

Applegater

Photo by Linda Kappen

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Applegate Valley Community Newsmagazine
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Celebrating
~32~
Years

APWC's Education Program weathers a challenging funding environment

BY CHARLOTTE HYDE

Over the past three years, the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council's (APWC) Education and Outreach program has steadily expanded its offerings of outdoor day programs for the youth of the Applegate Valley and surrounding communities. The goal of the education program is to provide high-quality, place-based learning opportunities that nurture students' connection to the natural world. Our three programs, Applegate Outdoor School (AOS), Grow Youth, and Applegate Outdoor Summer Camp

(AOSC), served 650 youth between the ages of 5 and 18 in 2025. Applegate Outdoor School and Grow Youth have built strong relationships with schools throughout the Medford, Three Rivers, and Grants Pass School Districts, while our Summer Camp received enthusiastic support from families across the Applegate. As the seasons pass, each program roots itself more firmly into the community.

Despite this upward trajectory, the volatile funding climate for projects relating to the environment, education, and environmental education has imposed major challenges upon two of our three programs.

Applegate Outdoor School is a state-funded Outdoor School provider. In 2016, Oregon voters passed Measure 99, creating the Oregon Outdoor School Fund. This fund allows Oregon 5th- and 6th-graders to experience a week of outdoor education, with providers such as AOS, at no cost to school districts or families. This stable funding source has allowed Outdoor School programs to flourish across the state, with providers serving 35,488 students in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

In May 2025, a \$12 million cut to the 2026/2027 biennium was abruptly introduced to Outdoor School. This cut sowed confusion and distress
See APWC'S EDUCATION PROGRAM, page 8.



Applegate Outdoor Summer Camp camper poses with her found-object sculpture.
Photo by APWC Staff.

Creating a fire-adapted community

BY AARON KRIKAVA

Depending on their environment, communities are affected by a variety of naturally occurring elemental extremes. The Midwest is subject to tornadoes, Gulf and Atlantic communities are inundated by hurricanes, and communities along fault lines experience earthquakes. Here in the Applegate and across much of the West, wildfire is a naturally occurring part of our environment. All of these forces occur across a wide spectrum of intensity. Some earthquakes can be so minor as to be almost undetectable, while others topple buildings. A gentle breeze might rustle fields of grain, while a Class 5 tornado can rip a building from its foundation. Wildfire also occurs across a spectrum. At the lowest end, a creeping surface fire might consume some leaves or dried grass while wetter leaves and grass underneath remain untouched. At the other extreme, a crown fire can roar through a forest, incinerating 150-foot trees and everything else in its path.

All these communities develop adaptations to make them more resilient to the environmental extremes they experience.

One way is by adapting our homes. In earthquake zones, building construction designs make structures more resilient to major shaking. Communities in Tornado Alley build underground bunkers where they can wait out the terrific winds and flying debris. In the Applegate, there are many steps we can take to make our homes more resilient to wildfire. Common recommendations include building with

materials that resist ignition, screening openings to prevent ember intrusion, and removing flammable material within five feet of structures.

Another way is through emergency planning. Similar to areas along the Pacific coast that develop tsunami evacuation routes, we need to plan wildfire evacuation routes. Community support networks like phone trees could also make the difference between life and death, especially for older folks who might not have cell service or an internet connection.

There's an important way in which wildfire differs from these other elemental events, particularly in the Applegate. Periodic low-intensity fire is a beneficial and necessary part of our environment; in its absence, wildfire becomes a catastrophic occurrence. Until very recently, the last 120 years or so, wildfires occurred almost exclusively (91-94 percent) at the low-to-moderate range of intensity. This mild, regular disturbance allowed local plants to adapt to and evolve with fire. Some plants developed seeds and root structures that are fire-dependent, meaning they require fire to maintain healthy populations.

Frequent, low- to moderate-intensity fire also prevented the accumulation of heavy fuel loads, allowing the cycle of mild disturbance to continue. Fire exclusion and suppression, first implemented in the early 1900s, particularly after World War II, with the use of aircraft and bulldozers, caused the number of acres burned annually to plummet significantly. Reducing the
See FIRE-ADAPTED COMMUNITY, page 13.

Evelyn Williams, a maker and conservator of Oregon history

BY LAURA AHEARN

During March, McKee Bridge Historical Society (MBHS) will exhibit the works of Evelyn Byrne Williams at the Jacksonville Library. Evelyn has been a creative force throughout her 99+ years on earth. She took readers of the *Applegater* "Back in Time" with entertaining and educational articles published 1994-2016. Evelyn is a professional artist in multiple media: oils, pen and ink, knitting, appliqué, and quilting (including seven "museum

storytelling quilts). She has illustrated her own books and those of other authors. Many of these pieces were created while Evelyn owned the Lamplighter Gallery at 165 E. California Street—originally the Judge and Nunan Saddlery and Harness Shop, now the Crown Jewel—and reveal the history, people, and lost landscapes of southern Oregon.

Evelyn is the great-granddaughter of John and Maryum McKee, who
See EVELYN WILLIAMS, page 17.



Hi Head and His Cabin, oil painting by Evelyn Byrne Williams.

Good news and bad news: this issue brought in more thoughtful, generous submissions than we had room to include in print. A few pieces have been published on our website instead: How to Stay Capable for Applegate Living by Grant Thomas; Wellington Wildlands Council: Endings and Beginnings by Jeanette LeTourneux, Liza Crosse, Audrey Eldridge, and Barbara Holiday; News from the Williams Grange by Harmony Sue Hanie; Wildfire-Risk Reduction: A Balancing Act by Nathan Gehres; and Kids are Key at JCC! by Julie Raefield. We deeply appreciate everyone who shared their work with us and hope you'll visit applegater.org to read it.

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OBITUARY

Dolores Lucille Durando

April 9, 1921–September 15, 2025

BY BARBARA HOLIDAY

Dolores Durando passed away peacefully at the age of 104. Her long life was marked by resilience, kindness, creativity, and an unwavering devotion to family and community.



where they operated a large goat dairy, milking about 100 animals by hand twice a day. In 1983, she moved to Santa Rosa, where she became state-licensed to care for developmentally disabled children, the elderly, and the mentally ill—work she cherished.

Dolores earned her psychiatric technician license and served on the Sonoma County Mental Health Board, where she supported meaningful reforms. She wrote *Out of the Darkness*, a novel based on her experiences.

Dolores was born in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. As a young child, while living in Newville, North Dakota, she was sent to live with her beloved Grandpa Cripe, the town blacksmith. He provided the love, protection, and belonging that shaped her earliest memories until, at age five, she returned to her mother, stepfather, and little brother to help with farm life.

After retiring to the Grants Pass area, Dolores discovered a new passion: miniature donkeys. She raised and showed them in trail competitions, cart driving, costume classes, and parades. She wrote *Always in the Ribbons*, a book about her favorite donkey, Tennessee Ernie, and served on the board of the National Miniature Donkey Association.

Her childhood unfolded during the hardships of the Great Depression. Dolores often spoke of howling prairie blizzards, searing summer heat, and dust storms that turned daylight to darkness. Those years taught her to work hard, persevere, and value responsibility. She said she learned love from her grandfather, strength from her circumstances, and purpose from those early trials.

A gifted artist, Dolores worked in watercolor and alabaster sculpture. At 90, she published her first novel, *Beyond the Bougainvillea*, based on her life. Several more novels followed, including *And Yesterday is Gone*, *The Long Journey Home*, and *Tomorrow is Forever*.

In 1942, Dolores married Allen Jorgenson and lived with his family on a farm outside Devils Lake, North Dakota. They had three children: Michael, Dori Anne, and Marilane. Around 1950, she and her children boarded a train for California and settled in North Hollywood with her extended family. Dolores and her female relatives worked alternating shifts at Tim's Aircraft, Douglas Aircraft, and Lockheed Aircraft as "Rosie the Riveters," contributing to the wartime effort. In 2024, Dolores was honored with the Rosie the Riveter Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor bestowed by Congress.

Dolores spent her final decade in the loving care of Bill and Cathy Dunlap, her son and daughter-in-law, in Applegate, and with her daughter Marilane Jorgenson and Matt Maclauchlin in Williams. Daughter Dori Anne Coleman lives in Windsor, California. Dolores is also survived by five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

In 1954, Dolores married Boyd Dunlap and moved to the Sylmar foothills of southern California, where she raised purebred champion Nubian and La Mancha goats shown across California and Nevada. In 1959, the family moved to Manteca,

All who knew Dolores are welcome to celebrate her amazing life on March 14, 1-5 pm, at Pacifica's Great Hall in Williams. For more information, contact Bill and Cathy Dunlap at evesafe@gmail.com or call 541-659-3145.

Barbara Holiday
sfholiday@aol.com

Quilters and community: "Life's Journey" Quilt Show

BY LIZA CROSSE

It is with real pleasure that the Rogue Valley Piecemakers are responding to the *Applegater's* call for articles and stories about community, commerce, and how we support our community on a local level. As quilters, we are experts in building fellowship, whether through creative projects, numerous charitable programs, or supportive friendship. For centuries, if not millennia, women, and sometimes men, have gathered to sew together. Sewing bees are an iconic piece of our nation's cultural history. Our local quilting group carries on this wonderful and ancient tradition.



Applegate and other Rogue Valley quilters gathered for EPP in the home of local quilting superstar Debbie Wheeler and her husband, George, in the Upper Applegate. Photo by Nathan Gehres, APWC.

A highlight of our efforts is our beautiful annual quilt show, when we extend this sense of community and artistic inspiration to our neighbors throughout the Rogue Valley. This year, our show is entitled "Life's Journey—An Inspirational Adventure!"

Board President Roxanne Zirkle chose this thoughtful theme, inspired by the history of the Underground Railroad and the northward journey made by enslaved people. Oral tradition has it that quilts with sewn-in symbols were draped on porches to help the escapees find homes that would shelter them on the road. Roxanne hopes to inspire quilters to share their own journeys in their quilts, whether a vacation adventure, personal

Please join us on May 8 and 9, 10 am-4 pm, at the Josephine County Fairgrounds.

See **QUILTERS AND COMMUNITY**, page 22.

Building resilience in the Applegate

BY TUCKER GRINNAN

Resilience is a term that gets thrown around a fair amount. But what does it actually mean to be resilient? To be tough or resourceful? Is it a box you can just check off? Like when you're doing your taxes: "Are you resilient? Yes or no." Honestly, I don't know how I'd answer that... probably "depends on the day?"

a hot commodity. When winter weather rolls in, many of these backroads are some of the last places to see a plow.

What I can say is that I've developed a much better understanding of the word by living and working here in the Applegate. Resilience is woven into the fabric of this place. I don't think I know anyone who would describe life in the valley as easy. Depending on where you're located, you could be almost an hour from the nearest hospital. Cell coverage is

Yet, it almost feels like these are reasons we choose to live here. The isolation is part of the charm. It may not be easy living here, but it is worthwhile. What happens when you can't get out of your steep, ice-covered driveway and you're running out of food during a snowstorm? You hitch a ride into town with a neighbor. When life gets hard, Applegaters find a way. No, I'm not your high school football coach. Yes, I am trying to make a point. Whatever resilience is, we have it here.

See **BUILDING RESILIENCE**, page 11.

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more information online at applegateconnect.org

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Humbuggers unite in becoming a “Firewise” community

BY SANG MONTAGE L.AC.

Fellow Applegaters, Humbuggers, and those who align with the Humbug mountainside along Highway 238 are working to become a Firewise community! Please consider joining our cause to become Firewise and learn why becoming Firewise makes sense for Humbug residents. We are also updating our current Fire Emergency Phone Tree.

Common questions

Will it lower our homeowner’s insurance?

While it may not lower your insurance, it may help prevent loss of coverage or assist in the ability to purchase coverage. Sterling Creek Road is our first

regional Firewise Community, and some residents reported that it did indeed lower their costs. It certainly won’t hurt us!

What does it get us?

The more residents who join in our Humbug Community, the greater the possibility of receiving grant money, especially grants that are not federally funded. Money from the private sector becomes available to us in the form of matching grants for volunteer hours spent making our homes safe. Hours spent must be accounted for and submitted to the appropriate agency to earn funds. Every hour of work equals \$34.75! Most

importantly, by making our properties Firewise and receiving the Firewise Certification, we ultimately help save our lives, our homes, and our neighbors when a wildfire strikes!

What’s involved in becoming Firewise?

It’s basically creating a defensible space around your home and making sure your driveway is clear for the exit or entry of emergency vehicles. Come to a meeting or pick up a brochure at the library or fire station.

Are there resources available for the disabled, elderly, or economically challenged?

We are working to create an infrastructure to make this happen. When we become certified, we can request grants to help those in need to create and maintain defensible space. Let us know if you’re interested by signing up for updates.

What are some examples of creating defensible space?

- Cleaning out gutters and covering them with mesh wire to prevent the buildup of leaves.
- Keeping the underside of decks and porches clear of flammable debris.
- Replacing missing or damaged roof vents with 1/8-inch metal mesh, limbing trees, etc.
- Coming to the All Things Fire Fair in Ruch on March 7, 2026, to learn more.

What can we do in the meantime to create defensible space?

There are some free resources available now, like chipping and dumpster use from the Applegate Fire District. Call them at 541-899-1050 for more information and schedule a dumpster for you to load up with flammable material.

Connections and resources for fire safety

Learn more about Firewise

- Website: firewise.org
- Firebrand Resiliency Collective
- Email: fireadapted@firebrandcollective.org

Firewise coordinators

- Tucker Grinnan: tucker.grinnan@firebrandcollective.org
- Kara Baylor: kara@firebrandcollective.org

Resilient Landscapes project manager—Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC)

- Nate Gehres: 541-890-9989 | nathan@apwc.info

Non-Emergency Fire Station #9—Ruch, Oregon

- Phone: 541-899-1050
- Address: 1095 Upper Applegate Rd, Jacksonville, OR 97530

Jackson County Burn Hotline

- Phone: 541-776-7007

Community Connect

A safe database resource for emergency personnel to access locked gates during emergencies and provide information

See HUMBUGGERS UNITE, page 15.



Funday Farm. Photo by Sang Montage L.Ac.

Business network in the Applegate

BY MEGAN FEHRMAN

Economic vitality and community are at the core of A Greater Applegate’s (AGA) mission, along with increasing social connection, rural resilience, and stewardship of the environments that surround us. Here in the Applegate Valley, we don’t have a multitude of services or supports, like our own Chamber of Commerce, but we do have A Greater Applegate and the Applegate Valley Business Network. The network supports businesses within the valley and promotes the Applegate as a desirable place to do business and as a destination that is welcoming to visitors.

