

THE SISKIYOU MOUNTAIN ADVOCATE

Logging, landslides, and the future of forests in the Applegate Valley

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

In the last few issues of the *Applegater*, I have written about the Medford District BLM's so-called "salvage" logging proposals in the Applegate Valley. This past spring, the impact of these projects became far more evident, even to the casual observer.

Perhaps you have recently hiked the Jack-Ash/Sterling Ditch Trail system in the Little Applegate River watershed and looked across the canyon to the recently clearcut slopes of the BLM's Lickety Split Timber Sale? Or perhaps, this spring, you noticed fresh logging while driving along Highway 238 at Forest Creek? This is the Forest Creek Salvage Timber Sale, which proposed retaining only 4.6 trees per acre and caused immense damage to lower Forest Creek. Maybe you took a drive on Upper Applegate Road and noticed the fresh clear-cuts across the river from Star Ranger Station, as well as above Eastside Road, on the western face of Cinnabar Ridge, part of the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale. By the time this article is published, you may have seen fresh logging above Buncom, in the Little Applegate. According to the agency's Timber Sale Prospectus, the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale has retained, on average, only 3.3 trees per acre.

Based on the faulty assumption that these clear-cuts and heavy industrial logging projects would have no significant environmental effects, the BLM approved these projects with no public involvement, no public comment, and no scientific and environmental review. However, what has been implemented are some of the most damaging logging projects on BLM land in the Applegate Valley in decades.



The clear-cut slopes, landslide, and debris flow in unit 27-4 of the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale above Eastside Road in the Upper Applegate Valley. Photo: Applegate Siskiyou Alliance.



Another view of the clear-cut slopes in unit 27-4 of the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale. Photo: Applegate Siskiyou Alliance.

The Boaz Salvage Timber Sale was logged between January and March 2025, during heavy rain and snow events. The Applegate Siskiyou Alliance (ASA) repeatedly reached out to the BLM with documentation of wet-weather

logging activities that were not authorized to take place between October 15 and May 15, when soil saturation levels exceeded 25 percent or when these activities transport sediment into streams. Unfortunately, the BLM failed to respond to our requests to suspend these damaging, wet-weather logging activities. Then, on March 16, 2025, during heavy rain, the clearcut slopes in Unit 27-4 gave way, triggering a landslide and debris flow that filled the seasonal stream below with mud, stumps, and logging debris.

The BLM also recently proposed the Strategic Operations for Safety (SOS) Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA) to expand these sorts of damaging logging projects across southwest Oregon. However, in the face of significant opposition, the agency canceled the project in April 2025. Unfortunately, the BLM has decided instead to log approximately 3,000 acres across the Applegate Valley in the newly proposed Ashland 2025 SOS EA, using similar prescriptions and criteria as recent "salvage" logging projects in our area. Although the prescription claims that the stands are "dead and dying," the new SOS project would heavily log living, green stands that survived the recent beetle outbreaks. The timber sale also appears to propose logging in some stands with more

pronounced mortality; however, even in these stands, many living, green, and viable trees are proposed for removal.

The Ashland 2025 SOS Project would include logging on Thompson Creek, on China Gulch, in the Wellington Wildlands, on the eastern face of Ben Johnson Mountain above Cantrall Buckley Park, along the East Applegate Ridge Trail, on Woodrat Mountain, and on Sterling Creek. In recent months, ASA has reviewed units marked for logging in the SOS Project and found that these stands regularly contain living, mature trees, and in some places, late-successional forest. Additionally, the timber sale markings show that the BLM intends to heavily log many large-diameter trees, some over 30 inches in diameter and likely more than 150 years old.

What has been proposed is not "salvage" logging, nor will it reduce fire risks or increase forest health. In fact, the opposite will occur if the project is implemented. The BLM is proposing to log some of the last mature forest habitats in our region and to forever change the scenic viewscapes of the Applegate Valley. We encourage our neighbors who are not yet directly affected by BLM "salvage" logging to take a drive and view these recent timber sales above the Upper Applegate and Little Applegate Valley. Is this responsible forest management? Is this how we want our valley to look? Clear-cut slopes above our farms, vineyards, and homes? At ASA, we say no—it is not what we want our valley to look like. If you agree, please reach out to help us stop the SOS Project!

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Transformative powers of community

JCC's practical answers to life's big questions

BY JULIE RAEFIELD

Summer—what a great time to reflect and restart. While sitting by a stream and chewing on some grass, you might begin to entertain thoughts that lead to some pretty big questions.

- What am I here for?
- Is there a higher purpose to my life?
- How do I leave a lasting legacy?
- Can I make a difference in a world with so many challenges?

- Who will remember me?
- How can I deepen my creative self?
- How do I give back for all that I have been given?
- How do I connect with others?
- How can I take better care of myself?

While you may think that these are the kinds of questions that need quiet and solitude to answer, there is an alternative route to find some powerful answers.



Friends from Jacksonville Garden Club tended JCC's pollinator garden and refreshed its design.

When we engage with others, we have daily opportunities to pose these questions and respond with personal actions, which often become the answers we hope to find.

At Jacksonville Community Center (JCC), our volunteers, donors, teachers (most of whom volunteer), and class and event participants are actively engaging in meaningful connections with others.

- They are donating time to ensure our community's children experience the beauty of art, nature, music, and play.

See TRANSFORMATIVE POWERS, page 21.

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