

MY OPINION FROM BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR

I like it wild

BY CHRIS BRATT

Here I am, glad to be back home in Applegate after a couple of family visits and work trips to the City. The City is San Francisco, California, where I was born and didn't leave until I was in my early 20s. Despite all of the blacktop, I once thought of this city and surrounding urban areas as underdeveloped with a simple, slow pace of life. Now the City and beyond presents a picture of mega-urbanization, overdevelopment, population overflow and an unequaled rate of technological change. I understand these same developments are happening worldwide. I believe the people of the Bay Area (and maybe the world, too) are now adapting to a way of life that is exclusively about humans, and that our natural and wild environments will not survive without the artificial aids that only we humans can provide.

The writer Michael Pollan observed over a decade ago, "All of nature (that includes us) is in the process of being domesticated, of coming or finding itself under the roof of civilization. Indeed, even the wild now depends on civilization for its survival." Pollan is right. And my particular trip into the mega-urban world showed me firsthand the changes transforming our country's shrinking wildlands into tamed cultivated places that accommodate a city dweller's lifestyle. I also recognized that we humans are in control of evolution now and in command of the survival of what we consider the fittest. (If Darwin were still alive, he'd probably have to alter his theory.)

But our control over nature is going

to require responsibility. Every person has to begin playing a part in the area where they live, whether you live in the country or city, suburban or rural surroundings, you must become a caretaker of these lands and communities. We can no longer wait for bureaucrats or politicians to solve or correct our defaced landscape or other problems. We who share love for a place are obligated to protect it.

Here in rural southern Oregon, we have a distinct advantage over other areas in searching for new ways to live sustainably. To a large extent, we are already maintaining our outstanding and globally significant natural areas on the extensive public lands. Local forest service and Bureau of Land Management agencies have begun many new restoration programs on our public forests. We have many local residents who love this area. Some are developing family organic farming. Others are building local economies through food and wine sales and distribution by connecting with local and regional cities. Carpenters, painters and other tradespeople keep our economy going, too.

We also have a large group of old-timers, farmers and ranchers who have taken care of the land long before most

of us arrived here. And don't forget our friends the environmentalists. National, regional and local environmental groups and individuals work and speak out against urban, suburban, rural and wildland degradation. They support new approaches to land use design, reduced dependence on cars and preserving farmland and open

space. Environmental folks make good neighbors and make good use of the law when our environment needs protecting.

Spotted owls, salmon, and old-growth forests are just a few of the thousands of species that are in jeopardy and are now dependent on us for survival. There are also damaged landscapes to restore, heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere to regulate, and water and air to free from

pollution. Are we willing to acknowledge that humans have caused these problems? I hope we are, because there is an urgent need for action to prop up our planet.

The resources nature has provided have been taken for granted and assumed to be unending. This, of course, we all know is a false assumption. Also, many times we put people in charge of addressing our ecological problems who are the very people who are making the problems themselves and allowing them to continue.

There are many reasons the world's environment is in such bad shape. But the main reason is that the present corporation-ruled economic system in use worldwide has failed to maintain the health and stability of the natural world. Rather, these corporations have exploited the world's resources for financial gain. Enough gain to make them richer than most nations in the world. Changing this system should be our first order of business.

If residents of this region want a healthy economy, a pristine environment and quality of life, they will have to make the political and economic investments necessary to guard against environmental degradation. These are chronic problems we face, but they are not insurmountable. If communities can agree to take the lead in settling their differences for the common good, preventing exploitation without limits and relying on the best available science for caretaking nature, we have a chance to continue. But, we must make peace with nature and embrace our compatibility with all things if we want to avoid economic disaster and survive ourselves.

The world is now part of our community and each one of us must show the way by becoming its guardian. Can I sign you up?

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SWIMMING HOLE

leaving behind broken glass and trash, and creating a public safety hazard that forced owner Jackie Inman to reluctantly close the park. Jackie and Scott Carey have lovingly maintained it for years in hopes it could be reopened again under the right circumstances. While the park may have been quiet, a groundswell of appreciation for this family landmark would create the right climate in which to reopen the park.