The Applegate Business Network Directory on applegateconnect.org has just been redesigned to function like the old yellow pages in the phone book. It is becoming a comprehensive listing of businesses located in the Applegate or serving the Applegate Valley community. If you haven’t seen it, please check it out. Now we just need to get all of the local businesses into the Directory! So we are asking for your help. If you know a business or own or manage one that should be in our Directory, please email Business Network Manager Jeff Haas at jeff@agreaterapplegate.org,

and we will follow up. If you own or manage a business that is located in or serves the Applegate, contact Jeff to join the Business Network.

Did you know that there is also an online Classified Ad space just for the Applegate? We have just redesigned the Classifieds section of the ApplegateConnect website too. If you are selling something that pictures will help to sell, you can post up to four on a listing. Like our Applegate Listserv, it is free for individuals or businesses to use.

Throughout the first half of 2026, we will be meeting with Applegate businesses and community members to take part in discussions about how we can support businesses and economic vitality in the valley. There will be individual meetings for industry groups that represent specific types of businesses, and also meetings related to location for our Village Hubs of Ruch, Applegate, Williams, Murphy, and Wilderville. The result will be an *Applegate Economic Vitality Plan* that we can use to guide our work and to bring regional business-support resources to the Applegate.

Here are the specific focus groups and meeting dates or target months:

- Vintners—March 4, 2026
- Tourism—March 20-30
- Artists—Early- to mid-April
- Cannabis—Late April
- Forest and Fire—May
- Outdoor Recreation—June
- Education—June-July
- Services (contractors, plumbers, electricians, landscaping, etc.)—July

The Applegate Valley is the first unincorporated rural community selected to do this kind of place-based process to increase rural economic vitality. This year will build on the *Applegate Valley Vision* that was completed in 2022, the two studies on the economic drivers and a map of rural commercial space that were done with the University of Oregon in 2023 and 2024, and all of the work that has been done up until this point, including the growing farmers markets, the artists network, and wanderapplegate.com.

The staff and board of AGA remain delighted to be doing this work in and for our community. There will be many opportunities to learn more, plug in, and celebrate 30 years of community-building work in this beautiful place. (Yes, that’s right! AGA, formerly the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation, is turning 30 this year!) Since the mid-1990s, AGA has strengthened local life through engagement that supports small farms and businesses, coordinates community



AGA’s Business Network Manager, Jeff Haas, with Jonathan Amorin of Apple Outlaw Cider. Photo by Sarah Haas.

networks, and creates inclusive, resident-led programs that celebrate our region’s unique sense of place. From the lower Applegate to the Little Applegate, a bounty of beauty, flavor, and diverse experiences abounds. Let’s #livelocal and support all that we’ve got right at our fingertips. 2026 is shaping up to be a big year, and we hope you will come along for the ride.

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POETRY CORNER

Applegate Conception

By Jack Duggan

When I was young and in my prime
I used to have a good ol' time
In bars and taverns goin' roun'
Just drinkin' beer and playin' clown

But as I grew, the neon lights
No longer brightened up my nights
The painted ladies with the flashing eyes
No longer seemed like such a prize

And I was also soon to learn
That others too were quick to spurn
The shuck and jive and the gaudy roles
That shield the heart from touching souls

So I found myself a mountainside
And it's there I let my heart abide
And opened the door to kith and kin
And let those touching souls come in

Jack Duggan wrote this poem shortly after coming home from Vietnam, while living in the 1910 cabin his great-grandfather built, where, his mother told him, he had been conceived. The cabin sits near the headwaters of Forest Creek, just below Mount Isabelle. Jack is a Land Steward and is known to advocate for natural resource issues in the Applegate.

Have a submission for Poetry Corner, either written by an Applegate resident or about the Applegate? Email it to *Applegater* poetry editor Paul Tipton at ptipton4u2c@gmail.com.

BOOK REVIEW

The Bill of Obligations

The Ten Habits of Good Citizens
by Richard Haas

BY PAUL TIPTON

After a recent rereading of the Bill of Rights, I was given a nudge to read *The Bill of Obligations*, written in 2023, the chosen book for my local book club. In his preface, Haas notes the current political divisions in our country, brought on by the incidents of January 6, 2021, and suggests that they raise questions about the integrity of American democracy. He describes himself as “not partisan,” and we have to take him at his word. I hope you don't stop reading here, because I have no desire to discuss politics, only wanting you to consider these ten “obligations” for citizens that seem to me to be the baseline for individual responsibilities in American society.

Haas begins, in the chapter titled “Rights and Their Limits,” by explaining that the need for republicanism—“representative governments exercising authority in the name of the people and held accountable to them”—led to the creation of the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the Constitution. Haas goes on to investigate the deterioration of democracy, believing that the differences in beliefs about the “rights” of citizens have led to this deterioration.

Hence came *The Bill of Obligations*, his effort to showcase ten “obligations” that, if followed, might help to narrow the gulf, or at least prevent further expansion of, the divide between those with differing views. Though he believes strongly in the necessity of changing the divisiveness of the current political climate, Haas concedes that because of the reality of changes, few are likely

to happen, “in no small part because the same problems that have led to the weakening of democracy here make it difficult to fix it. It is not just that the process of reform is arduous; it is more that those who perceive that the changes would restrain their rights will oppose them. This is where obligations come in: American democracy will work, and reform will prove possible only if obligations join rights at center stage.”

Here then are the ten obligations:

- Obligation I—Be Informed
- Obligation II—Get Involved
- Obligation III—Stay Open to Compromise
- Obligation IV—Remain Civil
- Obligation V—Reject Violence
- Obligation VI—Value Norms
- Obligation VII—Promote the Common Good
- Obligation VIII—Respect Government Service
- Obligation IX—Support the Teaching of Civics
- Obligation X—Put Country First

These are not difficult obligations to achieve or believe in, all being positive suggestions toward living in harmony in your community. They are not mandates, but a reasonable set of values for all of us to explore and try to live within. Interestingly, having gotten feedback from two book groups with different political alignments, both groups agreed that the list of obligations had value, with one of the main points of consensus being to “support the teaching of civics.” I think that means we all need to try to have our children become better citizens than we have been, a difficult task, since we haven't always been good role models.

This is a book worth reading, even if you just read Haas's obligations, a balance to the many rights we have and enjoy in these United States.

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Our Mission

The goal of the Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc., is to provide the Applegate watershed with a communication vehicle, the *Applegater*, that will provide educational information, increase community networking, and represent all the area's diverse communities. Through honest, constructive, relevant, and entertaining reports on a wide variety of subjects and viewpoints, including our natural resources, historical and current events, and community news, we can work together to enhance the quality of life we have in the Applegate, and continue to make a difference in our valley.

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All submissions to the *Applegater* are subject to editorial review and editing to meet the newsmagazine's standards and guidelines. Publication decisions are made by the editorial committee, and as space allows.

Photo Requirements

All photos submitted must be high resolution (300 dpi) or "large format" (e.g., 30" x 40"). If you have questions, email gater@applegater.org.

Photos submitted for the front-page banner are on a volunteer basis. Credit is given in the issue in which it appears, on our website, and on our Facebook page.

Submissions for the next issue must be received at gater@applegater.org by the deadline (see Editorial Calendar on this page).

Applegater Newsmagazine
PO Box 14, Jacksonville, OR 97530
applegater.org

Fire and community: Diverse groups coming together

BY BABETTE RAPP

Perhaps one of the most unifying issues for the Applegate Valley is the extremely high fire danger facing our rural landscape and the very real threat to our homes, businesses, and forests.

The good news is that this is an exciting time for our valley, with many community members and several nonprofits, in addition to our Applegate Fire District, engaging in fire prevention efforts. As can be seen in this issue of the *Applegater*, multiple efforts are underway, from the comprehensive Applegate Firewise Protection Plan coordinated by the Applegate Partnership to local Firewise groups working together to take care of neighborhood needs. And, as you will see below, the long-standing Friends of the Applegate Fire District and volunteers working in various ways

continue to do their good work. Now is a great time to join these efforts! All hands are needed to protect our valley.

The Friends of Applegate Fire District

Without doubt, the nonprofit Friends focuses on a very serious and important subject—providing for emergency medical and fire services. However, of all the community groups working on fire-related issues, we like to think we're the most fun!

Our overarching goal is to support the Applegate Fire District and the community it serves. We have several areas of focus: supporting good morale and the "esprit de corps" of our professional emergency responders, engaging the community to foster understanding about the work of the District and build trust in our professional emergency responders, and raising funds

for the purchase of essential equipment and programs that otherwise would not be funded by the District's very lean budget.

To accomplish these goals, we host events for the District staff members and volunteers, including a holiday party and annual awards banquet. We also regularly host events for the community's participation, from our traditional low-cost pancake breakfasts and spaghetti dinners to fabulous fundraiser dinners.

Thanks to support from the community, our recent accomplishments have included very successful campaigns to purchase a Type 3 Wildland Fire Engine and a specialized washer-extractor, which addresses the extremely high rate of cancer in firefighters by removing carcinogens from fire equipment. Most recently, and at the request of Chief Wolfard, our fundraising efforts and community donations have financed the acquisition of two large used engines in good condition. These will be placed at stations to provide extra pumper

See FIRE-AND COMMUNITY, page 9.

Help us

ensure that we have the ongoing support needed to publish the *Applegater* newsmagazine. All contributions are tax-deductible and receive recognition in print.

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For more information, contact:

Jackson County
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Next deadline: May 1

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Thanks to Linda Kappen for the delightful photo of pear blossoms and Mt. Isabelle sharing the spring sky.

...

Have a photo for the Summer 2026 *Applegater*? Email it in large format at 300 dpi to gater@applegater.org.

Corrections

The *Applegater* is committed to publishing accurate information in its news articles, correcting errors of fact, and clarifying misleading statements. Send suggested corrections to Editor in Chief Annika Hodges at annika@applegater.org.

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Editorial Calendar

ISSUE	DEADLINE
FALL (Sept - Nov) <i>Earth - Air</i>	August 1
WINTER (Dec - Feb).... <i>Holiday - Arts</i>	November 1
SPRING (March - May) ... <i>History - Heritage</i>	February 1
SUMMER (June - Aug) <i>Fire - Water</i>	May 1

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— Applegate Library —

Learn, fix, move, and make music at Applegate Library

BY CHRISTINE GRUBB



BY MEGAN PINDER

“Autocorrect” is a great slogan for a free library resource: Chilton’s Automotive Library. This database gives step-by-step repair instructions, wiring diagrams, maintenance schedules, and diagnostic information for thousands of vehicles. It is an accredited and trustworthy source, and barriers like video ads, various account sign-ins, and prompts to download certain types of software aren’t part of the equation. You can also use Chilton to look up your VIN to see if there have been any recalls. You can find Chilton’s Automotive Library at jcls.org/2026/01/09/featured-database-chiltons-automotive/.

Upcoming events

Android Basics, 18+ years. Learn the basics of Android phones and tablets. Topics include physical parts overview, Android operating system, and navigating gestures, widgets, keyboard, and more. Bring your own phone. 11 am-noon, Tuesday, March 3.

Music and Movement: Family Fun with Laurie Finear. This class combines singing, rhythm, movement, and sign language. Get ready to sing beloved songs and play with percussion instruments, hoops, balls, and more! Classes are on the second and fourth Fridays through May. 2:30-3:30 pm Friday, March 13 & 27; April 10 & 24; May 8.

Picture Perfect: An Introduction to Using the Apple Camera and Photos app, 18+ years. This beginner-level class will introduce users to the iPhone camera and Photos app. Topics include taking pictures, navigating the photo app, creating albums, sharing photos, learning features of the camera app and shooting modes, and much more. Bring your own device. 11 am-noon, Tuesday, April 7.

Veterans Outreach, 18+ years. A veteran service officer will be available to assist veterans and their families with

services, including VA disability applications, burial benefits, widow benefits, discharge upgrades, and more. For more information, call 541-774-8214. 10 am-3 pm, even-numbered month Tuesdays: April 14, June 9, August 11, October 13, and December 8.

An Introduction to MyChart, 18+ years. Learn how to use MyChart. Topics include accessing your medical information, attending virtual doctor visits, refilling prescriptions online, and more. There will be time for Q&A and time to practice. 11 am-noon, Tuesday, May 5.

Experience the West African Kora with Sean Gaskell, all ages. Hear the sound—and the history—of the kora, a 21-stringed West African harp. 3-4 pm, Friday, May 15.

Reminders

A technical education specialist will be at the Applegate branch library on Tuesdays from 10 am-12:30 pm on a first-come, first-served basis. You can also make an appointment by email at digitalservices@jcls.org or by phone at 541-734-3990.

The Applegate Library meeting room can be booked for your meeting, program, or event (even when the library is closed) by going to jcls.libcal.com/reserve/ap-meeting. Need a place to rehearse? You can do that here, whether for a meeting or music practice.

Wi-Fi is available 24-7 in our parking lot and available inside during open hours.

Preschool Storytime is on Fridays from 11-11:30 am.

Christine Grubb
Applegate Branch Library Manager
cgrubb@jcls.org
541-846-7346

The programs and services listed below, as well as our Seed Library, Wi-Fi, and cozy spaces, are free and accessible to every community member, including those living outside of Jackson County. For Jackson County residents, library cards are also free!

End of Life Planning for Your Online Accounts. This program will help you and your loved ones take practical steps to prepare your digital legacy. 2-3:30 pm Thursday, March 12.

Be an Energy Explorer with Scienceworks!, 6+ years. This interactive workshop teaches the basics of electricity and solar energy with engaging demonstrations, experiments, and activities that spark curiosity. 1-2 pm Saturday, March 14.

Pollinator Pals Seed Science Workshop, 7-12 years. Join the Pollinator Pals team for a seed science workshop where we’ll dissect beans under microscopes, use dancing to prepare wildflower seeds, and learn all about how to get your own pollinator garden started! 4-5 pm Thursday, March 19.

2nd Annual Community Plant & Seed Swap. The Ruch Seed Library is celebrating its second anniversary! Come swap seeds and stories of your gardening successes. Tubers, root divisions, and cuttings are also welcome. 1-2 pm Saturday, March 21.

Wildfire Risk Reduction: Being Firewise in our Community, 18+ years. Learn how to mitigate fire hazards around your home as well as in the event of a large-scale emergency, such as a wildfire. 1-2 pm Saturday, April 4.

Experience the West African Kora with Sean Gaskell. Hear the sound—and the history—of the kora, a 21-stringed West African harp. 4:30-5:30 pm Thursday, April 9.

What Is AI and Should I Be Worried?, 13+ years. Explore the hot topic of AI and learn what it is and some of the challenges and concerns it creates. 1-2:30 pm Saturday, April 11.

