who think differently, working together can become our new "traditional value," along with the golden rule. The proposed Siskiyou Crest National Monument is a unique opportunity to find some common ground, become better neighbors and protect the area's world renowned treasures. What do you think?

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Chris Bratt



Jackson County/OSU Master Gardener Classes and Events

**Tuesday, April 5, 7:00-9:00 pm
DANDY DAHLIAS**

Christy Hope, Master Gardener
Dahlias are easy and one little tuber can give an abundance of color and happiness. A yearly look at dahlias: varieties/classifications, purchasing, when/where to plant, pests/problems, digging/winter storage will be covered. Cost: \$5/MG free. *Class qualifies for M. G. recertification.*

**Tuesday, April 19, 7:00-9:00 pm
Made in the Shade**

Cliff Bennett, Chet's Garden Center
This class will cover annuals, perennials, evergreens, and unusual conifers that will thrive in a shade garden. Soils, fertilizers, and insects will also be discussed. Cost: \$5/MG free. *Class qualifies for Master Gardener recertification.*

There is a fee of \$10.00 per Saturday class and a \$5.00 per Weekday class (unless indicated otherwise). Master Gardeners wearing their badges are admitted free (materials fees still apply). The classes are held at the OSU Extension Center located at 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Oregon. For questions and/or registration please call 541-776-7371.

To learn more about J.C.M.G.A. go to: <http://extension.orst.edu/soec/gardening>

The Master Gardener Program educates local gardeners on the art and science of growing and caring for plants. Trained Master Gardener volunteers extend sustainable gardening information to their communities through educational outreach programs.

CELEBRATE Earth Day 2011

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