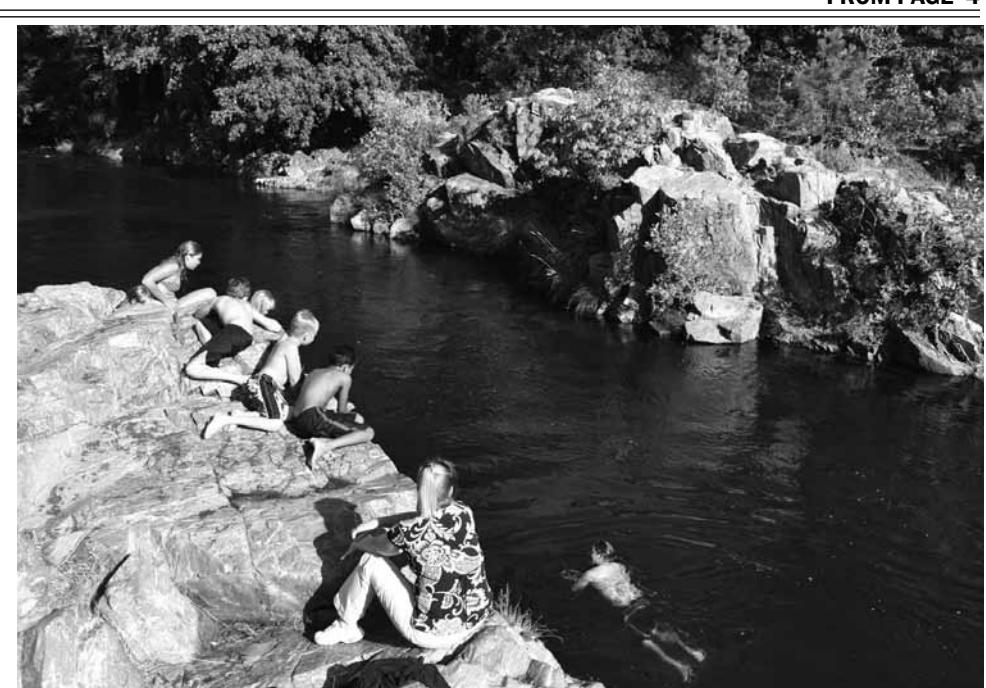
The park is a tribute to the extended family where multiple generations have made memories. Now through family camps (Family Frontier Vacations), families will stay at Applegate River Ranch Lodge, surrounding properties and in historic Jacksonville, and will dine at Applegate River Ranch Restaurant, the Applegate Cafe and Store, and enjoy local wineries.

Children will experience history, nature, art and music while their parents tour local wineries, and families can river raft, swim, and enjoy time together. The

Frontier Park will host art shows, special events, feature a small-log visitor center and several teepees.

"Romancing the West," a musical revue that tells the stories of over two centuries of Oregon and California history through music and visuals, will now be rooted into the community with a home base where its lessons and stories will find their fullest expression. This is also where artists in the production, including Native American Educator of the Year Jacque Nunez, will teach Native American and pioneer history. (For more information about "Romancing the West," visit www.romancingthewest.org.)

Williams resident, educator Jim Bickers who, along with his wife Merry, invented the Oregon lamp, had first encouraged me to think about how we might create something wonderful at the park. We are very grateful to Jackie Inman for giving us an opportunity to fulfill this



After years of being closed, the swimming hole at Oh Oregon Frontier Park and Cultural Center (Wayside Park) in downtown Applegate is open once again due to the efforts of Christina Duane.

vision and for all of you who have donated by ordering your park patronage brick. The sentiments on the bricks are so touching and showcase the beauty and diversity of the people here. It brings all of us joy to see the community coming together and enjoying the river there again.

Our sponsors will be paid honor

in the park as those who joined the community in preserving and creating family traditions for residents and visitors alike, and leaving the legacy of this land and its people to the next generation.

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