Ode to a Living Ancestor: Poetry & Colored Pencil, 12+ years. We will write a poem and make a colored-pencil art piece on Masonite to honor a relative. Youth 12-17 must be accompanied by an adult. 1-3 pm Saturday, April 18.

Chill and Paint. Join us for a creative class where we’ll use basic art supplies to let our creativity flow. Children under 12, please bring a grown-up. 1-2 pm Saturday, May 2.

Spring Cleaning and Cleansing with Herbs, 12+ years. In this hands-on

class, we will explore the practical use of spring herbs for cleaning and light internal cleansing. We will also identify and taste local wildcrafted herbs. 1-2:30 pm, Saturday, May 9.

Be an Energy Explorer with Scienceworks!, 6+ years. This interactive workshop teaches the basics of hydroelectric power and wind power with engaging demonstrations, experiments, and activities that spark curiosity. 1-2 pm Saturday, May 16.

Death Cafe Conversation, 13+ years. Facilitated by Southern Oregon Living and Dying Alliance, this is an informal, respectful space to share stories, ask questions, and discuss the sometimes difficult topic of mortality in a way that brings connection and insight. 6-8 pm first Thursdays.

World Snack Tour, 10+ years. Discover a new country through music, trivia, games, and the best snacks and candies a particular country has to offer. We provide the samples; you bring a spirit of adventure and curiosity about the world! 1-2 pm fourth Saturdays.

Preschool Storytime, 3-5 years. Bring your preschoolers to enjoy stories, rhymes, songs, and fun at the library. 10:30-11 am Tuesdays.

Community Resource Help. Need help with food, shelter, a medical provider, etc.? Meet with a member of our Community Resource Team by appointment or drop in. Noon-4 pm Wednesdays.

Computer and Tech Help. Meet with a Technology Education Specialist by appointment or drop in. 10 am-12:30 pm Tuesdays and 2-4:30 pm Thursdays.

Read Play Talk (RPT), 0-5 years. Discover how children learn through play and daily activities: singing, telling stories, creating art, and having fun! RPT is open to everyone—young children and their families and caregivers. 10:30 am-noon Thursdays.

Community Yoga, 13+ years. Join us for an all-levels yoga class with Dr. Rachel Stricker. The Community Room will open at 8:45 am, and class will begin at 9 am. *Registration required at jcls.org/events or by calling 899-7438. Bring your own mat.* 9-10 am second and fourth Wednesdays.

Megan Pinder
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7919 Highway 238, Ruch

Join the Friends of the Applegate Library!

BY DIANA COOGLE

We love our libraries! The Applegate Branch of the Jackson County Library System (JCLS) is a valuable resource for our community. It has books, of course (browsing the shelves is always fun), and a lot more—computers for patron use, programs for children and for adults, wonderful music gatherings (I hope you’ve been to some), a pick-up place for books ordered from the larger JCLS shelves, and a community room for meetings, yoga classes, readings, and other events.

Jackson County branch libraries have Friends groups that support and enhance the services of their libraries. With proceeds from book sales, they help pay for programs. They sponsor their own programs. They provide refreshments when needed. They stock “little libraries”

with books. They promote the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which gives free books to children. They step up as volunteers when their librarians need help.

The Friends of the Applegate Library likes to do these kinds of things, too, but when Joan Peterson died last November, our group was diminished to two—me and the wonderful and loyal Lynn Towns. By the bylaws, we need to have at least three members, or the organization will dissolve. Lynn and I would love to talk to you about joining the board. We love our library and would love to continue supporting it as FOAL. Join us so we can all do that together.

Diana Coogle
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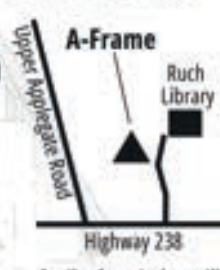
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Why volunteering (and paperbacks) still matter

BY JANIS MOHR-TIPTON

The Friends of Ruch Library (FORL) is a nonprofit that is completely run by volunteers, like many other organizations or groups in our valley.

We extend a heartfelt thank-you to each of the FORL volunteers for the hours they have given, the variety of jobs they have done, and the incredible connection they have made with members of our own community and with visitors, many of whom came from throughout our region for programs, activities, and shopping at our bookstores in 2025.

As we begin this first quarter of 2026, we could do even more if we had additional help. There's something very positive that happens for both the person providing helpful, cheerful service and the visiting person receiving the friendly, cheerful service.



FORL members Cynthia Cheney, Laurel Prchal, and Janie Tibbals volunteering to sort books from donation arrivals in the Book Barn. Photo by Barbara Krack.

In a *New York Times* article, author Tara Parker-Pope said, "Volunteering is linked to health benefits like lower blood pressure and decreased mortality rates. We also know that volunteering builds your resilience—your ability to bounce back from trauma, grief, and other small and big setbacks in life."

Volunteering in any nonprofit is not only a service to a community; it is a way to build relationships, learn new skills, and make connections that build friendships. There's a great opportunity to visit with many nonprofits and find out how you can become involved in your community on April 25, 2026, at the Ruch Fire Station Hall. Watch for upcoming details, and come visit with us.

End of an era with paperback books?

The FORL volunteers and board members who work with the book donations recently learned that at the end of 2025, most publishers of the very popular mass-market paperbacks were ending publication of them because of a severe drop in sales. One independent publisher will continue a specific niche, such as cozy mysteries in the paperback format. They will also move some titles to be printed in the trade paperback or hardcover formats. There will be plenty around the Ruch Library Campus for several years, and the Book Barn has a good stock.

There's an interesting history of how we got the smaller 4x7-inch paperback, so named in England in the 1930s. In 1931, the United States first published

similar-sized books called pocket books—affordable, portable books that could get distributed in more places than just the drug stores and train stations. They were printed on low-quality paper with vibrant, eye-catching covers to encourage people to buy them at 25 cents. *The Good Earth*, by Pearl Buck, published in 1938, was the first mass-marketed pocket book in the US. Then ten other titles were tried, and by the early 1940s, a wide variety of genre fiction was being published. The 1950s and World War

II brought newer technology and a wide readership of men and women serving in the military or employed as shift workers. The paperbacks were cheap, readily available, and easily posted and carried. These books provided easy reading while waiting for transportation.

Today, what does this mean for softcover books? The trade paperbacks that entered the American market in the 1960s will remain. These books are usually 6x8+ inches and have higher-quality paper and a larger font size with better ink for lasting quality. The soft edition of best sellers is also very popular, and most publishers will continue large-market sales with trade paperbacks.

How does FORL process the donations that come to them?

We have a system for sorting every item we receive:

- "Excellent condition" goes on sale at the A-Frame Bookstore
- "Good condition" goes to the Book Barn, Ruch Country Store, Ruch Hardware Store, and Little Libraries in the Ruch area
- "Okay condition" goes to the free bins in the breezeway attached to the Book Barn and occasionally to Goodwill or, if heavily damaged, to a recycling bin or garbage can

Processing and selling books is where FORL could use much more help. Come see us on a Tuesday, noon-2 pm, at the Ruch Library campus, 7919 Hwy 238, when we are processing items at the Book Barn, or stop to see us at the big event on April 25.

Thank you to this rural community for helping to become an outstanding place of stewardship.

Janis Mohr-Tipton, President
Friends of Ruch Library (FORL)
janis.agapark@gmail.com
541-846-7501

Josephine
Community Library

— Williams Library — Spring into learning with Josephine Community Library

BY SARAH MEYER

Williams Library events and programs are offered at no charge and are open to the public. Registration is not required, and a library card is not necessary to participate in library events and programs.

Featured events

Williams Weekly Story Time. Themed story time and craft session designed to spark creativity and joy in a safe, family-friendly setting. 11 am-noon every Friday.

K9 Reading Buddies. Stop by the Williams Branch to read with Shadow, Williams's friendly K9 Reading Buddy. This program offers a welcoming, low-pressure environment where children can practice reading aloud with a trained therapy dog and develop a love of reading. 3-4 pm on Tuesdays.

Adult Williams Book Club. Join a welcoming community of readers to explore engaging books, share perspectives, and build connections through thoughtful conversation and a shared love of reading. Noon-1 pm the last Saturday of every month.

Kanopy: Streaming with your library card

Josephine Community Library now offers Kanopy, a free streaming service for library cardholders. Enjoy thousands of ad-free movies, documentaries, and TV shows anytime, whether you're watching on your computer, mobile device, or streaming

directly to your smart TV through the Kanopy app. Your library card also provides access to Kanopy Kids, an ad-free, age-appropriate collection designed for safe and enjoyable viewing.

Start streaming today with your library card barcode at josephinelibrary.kanopy.com or by downloading the Kanopy app.

Other library matters

The tutors are in! Did you know that with a library card, students can access live virtual tutoring at no cost through **Brainfuse HelpNow?** Students from elementary through college level can get the help they need in various subjects, including math, writing, language, and more.

Students can also check out calculators, laptops, and Wi-Fi hotspots from our Library of Things to support studying at home or on the go—or stop by the library to take advantage of quiet study spaces.

To take advantage of this resource, visit josephinelibrary.org and find "Help Now" in the "Online Learning Resources" section under "Education/Resources."

Williams Library hours

Tuesday/Wednesday/Saturday, 1-6 pm
Friday, 11 am-6 pm

Sarah Meyer
Communications Lead
smeyer@josephinelibrary.org

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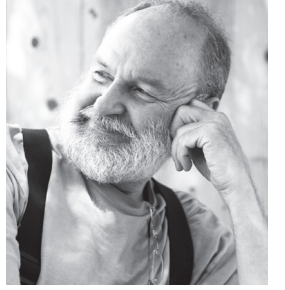
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THE STARRY SIDE

A season of stars

BY GREELEY WELLS



Greeley Wells.

Winter, such as it has been, is over. Days are lengthening, nights are finally shrinking, and the outside is calling. But I go out every clear night, anyway, even in winter. It's an amazing universe right over our heads. With all its beauty and complications, it can both interest us and bring us to new understandings. This heavenly spread has been around us all our history. In the past, our ancestors must have sat around fires cooking dinner each night. What do you think they looked at and talked about under the stars, each night slightly different from the one before, until the same night comes back around a year later?

This season, Orion, with his three-in-a-row belt, is in the south. He will have reached the southwest by April and will be standing on the western horizon line later that month. By May, he will have completely set in the west. Sirius, his bright dog star, the sky's brightest star, will be following him faithfully and also disappearing by May.

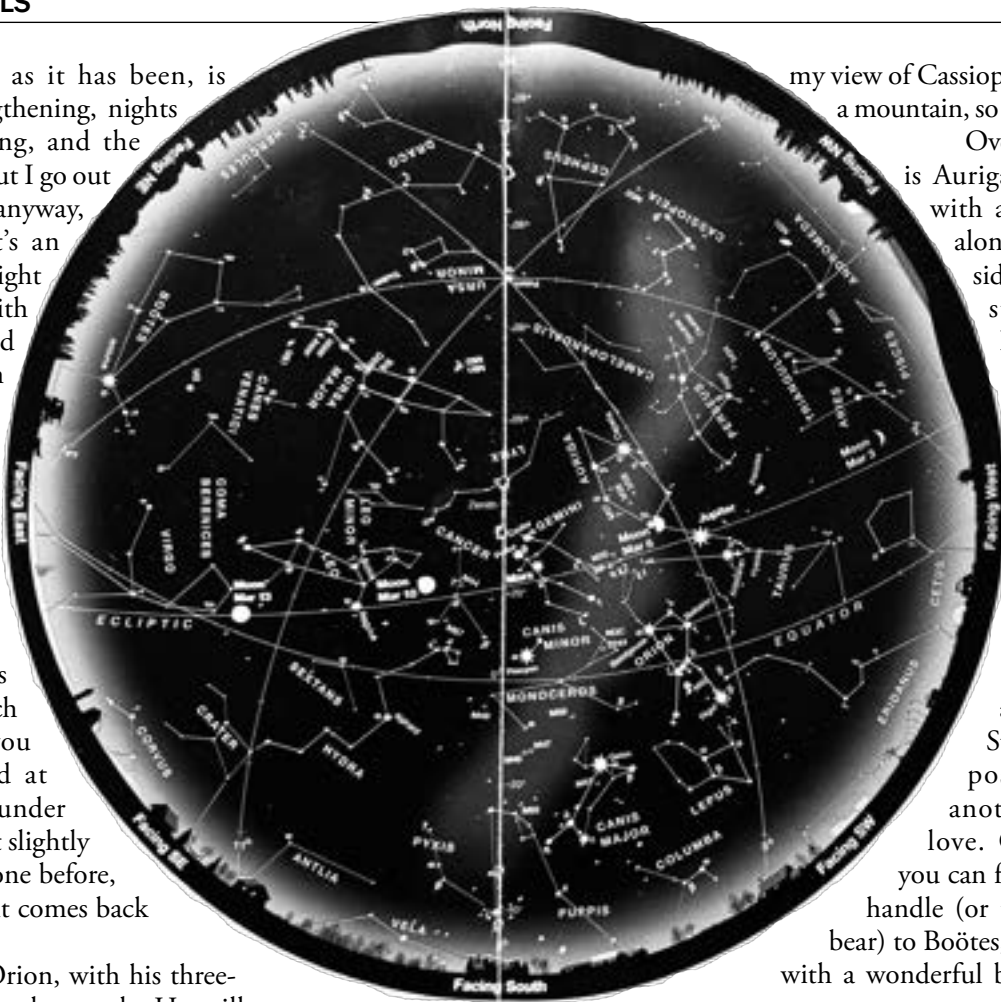


Image: Sky & Telescope (skyandtelescope.org).

My favorite, Cassiopeia, will have moved over the top of the north star to the west, then sunk below it. By May, she will be right under the North Star, making it a "W" (for Wells, you know). Unfortunately,

my view of Cassiopeia is full of trees and a mountain, so I look for parts of her.

Overhead and a little east is Auriga, a five-star square with a cool little triangle along one of its northern sides and a very bright star, Capella, in it. It moves to the southwest in May but is still along the horizon line.

The Big Dipper, Ursa Major, is northwest, opposite the North Star from Cassiopeia. In March, it's moving around the North Star to find an overhead position in May. It's another constellation I love. One reason is that you can follow the arch of the handle (or the tail of Ursa, the bear) to Boötes, a large constellation with a wonderful bright star, Arcturus,

at its end. It's moving east and then northeast to hang overhead during spring.

Leo the Lion (the backward question mark) moves straight west overhead all season. It's east in March, overhead, and then west in May. Leo really stands out.

Mars is bright and next to the Gemini Twins in March. By May, it is heading toward the western horizon, away from the twins.

