

**OPINIONS**

# Not only trees die

BY JACK DUGGAN

From the skies over southern Oregon you see a polka-dot landscape of clear-cuts. Hillsides scraped to bare soil dominate industry land in this part of the state. Oregon law allows clear-cuts up to 160 acres on private land. In some cases timber companies cut 160 acres, leave a bit of vegetation, then cut the adjoining 160 acres.

Whether they call it a regeneration harvest or stand replacement, the results are the same. The forests in one of the most biologically diverse regions of the world are being replaced by a homogenous stand of even-aged, single species of trees. But it is not just the trees that suffer and die.

Whole ecosystems will die. Researchers into forest soils report, in the September 2022 *National Geographic*, that “a single gram of forest soil can contain as many as a billion bacteria, up to a million fungi, hundreds of thousands of protozoans, and nearly a thousand roundworms.” One single gram is infinitesimal in four acres, the small “clear-cuts” proposed by Medford District Bureau of Land Management. The supporting soil network, stripped of vegetation, will die off and take decades to recover.

Even more damaging is the exacerbating impact on mycelium, fungus, and all the potential applications related to these resources, as documented by emerging scientific studies. As this science is more recent, continuing to clear-cut without understanding the value of these deep soil resources means we are eliminating the potential for beneficial uses, such as the next potential cancer

cure. Stripping our landscapes with clear-cutting, sadly, leaves so little left to study after a clear-cut. In the clay and granite soils of southern Oregon, the shaved hillsides will bleed soil for three to five years, further thinning the possibility of recovery.

Even as the soil dies, dries, and erodes down the landscape, other creatures lose out as well. Their homes and forage are destroyed. Increasingly, birds, squirrels, raccoons, turkeys, foxes, and a host of other wildlife have no place to call home. Larger mammals like deer, bear, cougars, and bobcats have lost room to roam, places to rest, and a continuity of landscape that allows them sufficient home territory. Displaced, these large mammals move into new territory, sometimes coming down into urban areas. Rural landowners have had to contend with increasing bear and cougar problems.

It is simple to say that clear-cutting is the most economical and efficient way to harvest timber. That statement, however, lacks any consideration for the additional ecological costs of the practice. Nor, in most cases, is it a sustainable practice on fragile southern Oregon soils. Moreover, the lands being clear-cut are not owned by the people who live here. The “management” direction and the profits often go to investors back East who see only dollar signs.

From the skies over southern Oregon we see our state’s legacy of forests being mowed down and multiple lives destroyed. Maybe we should change strategies before we lose it all.

Jack Duggan  
shanachie@hughes.net

# Public should have been given more information on fire chief’s removal

BY DANIEL PELISSIER

On October 19, 2022, approximately 50 people gathered in the Applegate Valley Fire District #9 training center for what had been promised, at the previous board meeting, to be a discussion about the performance of Chief Mike McLaughlin. Only one person was missing: Chief McLaughlin. The crowd was confused; there was not an agenda item for the chief’s review and the AGA (A Greater Applegate) website had taken down its statement that Chief McLaughlin would be a topic of discussion. What’s going on?

The board of directors came out from their closed-door meeting and let us all in on their secret. Board President Rob Underwood opened the meeting by verbally moving that the board add the missing agenda item, then followed immediately with a vote to accept a termination agreement with the chief. The public asked to see the agreement before the vote, but Underwood denied the request.

The agenda for the September board meeting contained an item for the performance review of the chief. It appeared he was going to get to tell his side of whatever the board’s issues were. But when it came to the agenda item, the president postponed the discussion until the October meeting. Immediately after the September

meeting, the board president and Vice President Doug Stewart put the chief on indefinite nondisciplinary administrative leave with arguably only limited authority given by the board to “manage initial employment activities.”

In hindsight, it is now clear that the board had met four times behind closed doors to orchestrate the termination of Chief McLaughlin. The true intent of these meetings was unclear to the public because they listed their authorization as “considering information and records exempt from public inspection.” They then deleted the agenda item for the October meeting found in the previous meeting agenda, causing further public confusion.

Oregon public meeting law states, “The Oregon form of government requires an informed public aware of the deliberations and decisions of governing bodies and the information upon which such decisions were made.” Whether you agree or disagree with the board’s actions, the process was flawed.

And where was the chief after he had requested to exercise his right to a public hearing? He reportedly was told he could not attend.

Daniel Pelissier  
pelissierdr@gmail.com

**We want your opinions and letters!  
Email to [gater@applegater.org](mailto:gater@applegater.org).**

**CECE SHOOP  
HOUSE KEEPING**

**CT Shoop  
Incorporated**

P.O. BOX 5557  
Central Point, OR 97502  
(541) 930-2437  
ctshoop15@gmail.com

**BOB THOMAS  
AUTOMOTIVE, INC.**

FOREIGN / DOMESTIC  
SERVICE AND REPAIR

Mail Tribune  
Readers'  
Choice

“We care about your repair.”

Brian Thomas, Owner  
535 Rossanley Drive  
Medford, OR 97501

541-734-3743  
Fax 541-245-3784

www.BobThomasAutomotive.com

**Bradley Realty**

Broker

**Julia McCue**

Cell: 541.291.6624  
Office: 541.582.0111  
114 E. Main St. P.O. Box 1887  
Rogue River, OR 97537  
Email: [jmccuerealtor@gmail.com](mailto:jmccuerealtor@gmail.com)  
www.bradleyrealty.biz

**EXCAVATION  
OREGON**

Let us lay the groundwork for your dreams. We can make your new country home happen!

**SPECIALIZING IN RAW LAND DEVELOPMENT**

New Home Sites  
Roads  
Clearing  
Fire Prevention

Licensed, Bonded & Insured • CCB #201660

Call for a FREE estimate: 541-890-5553 | [excavationoregon.com](http://excavationoregon.com)

**THE POT RACK**  
KITCHEN EMPORIUM • EST 1992

140 W California St - Jacksonville  
Open Daily 10:30am-5pm

**WE SHARPEN KNIVES!**