Jupiter is the brightest thing up there in March, near the "V" of Taurus, the Bull, in the midwest, heading for the horizon line to set there in April.

When we look at the night sky, we keep seeing more and understanding more, and we still never seem to know it all. It's so much bigger than us and so beautiful. I've been tempted by it since I was six or seven, when my grandmother showed me, from a beach, some of what was there. I saw enough then to capture me for life.

Greeley Wells
greeley@greeley.me

— OF NOTE —

Meteors

We will experience meteor showers on April 22-24, after midnight and through dawn. There will be 10 to 15 Lyrid meteors per hour, at their highest at dawn, with the radiant near Vega.

■ APCW'S EDUCATION

Continued from page 1.

among schools and providers. As a short-term response, OSU Outdoor School calculated maximum funding allotments to schools across the state. For some schools, the allotted funds per student are significantly lower than AOS's registration fee. While we have been able to work out a plan with our partner schools for spring 2026, these cuts have slashed AOS program management time and halted our newly developed High School Leader program. Ominously, an additional 12.78 percent cut is hovering over Outdoor School. If this cut is applied, AOS may have to shrink from four to three program days per student and potentially lose our catering service. These impacts are being felt not only by AOS but also by providers throughout the state, as

5th- and 6th-graders contend with a diminished experience from the one supported by Oregon voters when they passed Measure 99.

Today's funding climate has impacted Applegate Outdoor Summer Camp in a different, albeit broadly connected, manner. APWC piloted AOSC in 2025 with the goal of providing a conveniently located, financially accessible nature day camp in the Applegate. In February 2025, we recruited an AmeriCorps member to coordinate this program. The importance of this AmeriCorps partnership was two-fold: it added capacity to our small education staff and minimized overhead program management costs. When AmeriCorps was federally defunded in March 2025, our AmeriCorps member was forced to end their service term early. Without our AmeriCorps member,

program management and staffing costs ballooned, and the income we received from our low registration fees, which we had budgeted and put forth before our member's departure, was insufficient to cover overhead costs. Despite this setback, our four-week pilot season was a fulfilling and joyful experience for education staff, in no small part due to the warm feedback from the community.

We are excited to be offering AOSC again in 2026, this time for six weeks. In order to cover overhead costs while minimizing increases to registration fees, we have sought funding from a range of regional organizations. At this time, we have been awarded funds from the Pacific Power Foundation, Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District, and A Greater Applegate. We are also seeking contributions

from local businesses and community members who wish to support AOSC. Donations can be applied toward general program support or to the AOSC Scholarship Fund, which covers registration fees for campers from qualified families.

Despite these challenges, APWC's education program remains committed to facilitating impactful outdoor experiences for the Applegate's youth. As we forge ahead amid dwindling resources, we appreciate the community's support now more than ever.

Contact charlotte@apwc.info with questions or to discuss supporting Applegate Outdoor Summer Camp.

Charlotte Hyde
Education & Outreach
Program Director
charlotte@apwc.info
978-270-8831

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GARDENING FROM THE HEART

Soiled again! It feels *so-ul* good

BY NOEL RUIZ

Is soil the soul of a garden? Soil is certainly magical. Under the surface, it's dark, insulated, womb-like, and mysterious—only the worms and wiggles know what's going on down there. For us above, soil is a source of wonder and appreciation.

Gardeners depend on soil far more than plants depend on us. To anyone who claims to have brown thumbs, I say "Wonderful!" because brown is the beautiful color of soil. *What an honor!*

To be real, gardening and soil-building can feel soul-wrenching on a bad day. Other times, they are an elegant dance with nature. I oscillate through this spectrum.

It helps to carry fewer expectations for myself and the garden. Building soil and gaining experience are also worthy gifts to my future self, definitely worth waiting (years) for. Yes, as they say, gardens teach patience—priceless!

Catch me building soil year-round, one way or another. Here are a few favorites!

Lazy compost bed prep

I cold-compost out of the sheer joy of not having to turn piles. The downside of partially-broken-down compost is also the upside. Come the end of the season, I move the chunkier, unbroken-down

part of the pile (the outsides and top) to a new spot. The bottom-middle of the pile is beautifully (partially) broken-down, worm-inhabited, epic compost that gets added to garden beds. Now! The soil that was under the compost pile no longer has grass or weeds and is majorly enriched—perfect for immediately planting into! Rinse, repeat.

Pine needles have nutrients

Pine needles like to stay dry—it's almost as if they want to burn. I've found pine needles nearly a foot deep at the base of a tree, dry and not very broken down. Well, pine needles decompose if they stay wet. So I layer pine needles in my compost. I layer them in mulch. I layer them in new raised beds—lasagna style. It works really well! And no, dry pine needles won't acidify your garden!

Manure for the win

Manure boosts our garden's fertility! We don't have livestock (a.k.a. poop factories), but we are lucky this region is inhabited by lots of animal lovers. Many said animal lovers don't garden and have a, well, poop disposal problem. I am not picky about the animal, be it goat, horse, alpaca, chicken, cow, turkey, rabbit, what have you. They're all good! My concern is that their feed has not been sprayed, because persistent chemicals will kill the soil for years.

Weeds got it covered

Weeds literally cover the soil when we don't. How smart. How generous! I am only diligent about weeding thornies (e.g., blackberry, star thistle) and runners (e.g., mint, rhizomatous grass). Other weeds are quite welcome until they start competing with another plant I favor. Then they are either harvested for food and medicine, used as mulch, cut back and allowed to continue growing as cover, or composted. Sometimes I let the weeds ferment or rot in water—"weed tea" makes an amazing liquid fertilizer!

Soil building is a gift that keeps on giving, in part because the ritual never ends. When I dig into the compost pile or pull back the mulch and find a new layer of rich, dark humus—when I harvest some veggies that I struggled to grow just a few years ago (in the very same spot)—I uncover more gratitude for the garden, for myself, for life. I find the gifts I left in the soil for myself, all those seasons ago, when I wove wishes and dreams into layers of earth.

As I play in the dirt, I'm remembering something I inherently knew a long, long time ago as a young boy. Residual



Worms are hidden heroes, adding primo manure around plants' roots. Photo by Noel Ruiz.

joy appears to come from the process, the ritual, the satisfaction of doing *the thing*—whatever that thing is—while not expecting a certain outcome.

Healthy plants, large veggies, and abundant blooms are nice for a moment, if I'm lucky enough. When I'm loving the garden for what it is now—weeds, stones, and all—it turns out I can love myself, too, for who I am in this moment.

Noel Ruiz

hello@homesteadculture.com

Noel offers seeds and writes about homesteading from the heart at homesteadculture.com.

■ FIRE AND COMMUNITY

Continued from page 5

capacity. Now every Applegate Station has a large-capacity pumper, which improves our Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating, potentially leading to better insurance rates.

Please join us in our fun and meaningful work! To learn more, visit our webpage at friendsofapplegatefire.org, or join us at a meeting on the third Tuesday of each month at 3 pm at the Fire District Training Building, 1095 Upper Applegate Road. Or if you'd rather just have some food and fun, come to our next pancake breakfast on April 25, 8-10:30 am, also at the Training Building.

Volunteer firefighters and Emergency medical technicians (EMTs)

Volunteer firefighters and EMTs have a long history of valuable service in the Applegate Valley. Volunteers provide essential assistance with emergency response

by supporting our professional firefighters in diverse ways. One of the most valuable functions of volunteer responders is to assist with emergency calls by driving tankers or other engines to fires or medical calls. Our community is geographically spread out, and while our Fire District has seven strategically sited and well-maintained stations, only two are staffed. In a perfect world, the five unstaffed stations would be used by trained volunteers who live nearby and can provide a speedy response to local emergencies. Unfortunately, there is a chronic shortage of volunteers. If you have any interest in participating as a volunteer firefighter or EMT, please call the Fire District at 541-899-1050. We provide training.

Babette Rapp

President, Friends of the Applegate

Fire District

brapp5@aol.com

Got News?

The Applegater welcomes submissions!

What's going on around you in the Applegate? Let us know! Send your write-up and high-resolution photos to gater@applegater.org. Thanks!

See you in the Applegater....

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Wild Oak Preschool

indoor/outdoor home-based nature-inspired preschool program

NOW ENROLLING FOR WINTER 2026!

About the Program

Wild Oak Preschool is a nature-based preschool program that offers an early educational curriculum inspired by the seasons. Wild Oak's curriculum follows seasonal learning themes, incorporates STEAM education, and promotes social, emotional, and cognitive development. Wild Oak is located on a private 5-acre residential farm property with beautiful indoor and outdoor classrooms. Daily rhythms feature morning circle, group and individual activity times, teacher-led science and arts activities as well as child-led art, exploration, STEM and nature play both indoors and outdoors. Join us as we explore and connect with the world around us, together.

Winter Session: January 5 - March 19
winter enrollment period: November 21 - December 19
Spring Session: March 30 - June 11
spring enrollment period: February 15 - March 15
Summer Camp Short Sessions: Dates TBD

Wild Oak Preschool is a member of Natural Start Alliance and Association for Nature Based Education.

Program Details

- Small group size of up to 10 children
- Class runs Monday through Thursday
- Drop-off from 8-9AM
- Pick-up from 2-2:30PM
- Healthy meals provided
- Licensed as Certified Family Childcare Provider with Oregon Dept of Early Learning & Care
- Certified Nature-Based Educator with Association for Nature Based Education (ANBE)
- ERDC accepted

Enrolling Now!

Winter Enrollment begins November 21 and closes December 19.

Winter Session:
January 5 - March 19
Winter learning themes: Woodland and nocturnal animals, hibernation & migration, animal adaptations, cold climates and inhabitants, and all things winter

My contact information

Heather Paladini, Program Director

text or call 336-937-2882
wildoakpreschool@gmail.com
www.wildoakpreschool.com

Schedule your meet-and-greet today!



“Stewards of place” in Applegate Valley—Cantrall Buckley Park updates

BY JANIS MOHR-TIPTON

Each year, the Applegate Valley is strengthened by the people who choose to care for it. In 2025, dozens of community volunteers and students contributed their time and energy to service and education programs at Cantrall Buckley Park. Their efforts—whether pulling invasive weeds, tending native plantings, or learning about the ecology of our watershed—reflect a deep and meaningful connection to this place. These volunteers embody what it means to be stewards of place: individuals who bring care, curiosity, and commitment to the landscapes that sustain us.

For many years, volunteers have played a central role in improving the health and beauty of Cantrall Buckley Park. Invasive species have been removed by hand, blackberry root wads have been dug out, and native plants have been given room to thrive again. This work is not glamorous, and it is rarely easy. It requires persistence—returning season after season to pull the same stubborn weeds, clear the same thickets, and nurture the same recovering habitats.

Yet so many of you continue to show up, year after year, driven by a shared desire to restore the park’s natural character. Your dedication is visible in every cleared trail, every thriving native shrub, and every patch of ground where invasive plants once dominated.

As we move into the first quarter of 2026, the focus in the pollinator beds and riparian areas will shift toward planting, nurturing, and supporting the young native species already established. Volunteers will help place new plants in the ground, tend earlier plantings, and ensure that these areas receive the water, mulch, and care they need to flourish. While we may still encounter newly emerged weeds or the occasional blackberry root wad, the emphasis this season is on growth—supporting the next generation of native plants that will provide habitat, shade, and beauty for years to come.

Opportunities to participate will be posted on the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council website, social media, and flyers throughout the community.

Anyone interested in joining can reach out to either me at janis@applegatepartnership.org or Caleb at caleb@applegatepartnership.org. We will be happy to help coordinate a time that works for you. Whether you can volunteer once or return throughout the season, your involvement makes a meaningful difference.

Save the date: A community celebration

We also invite everyone in the Applegate Valley to mark their calendars for a special community event, the Fourth Annual Celebration of the Community:

Saturday, April 25, 1-4:30 pm
Ruch Fire District #9 Hall
1095 Upper Applegate Road

This gathering brings together volunteers, nonprofit organizations, local groups, and clubs from across the Applegate Valley. It is a family-friendly event for all ages, offering a chance to meet the people and organizations who help keep our valley vibrant and resilient. We’ll share more details soon through social media and community channels.

This celebration is more than an event; it is an invitation. Many of the groups working throughout the Applegate Valley rely on volunteers to carry out their missions. These efforts keep our rural community thriving, from environmental stewardship and fire preparedness to education, arts, and social support. The event provides a welcoming space to learn about these organizations, discover what they do, and explore how you might get involved. Opportunities range from short-term or occasional tasks to ongoing roles, allowing each person



November 2025 volunteers prepping and planting the Pollinator Garden. Photo by Janis Mohr-Tipton.

to find the level of engagement that fits their interests and availability.

Volunteering is not only a service to the community; it is a way to build relationships, learn new skills, and deepen your connection to our home. Whether you are new to the valley or have lived here for decades, there is a place for you in this network of stewardship.

Thank you again to everyone who contributed time, energy, and heart to Cantrall Buckley Park and the broader Applegate Valley in 2025. Your work continues to inspire, and your commitment ensures that our natural spaces remain healthy, welcoming, and resilient for generations to come. We look forward to seeing many of you in the park this spring and at the community celebration in April.

Janis Mohr-Tipton
Chair, Cantrall Buckley
Enhancement Committee
janis@applegatepartnership.org
541-846-7501

Spring update from the Star Ranger Station of the Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District

BY U.S. FOREST SERVICE-SISKIYOU MOUNTAINS RANGER DISTRICT

Happy spring to the Applegate community and our valued partners.

We were unable to submit an article for the December issue, so we would like to provide a 2025 fire season summary. The district recorded 34 wildfires, burning a total of 104 acres. Of these, 33 were caused by lightning, and one was human-caused. The Kenny Fire was the largest at 50 acres, followed by the Waters Fire at 34 acres. Thanks to the rapid response from fire crews, the number of acres burned remained minimal, even with abundant lightning.

We have completed 200 acres of pile burning in the Applegate and Ashland watersheds so far in 2026. This is significantly lower than our typical progress for this time of year, but the unusually warm, dry winter has limited the areas where it is safe to apply prescribed fire.

The Dutchman Lookout ground house underwent extensive renovations in 2025, including new drywall, flooring, trim, and paint throughout the interior. Crews installed new propane tanks and a heater, remodeled the snow entrance, and removed the old firewood shed. Renovations also included replacing two exterior and two interior doors, caulking and repainting the exterior, repairing metal flashing, and rodent-proofing the building by sealing gaps and adding gravel around the foundation. We believed it was important to complete this work ahead of the lookout’s 2027 centennial celebration, and more restoration efforts are planned for the coming year.

We also plan to begin renovation and restoration work on Acorn Woman Lookout. This project will ensure the structure remains safe, functional, and ready for future visitors while honoring its history and importance to the community.

Note: The Star Ranger Station will operate with slightly reduced public hours, open from 8:30 am-3:30 pm. Sales and permit services may be limited at times. Visitors are encouraged to call ahead to confirm availability before making the trip. Check our website at fs.usda.gov/r06/rogue-siskiyou/projects/signup for services that may be available digitally.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership in the Applegate Valley!

Project updates

On July 3, 2025, the US Department of Agriculture published a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) interim final rule in the *Federal Register*. The rule is effective immediately and applies to the following projects.

Thompson Creek (formerly Grayback) Shaded Fuel Break Category Exclusion

This fuels-reduction project is planned along Forest Service Roads 1010 and 1020, targeting approximately 1,000 acres. Proposed treatments include thinning, hand piling, pile burning, and underburning to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health. Community input has played a key role in shaping this project. In partnership with the Oregon

Department of Forestry, final surveys are underway. We anticipate completing the NEPA process using the new Emergency Authority Determination. For project details, visit the project website at fs.usda.gov/r06/rogue-siskiyou/projects/63141.

Yellowjacket (formerly Little Applegate) Environmental Assessment

The Yellowjacket Project is designed to improve wildfire resilience across the Upper Applegate Watershed while connecting strategic fuels reduction efforts with the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project. In addition to enhancing forest health, it supports local economies through sustainable timber production. The project is moving forward under an Emergency Action Determination consistent with Executive Order 14225: “Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production” (March 1, 2025). Surveys are being completed in partnership with the Oregon Department of Forestry. We will complete the NEPA process using the new Emergency Authority Determination. If you are interested in scheduling a site visit to discuss potential treatments, email Wes Crum at Wesley.crum@usda.gov.

Upper Applegate Watershed Restoration Project Environmental Assessment

Pile burning resumed this winter, and additional surface and ladder fuels reduction work will continue throughout the year to support long-term forest health and wildfire resilience. Project information is available on the project website at fs.usda.gov/r06/rogue-siskiyou/projects/archive/52305.



The Dutchman Lookout ground house had been neglected for many years and suffered significant damage when heavy snow in the winter of 2022 caused the communication tower to collapse onto the roof. Photo by USDA Forest Service, Michael Ingman.

Staying Informed

- **Forest webpage:** Our URL has changed to fs.usda.gov/r06/rogue-siskiyou.
- **General mailing list:** Visit fs.usda.gov/r06/rogue-siskiyou/keep-in-touch to join our general mailing list.
- **District email:** As of June 2025, GovDelivery is no longer in service. Instead, please email our District for any comments or project communication at comments-pacificnorthwest-rogue-river-siskiyoumountains@usda.gov.
- **Project mailing list:** Join the project mailing list at fs.usda.gov/r06/rogue-siskiyou/projects/signup.
- **Forest Facebook page:** Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/R6RRSNF.
- View current and recent projects at fs.usda.gov/r06/rogue-siskiyou/projects.

INTRODUCING...

Introducing Evelyn Byrne Williams: An Applegate resident for 100 years

BY WILLIAM WHITNEY

Evelyn Byrne Williams, a fourth-generation Applegate, turns 100 years old on June 22. That century has been rich with family lore and personal accomplishments for Evelyn.

As though in a Ken Burns film, the family history begins with her great-grandparents, John and Maryum McKee, coming from Missouri via wagon train in 1853 and settling on Forest Creek. When Evelyn's grandfather, Amos McKee, found gold there, he bought 160 acres on both sides of the Applegate River, where Evelyn grew up and still lives. In 1916, Evelyn's great-uncle, Adelbert "Deb" McKee, donated land for a covered bridge. The McKee Bridge is now under the care of the McKee Bridge Historical Society, which Evelyn cofounded in 1991.

Evelyn's lifelong career as an artist began in elementary school when her teacher, Mrs. Haskins, noticed her interest in art and sent her home with some leftover tempera paint. Evelyn enthusiastically covered the family chicken coop with a mural. Her mother was not thrilled. Evelyn washed the paint off, but an artistic spark had been ignited.

In the 1950s, Evelyn entered a pen-and-ink drawing of a covered wagon in a statewide contest. Her third-place prize was a major encouragement to her pursuit of art as a career.

Her art education took a major turn in the late 1960s, when a friend asked her to attend a series of art classes with her in Jacksonville. Evelyn went along and became hooked. "I took five lessons, and I was like an alcoholic," she said. "I just had to have more!"

In 1970, Evelyn opened the Lamplighter Gallery in downtown Jacksonville, where she sold many of her paintings. The store was her passion for twenty-one years. A series of 50-60 portraits of Native American men, rendered in oil paint, is a special favorite of hers. Depicted on stretched cowhide, each face comes to life as a proud character. "I just love their features," she says of these subjects.

Drawing and painting are only two of the artistic expressions Evelyn Williams has used. The museum-quality McKee Bridge Quilt she designed and hand-stitched has graced the state capitol in Salem as well as the walls of McKee Bridge during celebrations. And between 1962 and 1965, she learned such arts as sewing,

cooking, tailoring, and upholstery through the Home Extension units offered by Oregon State University. She also learned and became proficient in carpentry, embroidery, bookkeeping, and gardening.

At age 15, the same year her brother, Morris, taught her to drive in a 1920s Model T two-seat convertible, she joined Upper Applegate Grange and remained a member until it lost its charter. In those early days, Grange activities included lectures by invited guests and amateur productions of plays, skits, and poetry readings. (Evelyn's daughter, Janeen, remembers being "volun-told" at an early age to be in several of the skits.)

Although her main focus has always been the visual arts, Evelyn has also distinguished herself as an author. Her column in the *Applegater*, "Back in Time," about life in the Applegate when she was growing up, entertained readers for years. In 2022 she published a book of those collected columns, also called

Back in Time, a rich collection of stories, memories, and anecdotes about life in the Applegate in the 1930s and '40s, when narrow, rugged wagon trails were transitioning to dirt roads for logging and mining operations, when people didn't have electricity or telephones, when Evelyn, like others, suffered from the flu and bad colds year after year. "Those years were really difficult," she acknowledges now.

Since Clarence, her husband of 63 years, died in 2009, Evelyn has continued to live in the house they built (Evelyn did much of the interior) on Palmer Creek Road. Her daughter and son-in-law, Janeen and Daniel Sathre, live across the street.

Evelyn has finally put away her brushes and no longer paints, but she can be found most days solving various puzzles, beating her family at cribbage, canning, sewing, or participating in Monday yoga classes.

On June 22, "centenarian" will join Evelyn's long list of accomplishments. From that perch, she offers us some advice: "Treat people and love people like the Good Savior taught us. And thank God for the good things you have."

William Whitney
williewhit52@gmail.com



Applegate After Dark plans to "turn down the light and turn up the life"

BY SAM DENNIS

A fun fact: Only 20 percent of people in the US live in a place where the sky is dark enough to see the Milky Way. Here in the Applegate Valley, we are fortunate to be in that 20 percent. Despite our proximity to Grants Pass and Medford, the intervening mountains help shield the valley from the skyglow produced by the nearby cities. On most nights without a bright moon, the Milky Way is readily visible to the naked eye. It can be easy, therefore, to take our dark skies for granted. However, across the world, dark skies are disappearing swiftly. A recent paper in *Science* found that over the last 15 years, the night sky has gotten 10 percent brighter each year. The impacts of brightening nighttime skies go well beyond washed-out stars. Many migratory birds rely on the stars for navigation, and bright, artificial light can take them off course. Nighttime pollinating insects are essential for agriculture and ecosystem health, but bright lights attract and kill many of those pollinators. Humans are

not immune; bright nighttime lighting suppresses the production of melatonin, resulting in degraded sleep and multiple health issues linked to sleep deficit. Finally, poorly implemented nighttime lights waste a lot of energy and money.

A growing awareness of the risks associated with our brightening night skies has inspired action by groups around the world. Applegate After Dark (AAD) is a community-based group formed in 2024 to increase public awareness of the health, environmental, and economic benefits of dark nights, while working to decrease light pollution in the Applegate Valley. We work toward these goals through educational materials and community events that "shed light" on the merits of dark-sky-compliant lighting, the wonders of nocturnal creatures, and the awe of the celestial bodies that are visible with dark skies. In September 2025, AAD, working with the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council, A Greater Applegate,



Caption: The Milky Way, June 2025, from the Provolt Recreation Site. Photo by Kyle Sullivan.

the Bureau of Land Management, and Pollinator Project Rogue Valley, put on the event "Bugs, Bats, and Beyond" at the Provolt Recreation Site. This nighttime event featured a bat viewing, pollinator education, astrophotography, and a guided astronomy session. In 2026, AAD will continue with events where you can perceive pollinators, behold bats, goggle at galaxies, and marvel at more.

Visit the AAD webpage at applegatepartnership.org/applegateafterdark for information on dark skies, upcoming events, and how to get involved. And remember: every time you go outside at night, look up and appreciate how lucky we are to live in the Applegate Valley with our magnificent dark sky.

Sam Dennis
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907-202-1377

■ BUILDING RESILIENCE

Continued from page 2.

That said, if we've learned anything from the Upper Applegate fires, it's that we're facing unprecedented danger to our community and the places we love. These events exposed existing vulnerabilities in the systems we rely on to protect our communities. Emergency alerts only do so much when the power is down and you're five miles up Humbug Creek. Larger fires are forcing us to move beyond solely relying on personal grit and the folks who live next door. We need to lean into our community to build resilience on a larger scale here in the Applegate.

Luckily, there are a couple of local organizations that are on the job. These include A Greater Applegate (AGA),

the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council (APWC), and Firebrand Resiliency Collective (FRC). Each organization is working towards enhancing community preparedness across the valley. As for AGA, which brought me on last year to do this work, we're facilitating two important initiatives.

First, we're working with community leaders to establish safe spaces for Applegaters to gather in the event of an emergency. We're terming these spaces "resilience hubs." They consist of existing community buildings or gathering spots, such as public libraries and churches, to host residents in the event of a wildfire. The hope is that these hubs will give community members a safe place to shelter

and to receive the most up-to-date information on the emergency and on the next steps.

Over the last several months, we've worked to identify the emergency infrastructure needed at these sites, like back-up power or air filtration, and have started to train the folks who will be operating the equipment. The task now is to begin to retrofit each building with the needed emergency equipment and work toward opening the hubs to the Applegate public. You can stay up to date on the process by connecting with AGA online or in person.

Second, the "All Things Fire Fair." This annual community event focuses on cultivating community preparedness for wildfire in the Applegate. The fair brings in experts from across Oregon to present on

topics ranging from the use of prescribed fire to homeowners' insurance. It also features kids' activities and family-friendly demonstrations that offer an interactive perspective on the topics of the day. This year's fair will take place on Saturday, March 7, from 10 am-4 pm. We encourage you to join us for an opportunity to engage in community and learn more about what you can do to prepare for fire.

If I can leave you with anything, it's this: Resilience in the Applegate means leaning into community. Given what we're facing on the wildfire front, it's imperative that we keep showing up, educating ourselves, and looking out for each other.

Tucker Grinnan
tucker@agreaterapplegate.org

Mega fires coming our way

BY MARK HAMLIN

California's mega fire problem is coming our way; perhaps a big fire in our watershed has been delayed a decade or so by our further north location, or perhaps we are just lucky so far.

In any case, dead trees play a major role in causing the state's severe wildfires. Two hundred million trees have died California's national forests since 2010, according to the USDA Forest Service. Before applying research based in California, it is reasonable to ask why the California experience applies in southern Oregon. First, the mixed conifer forests of the Sierra Nevada and the Applegate both evolved as "frequent-fire" forests. Sharing so many tree species in common (e.g., Douglas-fir, Ponderosa Pine, Sugar Pine, White Fir, Incense Cedar) is not an accident but a consequence of being shaped by frequent low-to-moderate-intensity fires and similar climates. The mixed conifer forests in California and southern Oregon share a frequent-fire designation, due to many conifer species and climatically wet winters with long dry summers. Therefore, they are comparable in terms of fire-ecosystem dynamics.

A recent paper in *Forest Ecology and Management* (by Cova et al., 2023) is titled "The outsized role of California's largest wildfires in changing forest burn patterns and coarsening ecosystem scale." Researchers reviewed 1,800 forest fires that took place in the state from 1985-2020. Within the footprint of each fire, patches of fire were classified into one of three severity levels: High-Severity, Low-Moderate-Severity, and Unburned-Very-Low-Severity. Strikingly, 18 exceptionally large fires, the top one percent by size, produced 58 percent of the high-severity wildfires. Moreover, 14 of the 18 fires occurred in the last decade, indicating the increasing frequency.

The Applegate is not immune. The purple areas in the accompanying map depict the 18 exceptionally large fires. Moreover, almost half of these occurred in the Klamath Mountains, the geographic area that includes the Applegate. Also notable is where the 160,000-acre Slater fire entered Oregon to our west. Of further note, an AI query lists nine Oregon fires (1985-2020) greater than 68,000 acres, Cova's top one-percent-cut-off.

Another consequence of these exceptionally large fires is the coarsening of the ecosystem, that is, a reduction in species

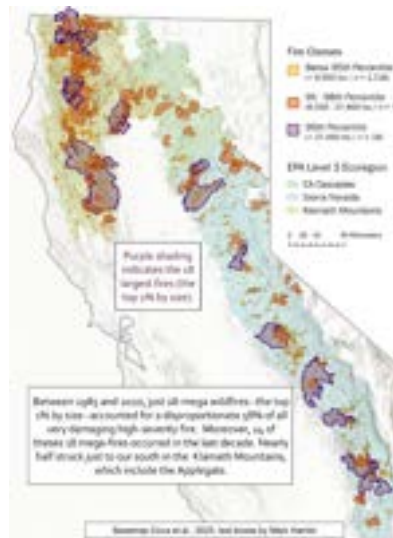
diversity as well as vegetative heterogeneity. One reason for reduced diversity is that intense, widespread fires destroy seed sources needed for regeneration. Most conifer seeds, for example, will not disperse beyond about four hundred feet from the source seed tree. Therefore, in large high-severity fire patches, conifer regeneration occurs only within about four hundred feet of the fire's edge.

A large incinerated patch would then be reseeded primarily by windblown seeds capable of travelling long distances, and some areas may remain devoid of vegetation for years. "With their larger patch sizes, our results suggest that exceptionally large fires coarsen the landscape pattern of California's forests, reducing their fine-scale heterogeneity, which supports much of their biodiversity as well as wildfire and climate resilience" (Cova et al., 2023).

Significant tree die-off leads to both larger and higher-severity wildfires. The massive 380,000-acre 2020 Creek Fire, a mass fire or firestorm in a largely mixed conifer forest, was studied by Stephens and a team of scientists (Stephens et al., 2022). The study concluded that the dead tree biomass (>23 tons/acre) and live tree density (>277/acre) "were the most important variables in ... predicting fire severity." Furthermore, beetle infestations were responsible for killing between 25 percent and 75 percent of trees in 63 percent of the Creek Fire's affected area—a rate that closely resembles what is now observed near Ruch as well as in the Little and Upper Applegate regions.

BLM proposes to reduce these dead and declining tree fuel loads by logging, a challenging option for the public to understand and accept. Logging always looks bad, especially in the first year. Nevertheless, the BLM SOS Environmental Assessment (EA) concludes that logging "is the only known method to reduce these risks." Moreover, BLM's EA and plan of action are well researched; in fact, the scientific citations run to 17 pages in a document that is over two hundred pages long.

Mark Hamlin
mark@applegatepartnership.org
M.S. Wildland Resource Science,
U.C. Berkeley



Base map from Cova et al., 2023.

Rogue Valley Prescribed Burn Association activities

BY AARON KRIKAVA

Film showing and panel discussion

Come out for a showing of *Burning to Heal*, the short documentary film about the Rogue Valley Prescribed Burn Association's (RVPBA) work to heal our relationship with fire and reintroduce this important element for our community's safety and the health of our landscape. The film showing will be followed by a panel discussion and Q&A with members of the RVPBA and other local prescribed fire experts. This event is organized by A Greater Applegate.

Friday, March 6, 5:30-7 pm
Ruch Outdoor Community
School Gymnasium
FREE

All Things Fire Fair

Join us at A Greater Applegate's third annual All Things Fire Fair for a family-friendly atmosphere and a mix of informational tables, presentations, and live demonstrations focusing on wildfire and community preparedness and the role of individuals in protecting their homes and properties. The PBA will be doing our straw-burning demonstration. This is a fun and easy way to talk about the fire triangle and observe basic fire behavior.

Saturday, March 7, 10 am-4 pm
Applegate Valley Fire District
Training Building
FREE

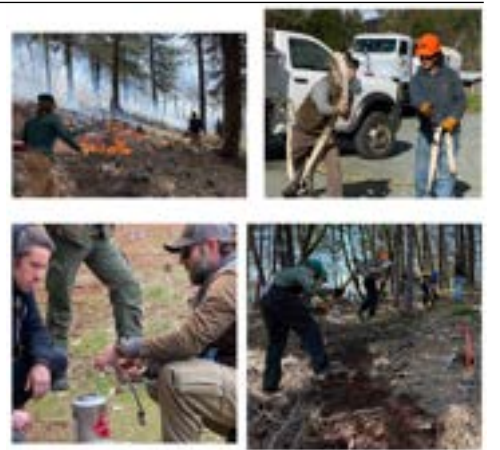
IGNITE Prescribed Fire Skills Training

The third annual IGNITE prescribed fire skills training will be held at the Siskiyou Field Institute in Selma. This hands-on, introductory prescribed-fire training is open to any level of experience or qualifications. Learn about ignition and holding techniques, burn unit layout, weather observations, operating pumps, engines, and more!

April 3, 4, and 5
Siskiyou Field Institute
\$50 (scholarships available)

\$130/\$190 Field Day Exercise

This course covers the basic skills and techniques for wildland firefighting and prescribed burning. Training stations include hand line construction, pumps and hoses, weather observations, and



Participants enjoy a variety of hands-on training opportunities at the IGNITE prescribed fire skills training and other Rogue Valley PBA events. Photo by Ruth Johnson.

ignition devices. This course is a valuable skills introduction for anyone living in our fire-adapted region and will allow interested participants to complete their S130/S190 basic wildland firefighting qualifications. A practice fire shelter deployment and arduous pack test will also be offered for those seeking a Basic FireFighter type 2 (FFT2) qualification. Those interested in the FFT2 qualification should contact us for more information.

April 12, 8 am-4 pm
Oregon Department of Forestry
Southwest District Headquarters
FREE

Prescribed fire training events

When weather and fuel conditions allow, we will be offering live fire training opportunities. Come learn and experience how prescribed burning is implemented under the guidance of knowledgeable fire practitioners while helping to make our landscape healthier and our communities more resilient. No experience or qualifications required.

Sign up for notifications on our website.
March, April, and May
As conditions allow
FREE

To sign up for email updates, visit our website at RogueValleyPBA.com.

For questions, contact RogueValleyPBA@gmail.com.
Aaron Krikava
aaronkrikava@yahoo.com

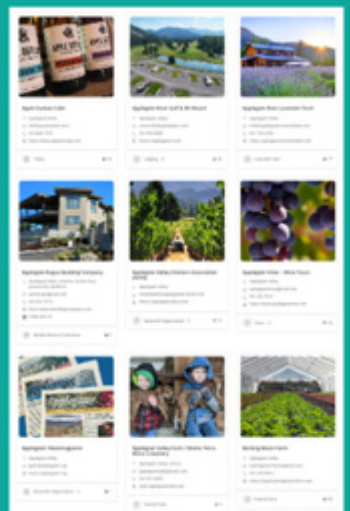


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THROUGH THE LEPIDOPTERAN LENS

Spring with the Brown Elfin

BY LINDA KAPPEN

Exploring the outdoors in early spring, we can encounter the Brown Elfin *Callophrys augustinus*. This is a butterfly of the Lycaenidae family of butterflies.

The size of the Brown Elfin is one and a quarter inches or less. Colors on the VFW (ventral forewing) range from warm browns to gray. The VHW (ventral hindwing) has two-tone variations of color, from warm brown to violet, with rows of small dots. Brown Elfins can be seen in flight from the middle of February to late July.

The Brown Elfin is the generalist of the Elfin species, using a number of different host plants for larval food. Some of the larval host plants are madrone, manzanita, kinnikinnick, Oregon grape, or species of buckwheat. The male will fly and perch on a host plant in early spring, awaiting a female for mating. The female will deposit eggs on the host plants. They produce one generation, and the larvae overwinter.



Brown Elfin on *Micranthes integrifolia*—whole leaf saxifrage. Photo by Linda Kappen.

Habitat for the Brown Elfin is oak and pine woodlands, road seeps, gardens, bogs, parks, and other types of clearings near forests. Brown Elfins use nectar of their host plants, willow catkins, clovers, chokecherry, strawberry, and phlox, among others.

The Brown Elfin and other Elfin species are boreal species occurring in

cooler northern climates. They are absent in the American landscapes of the midwestern and southern states.

In April of 2022, we picked our son and friend up at the airport in Medford. It was a warm day, and I had set up a hike at Whetstone Savanna Preserve, a land managed by Southern Oregon Land Conservancy. Here we encountered the Brown Elfin

pictured with this story. The land is an oak savanna and buckbrush chaparral with vernal pools running through the mounded prairie, and supports three federally listed species: vernal pool fairy shrimp, Cook's lomatium, and large flowered meadowfoam. All are associated with the Agate Desert. Many insects and birds—including hawks—live here. Although this visit takes us beyond the Applegate Valley, we are all connected in some way.

Slow walks through any land, yard, or forest will reveal treasures in nature, such as the Brown Elfins who fly among the early spring-blooming flowers of the valley bottom. We see the Brown Elfin at the Applegate School flying nearly the same time as the early Echo Azure butterfly. These spring beauties of flora and fauna are a delight to see after cold, foggy, and rainy winters.

Linda Kappen
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Linda Kappen.

Take Flight with the Siskiyou Crest Moth Project

BY LINDA KAPPEN AND SUZIE SAVOIE

The Siskiyou Crest Moth Project (SCMP) is launching a long-term study of the moths of the Siskiyou Crest region this spring, utilizing scientific research and community science.

The Siskiyou Crest region is renowned for its botanical diversity and corresponding insect diversity. The SCMP, a program of the Siskiyou Crest Coalition, is setting out to identify the moth species that live and reproduce in, or migrate through the Siskiyou Crest region. With varied geology and topography, our study sites will vary from low-elevation chaparral, oak woodland, mixed conifer, and riparian areas to high-elevation ridgelines, meadows, subalpine forests, and serpentine habitat.

Lepidopterist Dana Ross, a recognized expert in Pacific Northwest butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera), will head the Siskiyou Crest Moth Project. His lifelong interest in these insects led to an MS degree in entomology from Oregon State University under Dr. Jeffrey Miller. Dana currently holds a Courtesy Faculty position at Oregon State University's Department of Integrative Biology, where he serves as a curator of Lepidoptera at the Oregon State Arthropod Collection.

This is your chance to take flight and volunteer with the SCMP! The project will use community science, with the help of potentially hundreds of volunteers over several years, which will increase the

capacity of the project and the number of moth samples and observations gathered.

Moth nights at some of the SCMP study sites will be open to the public at various times, allowing volunteers and local community members to help contribute to science. Volunteers will use a moth sampling method that lures moths to a sheet with black lights.

Moths are a little-known fauna, but we want to change that! We are hoping to make the names and identification of moths of the region on par with that of other, more well-known insects and pollinators, such as bees and butterflies. North America is home to more than 12,000+ species of moths, compared to only 800+ species of butterflies. Butterflies actually evolved from moth ancestors.

The Siskiyou Crest likely has over 1,000 species of moths, but there's a lot of work to do to find out!

The Siskiyou Crest is home to many rare and endemic plant species, and the same is true with moths. This study will look for endemic moth species, such as the Siskiyou hadena moth (*Hadena siskiyou*), whose range is primarily restricted to the Siskiyou Mountains. We may even find moths that are currently not known to science. The SCMP expects to unveil new discoveries that highlight just how much we have yet to learn about the countless species that call the Siskiyou Crest home.



The SCMP will create a moth species list for the Siskiyou Crest region, along with geospatial data for the moth collections. All samples will be added to the Oregon State Arthropod Collection at Oregon State University.

There's a common misconception that moths are only active at night and that they are not very colorful, when in fact, many species are actually diurnal, or day-active, and can be large and very colorful. Some moth species feed on flowers and sap or "puddle" at the same time that butterflies do, during the day, so they're often confused for butterflies.

Moths are not only beautiful; they are important parts of the ecosystem. Modern research is showing that moths are just as important for pollination as many bee and butterfly species. One study found that nocturnal moths visit more plant species than day-active bees do, highlighting that moths should be given at least an equal amount of credit as important pollinators. But because most moths are strictly nocturnal, they have been studied less and are not elevated as species for conservation concern.

The SCMP will start with seven study sites in 2026, and we intend to add more sites in the following years. Our 2026 project sites will be: Colestin Valley, Mt. Ashland, Observation Peak, Humbug Creek, Elliott Creek, Oregon Caves, and East Fork Illinois River/Takilma. Three of these sites are in the Applegate River watershed.

The SCMP is partially supported by its partner organizations: Pollinator Project Rogue Valley, Selberg Institute, Applegate Siskiyou Alliance, The Crest at Willow-Witt, Williams Community Forest Project, Wellington Wildlands, and the Siskiyou Crest Coalition.

Learn more at a SCMP volunteer workshop at Herb Pharm on Saturday, March 14. Dana Ross will give an evening presentation on moth sampling methodology, followed by a nighttime moth demonstration. Contact siskiyoucrestcoalition@gmail.com or visit siskiyoucrestcoalition.org/siskiyou-crest-moth-project for more information.

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■ FIRE-ADAPTED COMMUNITY

Continued from page 1.

amount of mild fire disturbance that kept our ecosystem in balance has led to increasing acres burned and increasing fire severity in those acres. What was a mild environmental disturbance is now an increasingly catastrophic event.

If we work to mimic the effects of mild fire and reintroduce that environmental process, we have a unique way to make our community more adapted and resilient while also benefiting our environment. The first step is reducing the amount of fuel available to burn. The best way to accomplish this is mechanical fuel

reduction and pile burning. Skilled crews use chainsaws to cut trees and shrubs that would have historically been removed by regular fire disturbance. This material is stacked in piles where it can be burned when weather conditions allow for safe consumption of the fuel. This removes the larger flammable material, but the fine fuel layer of sticks and leaves that accumulate without the periodic return of fire remains.

Understory burning is the next step to help correct this imbalance. This is the planned burning of surface fuels under weather conditions that cause low-to-moderate fire behavior, mimicking the

natural process that historically kept our forests resilient and healthy. After this initial application of mild fire, we can maintain this balance and resilience by ensuring our landscape experiences healthy fire disturbance with enough regularity to keep fuel levels low. Understory burning can be accomplished by a contractor, or the landowner can collaborate with the Rogue Valley Prescribed Burn Association (RVPBA) on a community-implemented understory burn, developing lasting skills, training, and relationships.

Fire is an intrinsic part of our environment, and like many native plants

in our region, the health and resilience of our community are dependent on reintroducing regular low-intensity fire and adapting to its presence on our landscape.

Aaron Krikava
Fire Adapted Community Educator
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For more information about how to become fire-adapted, join community partners at the All Things Fire Fair on March 6, 10 am-4 pm, at the Applegate Fire Department Training Building.

BIRD EXPLORER

A flyway moment in the Applegate

BY HEATHER PALADINI

You might have noticed, this January, massive flocks of robins in the Ruch area, swirling through the air and carpeting the treetops. Thousands upon thousands of birds moved as one living cloud, filling the sky, lining roadsides, swooping low and fast over roads. It was breathtaking and startling. Why did this happen? And why did they just as suddenly disappear?

American robins, *Turdus migratorius*, are familiar year-round residents here. They hop across lawns, tugging at worms, and sing their clear, hopeful songs in early spring. But robins are actually partial migrants—some stay while others move, motivated by food rather than by seasons.

In winter, robins form nomadic flocks of hundreds or even thousands. They roam widely, absorbing resident robins and settling wherever food is abundant. When that food runs out, the birds lift off together and move on, sometimes overnight, leaving a place suddenly quiet again.

This winter in the Applegate, Pacific madrone trees, *Arbutus menziesii*, produced an unusually heavy crop of berries, a crucial winter food for birds that must be sweetened and softened by frost to turn the hard, bitter fruit into an energy-rich resource. Repeated freezes in the Applegate this winter resulted in a feast for robins. They descended on madrone groves in dense flocks, moving from tree to tree and stripping branches clean. For days on end, the sky was speckled with birds in every direction.

The Applegate Valley sits within the Pacific Flyway, one of North America's major bird migration corridors. Some of the robins this January may have come from higher elevations in the Cascades or Siskiyou, where snow buried food sources. Harsh weather farther north may have pushed others here. The Pacific Flyway allows these fluid movements, becoming a living network of seasonal opportunity rather than a single road.

Winter migration is often quieter and less noticed than the dramatic spring and fall movements. Instead of long, nonstop journeys, winter migrants make a series of shorter shifts, responding quickly to changes in weather and food. In years like this one, when a particular food source explodes in abundance, the response can be sudden and spectacular.

And then, almost as quickly as they arrived, the robins were gone. Once the madrone berries were depleted, the flocks moved on, leaving bare branches, a few lingering local birds, and the memory of an event that felt both fleeting and profound.

Moments like this remind us that we live within a much larger ecological rhythm. The Applegate Valley is not just our home, but a vital seasonal refuge for countless creatures. This winter, the robins chose us. For a brief time, we were part of their story, and they were very much part of ours.

Where to witness bird migrations and gatherings

To witness other migrations and bird gatherings in Oregon, try the Harney



Robin eating madrone berries. Photo by Watts, Flickr (CC BY 2.0).

County Migratory Bird Festival in Burns and the Harney Basin, where every April, hundreds of bird species congregate in the high desert along the Pacific Flyway. Guided tours, field trips, and interpretive events help visitors experience everything from waterfowl and shorebirds to raptors and songbirds in full migratory mode.

Or celebrate World Migratory Bird Day, the second Saturday in May, at the Ladd Marsh Bird Festival in the Grande Ronde Valley, with abundant shorebirds, waterfowl, and passerines. You can find events all over the world listed on their website, at migratorybirdday.com, as well as free resources to help you create or enhance your own event.

There is also Birdathon, Oregon's spring birding fundraiser, from late April through early June, with birders of all skill levels out in the field counting

and celebrating birds across the state. See birdallianceoregon.org for details.

Birds of a feather flock together

Did you witness the robin takeover this winter, or have you had another memorable bird encounter? I'd love to hear your stories. Whether it was a jaw-dropping migration, an unexpected visitor in your backyard, or a fleeting but unforgettable moment with a local bird, your experience helps tell the bigger story of life along the flyway. Photos are especially welcome. And if you know of upcoming bird walks, festivals, surveys, or informal gatherings in our region or beyond, share those too. Consider this an open invitation to flock together and keep the conversation, and the wonder, in the air. I can't wait to hear from you!

Heather Paladini
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BLM's latest projects aren't about fire protection; they're a plan for deforestation

BY MARTY PAULE

The Medford District BLM is currently implementing the Apple Saws Timber Sale above Cantrall-Buckley Park. Although sold as a "salvage" timber sale and supposedly focused on removing only "dead and dying" trees, the project is logging off whole stands of living, green trees on the eastern face of Ben Johnson Mountain overlooking Ruch.

Applegate Siskiyou Alliance (ASA) and a coalition of local residents have been monitoring the logging project and are concerned that BLM is allowing industrial logging in violation of its own authorizations. This includes thousands of trees "reserved" from felling operations. We are seeing whole groves of mature

madrone, black oak, and commercial-sized Douglas-fir trees, formerly marked for retention, being felled, yarded, and removed from the site. In fact, we estimate 80 percent of the madrone population has been logged despite being specifically prohibited. The result is vastly less canopy cover and forest structure in treated stands than authorized in BLM documents.

We've documented BLM logging into and yarding through Riparian Reserves and seasonal stream corridors. We have also discovered unauthorized construction of roads and the use of large ground-based equipment in units authorized only for cable logging.

The result has been the conversion of previously living, green, mixed-conifer forest habitats into stumpfields, logging slash, and churned-up earth. We are concerned that when these mature trees and the overstory canopy are removed, as in recent timber sales, they will be replaced with far more flammable brush, young trees, and logging slash deposited on the forest floor, where they can more readily burn in a fire. We are also concerned that this is being done adjacent to local communities and on wildfire escape routes.

The Holcomb Hollow Timber Sale, with logging currently occurring on the western face of Woodrat Mountain above Ruch, also includes logging in both living stands and stands affected by recent beetle mortality. Additional logging would occur above Highway 238 on Poormans Creek, on Sterling Creek, and along the beloved East Applegate Ridge Trail, which has become one of the most popular trails in southwest Oregon and overlooks vast acreages BLM has either authorized or recently proposed for logging.

The logging units will increasingly become visible to residents from their homes, vineyards, farms, and maybe even from your favorite hiking trails, degrading the scenic views we have all become accustomed to in the Applegate. In fact, I have whole stands of living, green stands on my property boundary proposed for logging in the Holcomb Hollow Sale. I am

worried that this level of logging will increase fire risks directly adjacent to my home while decimating a healthy green forest to a few trees per acre.

Logging very similar to the SOS Project is now being proposed on approximately 8,000 acres in the BLM's Douglas Fir Mortality Complex Project. It would log off forests throughout the eastern Applegate Valley, from the Little Applegate River Canyon to Buncom; up Sterling Creek and on the slopes east of Griffin Lane; and from Boaz Mountain and McKee Bridge, on the slopes above Eastside Road. The project proposes to log much of the remaining forested habitat around these areas. But like SOS, this "salvage" sale involves logging both dead, standing trees and far more living, green trees that have withstood the beetle outbreak.

The impacts on local wildlife, forest habitats, streams, scenic values, and local communities from these sales are likely to be devastating, as they could undermine our fire safety, local habitats, outdoor recreation, and tourism-based economy. Living next to units in the SOS Project will not make me feel safer during the next wildfire that burns on Woodrat. In fact, I will likely feel less safe due to the hot, dry winds blowing through BLM logging units and the dramatic increase in dense, young trees and brush that usually develops following BLM logging. These projects do not make our communities safer. They do the exact opposite.

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Learn more at applegatesiskiyoualliance.org.



The bare ridge in the foreground was logged in the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale above Eastside Road. Before logging, this was a living, mature forest; after logging, it consists of a few trees per acre and will soon fill in with dense, young, very flammable brush. This "salvage" sale was implemented in the winter of 2025 and is the model for both the SOS and Douglas Fir Mortality Complex logging projects, which together propose about 13,000 acres of logging in the Applegate Valley.

Snags are full of life

BY SUZIE SAVOIE

More than just dead wood, snags are pillars full of life. Often called “wildlife trees,” snags support more than 100 species of wildlife in the Pacific Northwest, providing more wildlife habitat than living trees do. Without snags, the forest ecosystem suffers.

But in Oregon, decades of clearcutting and fire suppression have created a snag deficit.

The majority of terrestrial vertebrates in Oregon forests live in or depend on snags, which provide habitat for foraging, nesting, nurseries, food storage, or cover for many species, such as birds, bats, owls, pollinators, and many mammals, including the Pacific fisher. Brown creepers, bats, and other small animals, for instance, roost behind loose bark on snags for winter warmth and shelter.

Studies have shown that large patches of snags resulting from beetle outbreaks have an increased richness of bird species. This is due both to snag abundance and to the invigorated understory plant community that increases insects and other food for birds. This increased richness can last for up to ten years following outbreaks.

Woodpeckers eat wood-boring insects in snags that other animals cannot access. Woodpeckers excavate several holes a year but rarely nest in the same ones in consecutive years, creating homes

for species like songbirds, wood ducks, squirrels, and owls that cannot excavate cavities themselves.

Small snags are used as song posts where songbirds attract mates and proclaim territories.

Black-capped chickadees nest in snags as little as six feet tall and four inches in diameter.

Snags provide habitat for fungi, invertebrates, amphibians, and reptiles, and contribute to nutrient cycling. Slowly decaying, coarse woody debris on the forest floor functions as a long-term nutrient and carbon store, an energy source for saprophytic plants and fungi, and a contributor to long-term soil development. Nutrients are lost to the forest forever if snags are logged and hauled away.

Snags along streams eventually fall, adding important woody debris for aquatic habitat and fisheries.

Some snags, depending on species and size, can remain standing for decades, providing habitat for years—up to a century for really large snags. Douglas-fir snags typically stay standing longer than ponderosa pine.

Despite scientific consensus that snags are good for forests and wildlife, some people ask, “Don’t snags create a fire hazard and need to be cut down?”

There is no consensus among scientists that standing snags cause more intense wildfires. Fire behavior is complex and site- and weather-dependent. Under severe winds and dry conditions, as with the Alameda Fire, any fuel type can burn at high severity, but in general, snags do not contribute to increased fire severity on their own. Some studies have shown that standing snags actually reduce severe fire risk because they have less ladder fuel and keep flammable fuels off the forest floor. Naturally falling snags slowly accumulate on the forest floor over years or decades, creating less fuel on the ground at any one time.

Research has shown that large, downed wood and snags have less flashy fuels than live trees full of volatile, resinous compounds that carry fires. This was demonstrated with the Upper Applegate Fires in 2024 and 2025. Despite strong winds at times, the beetle-killed snag patches burned as understory, low-severity fires and did not contribute to increased fire behavior.

Removing snags can lead to an increase in highly flammable invasive cheatgrass, which studies across the West are showing to be a leading contributor to fire spread. The increased density of young trees and shrubs after logging also increases fire risks.

Snags directly adjacent to buildings, roads, and other human infrastructure pose a credible threat and should be cut



A raccoon rests in its snag den.
Photo by Frank Lospalluto.

down. But those far from heavily used roads and buildings can safely remain to provide critical habitat for wildlife.

To keep safe in snag patches, firefighters can cut snags along roads and use roads as fire containment features and safe control lines.

After the Alameda Fire, ecologists encouraged land managers not to succumb to the belief that snags are a fire hazard and should be cut, thus saving wildlife snags along the Bear Creek Greenway. Ecologists now advocate for beetle-killed snags in the Applegate.

The BLM’s timber sales targeting so-called “dead and dying” trees in the Applegate are bad for wildlife and could increase fire risks. These sales include the recently logged Boaz Timber Sale and current sales: Apple Saws, Holcomb Hollow, Thom Bone, Chopper Styx, and Douglas Fir Mortality Complex.

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Applegate Valley Oak Legacy Initiative

BY CATHY RODGERS

Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District has awarded its Community Conservation and Education Grant to Rooted in Hope, an organization that partners with the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council (APWC) and Ruch Outdoor Community School (ROCS). The community-based Oak Legacy Initiative focuses on restoring Oregon’s primary native-oak habitat while cultivating the next generation of environmental stewards through a multi-year, cooperative, hands-on project.

The \$10,000 grant is designed to restore the local population of *Quercus garryana*, commonly known as the Oregon white oak or Garry oak. This oak is a deciduous hardwood with shallow acorn caps and narrow bark furrows, both of which are crucial for wildlife. These majestic trees, known for their longevity, can live up to 500 years, growing gnarly limbs with a full, open crown. This two-year initiative will focus on establishing small-scale, native-tree nurseries, restoring declining oak woodlands, and delivering experiential conservation education to local youth. Rooted in Hope will coordinate with partners across the valley, helping to implement this important environmental restoration effort.

These oaks play a vital role in our forest health. Their open canopy structure historically supported low-intensity fire regimes that reduced hazardous fuel buildup. By restoring oak stands, the

project strengthens wildfire resilience while reconnecting fragmented habitat and enhancing biodiversity.

This project helps address a critical ecological need, as Oregon oak habitat has been in steep decline. Aging oak trees are dying without sufficient natural regeneration, driven by decades of fire suppression, development pressure, invasive species, and increasing climate stress. According to *Woodland Fish & Wildlife*, the small percentage of historic white oak habitat that remains places more than 200 wildlife species at risk, including insects, birds, small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

“The loss of oak woodlands isn’t just about trees—it’s about wildlife habitat, fire resilience, water quality, and the health of the entire ecosystem,” said Katie Emick, Rooted in Hope’s cofounder. The Oak Legacy Initiative confronts these challenges head-on by addressing key barriers to restoration: limited access to locally adapted seedlings, gaps in landowner knowledge, and a need for meaningful, place-based environmental education.

This grant will help establish two native-tree nursery sites in the Applegate Valley to germinate and nurture native oak acorns. These nurseries are intentionally designed to outlast the grant period, ensuring a continued supply of locally adapted, drought-tolerant seedlings for future restoration projects throughout the valley.

APWC will lead education programming and assist with local tree planting. Janelle Dunlevy, Executive Director, believes these cross-community partnerships are an excellent way to leverage limited resources for the benefit of our environment and all those who enjoy the Applegate’s natural landscape. Charlotte Hyde, APWC’s Education and Outreach Program Director, echoes the sentiment that this project is a great fit,

promoting ecological and community well-being in the Applegate.

Over the course of the project, partners, landowners, and students will plant more than 250 native trees across multiple sites. Landowners will receive education on oak habitat restoration, fire-adapted landscaping, and long-term stewardship practices.

At the heart of this initiative is a tailored educational program engaging ROCS students. Led by APWC education staff, students will take part in every phase of the project, from fall acorn collection and winter seedling propagation to spring planting and ongoing monitoring. Through this immersive curriculum, students will gain ecological knowledge of oak savanna systems, fire-adapted landscapes, native plant identification, and wildlife relationships. They will also develop scientific skills by collecting data on seedling survival and growth, contributing to citizen science efforts that support regional restoration knowledge. Equally important, students will cultivate stewardship values by taking direct responsibility for living ecosystems in their own community.

The Applegate Oak Legacy Initiative is designed to be accessible and inclusive, with broad community engagement and shared benefits. All educational programming, volunteer opportunities, and community events will be offered at no cost. By combining ecological restoration, youth education, and landowner collaboration, this project represents a hopeful model for community-driven conservation. With support from Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, Rooted in Hope and its partners are planting more than trees—this conservation effort plants native trees while also nurturing knowledge, promoting resilience, and leaving a lasting legacy for the Applegate Valley.

Cathy Rodgers
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■ HUMBUGGER’S UNITE

Continued from page 3.

about disabled, vision-impaired, hearing-impaired, or elderly residents. List information regarding pets and livestock.

- Website: community.io/info/or-applegatefiredistrict

A Greater Applegate

- Phone: 541-702-2108
- Address: 7380 Hwy 238, Jacksonville, OR 97530
- Office Hours: Monday-Wednesday, 10 am-4 pm, or by appointment
- Email: info@agreaterapplegate.org
- Website: agreaterapplegate.org
- OSU Extension: extension.oregonstate.edu/search?search=ignition+zones

Humbug Firewise Community Leaders

- Paul Tipton: ptipton4u2c@gmail.com
- Deb Keberle: wickedwoolens@gmail.com
- Natalie Tinker: ntinker03@gmail.com

Humbug Fire Emergency Phone Tree

- Natalie Tinker: ntinker03@gmail.com
- Sang Montage: 541-708-3953

Please update us with your address, name, phone number, and email information.

This is a *private list for fire emergencies only*. It will be updated and tested annually. We need volunteers to help us share the phone tree duties, and we need a primary fire department contact person.

Natalie and I are fun, and it’s wonderful to be of service to our local community. We hope you join us! Come to a meeting to receive more information about our Firewise Community efforts!

Sang Montage L.Ac.
Sang@montageom.com



Bella Payne, ROCS third grader, examines an oak tree acorn sprouting its root.
Photo by Gregg Payne.



THE SISKIYOU MOUNTAIN ADVOCATE

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan should focus on protecting homes and communities

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

Having spent over two decades planning, designing, and implementing defensible-space thinning and fuel-reduction treatments in southwestern Oregon and even longer studying wildfire and its effects across the Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains, I have significant concerns about the new Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) being developed in the Applegate Valley by the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council and the Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative. Unfortunately, it has become increasingly clear that this plan offers little in the form of community wildfire protection and instead focuses on backcountry, public-land logging and fuel-reduction treatments far from homes, communities, or values at risk.

An effective and responsible CWPP would start from a home- or community-outward approach by holistically addressing home hardening, ingress/egress concerns, defensible-space thinning around homes and infrastructure, and evacuation planning efforts that increase community preparedness, reduce the potential for home ignitions, and support public safety during wildfire events.

Science shows that the vast majority of home losses during wildfires are preventable and have more to do with the construction of a home and the combustible material within 100 feet of that structure than the fuels or fire severity in more distant areas (Cohen, 2000). Additionally, when researchers at the University of Colorado looked at over 60,000 fires across the US, they found that fast-moving fires accounted for 88 percent of all home losses between 2001 and 2020. They also found that the fastest-moving fires burned more frequently in open grasslands than in forests (Balch, 2024).

Locally, the Almeda Fire demonstrated that fires that start within local communities

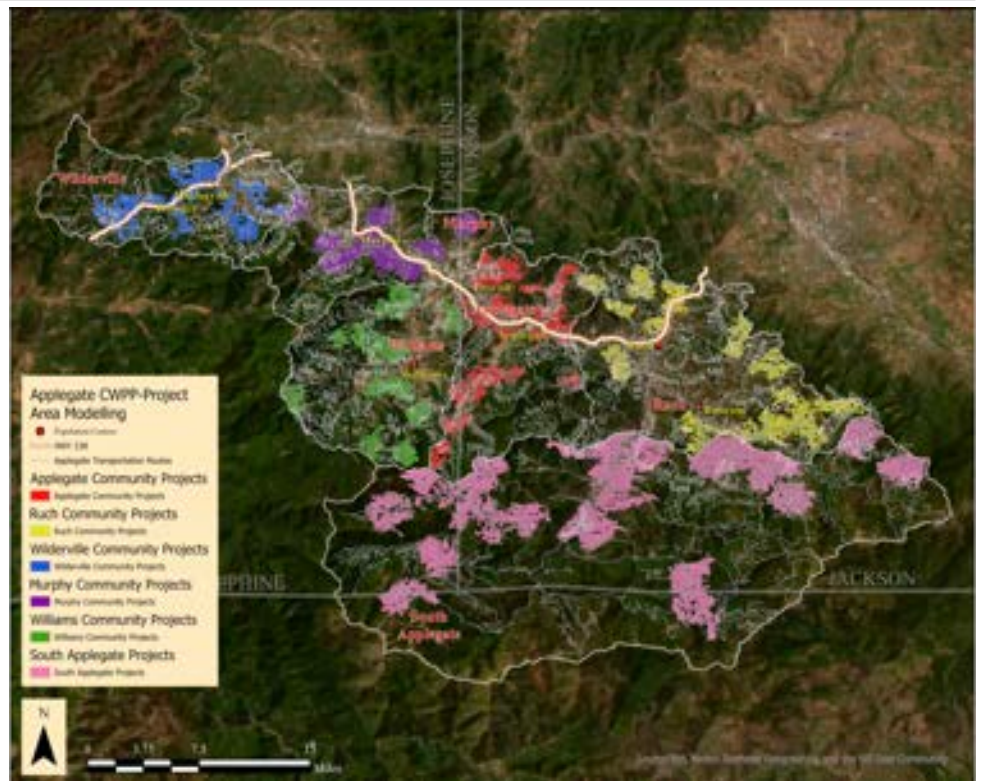
and residential areas do the most damage to homes, communities, and infrastructure; however, the current approach to the CWPP leaves our communities vulnerable to fire-related impacts and puts limited resources in locations where they will provide little benefit to communities while having potentially significant environmental impacts.

The maps shown at recent public meetings demonstrate that little emphasis is being placed on treating fuels on private residential lands. Yet, this is where treatments have the most potential to contribute toward community wildfire protection and could meaningfully reduce the potential for home ignitions. Very few fuel-reduction treatments are proposed in the residential areas of the Applegate Valley under the current version of the CWPP. Instead, the so-called “community projects” that have been prioritized are located on public lands, often far from where most people live.

These same maps also show extensive treatment areas in remote and intact habitats, old-growth forests, and roadless areas at the headwaters of the Middle Fork Applegate River, adjacent to the Red Buttes Wilderness, near Whisky Peak, on Sturgis Fork, Steve Fork, and O’Brien Creek, and in old-growth forests along the Grayback Mountain Trail at the headwaters of Rock Creek and Glade Fork.

Every dollar spent thinning in the backcountry takes limited resources, focus, and funding away from the protection of communities. We should focus directly on reducing the risk of home ignition and supporting public safety, not logging old forests in the remote backcountry of our watershed.

If we want to actually support community wildfire protection, we need to focus from the home outward, building resilience into our communities, funding



This map is being shared at CWPP meetings, identifying potential “community” treatments that, in many cases, do not focus on communities. For example, very little is proposed on the residential lands around Ruch, Buncom, Williams, and along large portions of Highway 238, where the majority of residents live. Instead, treatments are often proposed on public lands and in remote locations where they have little potential benefit for community wildfire protection.

fuel treatments and home hardening on private residential lands, and being prepared within our communities for the inevitable next wildfire event. It has consistently been shown that ember cast, localized weather, and the configuration of fuels within residential communities are most responsible for the potentially devastating consequences of uncontrolled wildfire within our communities, and neither backcountry logging nor fuel reduction will effectively reduce these risks.

Many in the Applegate support such an approach, and the benefits would directly aid our communities. The people of the Applegate created the

first CWPP in the country in 2002. Why not continue leading and innovating by promoting a home-outward approach that more directly prioritizes the safety of local communities and infrastructure? Advocating for home hardening initiatives, ingress/egress work, a focus on private residential lands, defensible space thinning, and fuel maintenance around homes and community infrastructure should be the top priorities and will most effectively facilitate safer and more firewise communities.

Luke Ruediger
siskiyoucrest@gmail.com

Rounding up the second round of Applegate CWPP public meetings

BY AMELIA LIBERATORE

It has been a busy winter for wildfire planning in the Applegate. A team of nonprofits led by Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council (APWC) is working diligently on a revamp of the Applegate Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This was the very first CWPP in the nation when it was published in 2002. A lot has changed since then: the Applegate population has grown, summer heat and drought have intensified, countless conifers have died, and massive wildfires have become more common and have strained suppression budgets and resources. But some things haven't changed—fire is still essential to the health of southern Oregon ecosystems. Of the three driving factors of fire behavior—weather, topography, and fuels—the only one we can control is fuels. The Applegate CWPP will guide wildfire preparedness and resilience throughout the watershed by proposing priority fuels-reduction projects and recommending actions for community members, landowners, and agencies to reduce wildfire risk and boost resilience.

This winter, the CWPP team held five public meetings to share progress and invite discussion. We shared initial survey results (192 responses at this writing) and reviewed maps of potential project areas, both unique to each of the five neighborhoods. Many thanks to those who participated! Here are the highlights:

Ruch: 18 attendees

- Ruch represents about 25 percent of survey responses.
- Ruch residents have greater support for prescribed fire than average.
- Discussion centered on what landowners can do to protect their homes and how to receive financial reimbursement.
- Tip: Contact Nathan Gehres of APWC at nathan@apwc.info for information about possible financial and technical assistance with fuels-reduction projects.

Wilderville: 8 attendees

- Wilderville/Jerome Prairie represents two percent of survey responses.
- Wilderville residents value water more than any of the other eight values ranked in the CWPP survey.

- Discussion included concern about the evacuation of livestock. Attendees highlighted Stringer Gap Road as an important area to consider for priority fuels reduction.

- Tip: Review the comprehensive OSU Extension publication “Wildfires, Smoke, and Livestock: What Can We Do?”

Applegate: 58 attendees

- Applegate represents nearly 50 percent of survey responses.
- Applegate residents have less support for prescribed fire than average.
- Discussion centered on how and where fuels-reduction projects will be implemented. Remember, the CWPP is a strategic plan, not an implementation plan, and any projects on public land will still require a public comment period.
- Tip: Look to the Oregon State Fire Marshal for dependable resources on home hardening recommendations that don't come from a salesperson. For free property assessments,

contact your local fire district or Firebrand Resiliency Collective.

Murphy: 3 attendees

- Murphy represents about four percent of survey responses.
- Murphy residents have especially strong support for fuels reduction, and their top value is wildlands health.
- Attendees approved of the initial rendering of proposed fuel reduction projects but indicated that broader public reactions may be mixed.
- Tip: Share information about the CWPP with your neighbors, community group, or school by visiting applegatepartnership.org/cwpp.

See CWPP PUBLIC MEETINGS, page 21.



Standing room only at the Applegate CWPP meeting held at the Applegate Community Church on January 20, 2026. Photo by Charlotte Hyde (APWC).



From sap to syrup: A bigleaf journey

BY ALLIE PARKIN

I've always been a fan of maple syrup, that delicious liquid gold made from the eastern sugar maple, but I had no idea that syrup could be made from our local bigleaf maples in the Pacific Northwest until I read Laird Funk's article in the spring 2012 issue of this very newspaper. He went on to pen several more pieces over the years, each one deepening my curiosity about our native maples, and his second-place win at the 2014 Bigleaf Maple Syrup Festival in British Columbia only fueled my intrigue. Though I didn't immediately run out to buy gear, the idea of tapping took root and lingered quietly in the back of my mind.



Our dog Blue helping with the maple tapping.

Years passed, and the notion stayed on simmer until the winter of 2022. While limbing a bigleaf maple that was crowding our satellite dish, I noticed a steady stream of sap pouring from the fresh cut. That clear signal finally pulled me into action, and I've been tapping ever since.

Bigleaf maples here in the Pacific Northwest produce sap with a lower sugar content—typically averaging around 1-1.5 percent Brix, sometimes reaching up to about 2 percent in ideal conditions—compared to the sugar maples of the eastern US, which often run 2-3 percent or higher. It takes roughly twice as much sap to yield the same amount of syrup, but the payoff is a distinctive, complex flavor worth every drop.

Last year, I collected 17 gallons of sap from three trees, which boiled down to just under 2.5 quarts, much less than Laird wrote about, but I surmise he has a few more maples than we do. This year's flow has been a bit slower as I write this article at the end of January, which makes sense considering the drier conditions we've had so far this season. I tapped five trees in the middle of the month, plus three more this

past week, and have collected 16 gallons of sap so far, which boiled down to just one quart and one pint of syrup. I believe this year we've had lower sugar content in the sap, resulting in less syrup. I've been tracking the forecast, and it's showing warmer nights rolling in through the first week of February. That'll halt the sap flow until the next proper freeze-thaw cycle kicks back in. Fingers crossed!

Our milder winters give us a real advantage here: the freeze-thaw cycles that provide strong sap flow often arrive earlier and stretch out longer than on the East Coast. Look for a reliable pattern of nights dipping to freezing (or below) followed by days climbing above 40°F—sometimes starting as early as November and continuing well into late winter or early spring until buds begin to form. Trees in sunny spots tend to flow more vigorously, as warmth triggers better pressure changes in the sapwood.

See **SAP TO SYRUP**, page 23.

■ EVELYN WILLIAMS

Continued from page 1.

arrived in the Rogue Valley in 1853 and staked a homestead on the flanks of a butte they named after Roxy Ann Hutchinson Bowen, John's maternal aunt and Maryum's stepmother. John was a blacksmith and found it profitable to commute to Jacksonville and service miners' tools. In 1855, the McKees moved to Logtown, where they were closer to the bustling mining town and could work their own claims. Evelyn's artwork depicts the McKees' pioneer life as well as the environs and neighbors of her maternal side, the Byrnes, ranchers at Watkins (now Applegate Lake). And, of course, as a founder of the McKee Bridge Historical Society who has worked for the preservation of McKee Bridge since the 1980s, Evelyn has depicted Oregon's oldest (tied) surviving covered bridge on paper, canvas, cedar shingles, pillows, quilts—whatever caught her inventive mind.

Many of Evelyn's works are interpretations of vintage photographs, from the rough-hewn Byrne cabin to iconic Native American portraits. Several of the pieces at the library are displayed with the photographs that inspired Evelyn, such as *Hi Head and His Cabin*. This one-room cabin with movable interior walls was built before 1880, very likely by Samuel Lackland and his Chinese crew who started the Palmer Creek Diggings. Lackland sold his interest to Gin Lin in 1881, and now we call the mining site the Gin Lin Trail. Evelyn's grandparents and mother lived in this cabin in 1889-90. She wrote about this curious abode in the Summer 2011 edition of the *Applegater*, including her detailed diagram of the interior. You can re-read this "Back in Time" article on the *Applegater* website.

If you are the lucky owner of one of Evelyn's creations, please let MBHS know at mckeebridge1917@gmail.com. We would like to include digitized versions and record their provenance in the Virtual Museum at mckeebridge.org for the benefit of today's history lovers, art enthusiasts, and future generations. We hope you enjoy the art show!

Laura Ahearn
Mckeebridge1917@gmail.com
 458-226-0666



Evelyn Byrne Williams painting at Lamplighter Gallery in 1976. Photo by Kenn Knackstedt.

What Size Generator Do You Need to Run Your Well Pump?

One of the most common questions I hear during storm season is, "What size generator do I need to keep my well running during a power outage?" Losing power doesn't have to mean losing access to water, but having the right setup ahead of time is key.

In most homes, a 5,500-watt or larger generator can run a residential well pump. That said, generator size alone isn't always enough. Voltage requirements, starting power, and the correct plug or transfer switch setup all play a major role in whether a pump will operate safely and reliably.

Another reliable backup option to consider is the Simple Pump. In many applications, the Simple Pump can be connected to an existing pressure tank, allowing homeowners to maintain water access during power outages. This means you can continue to have water for drinking, cooking, handwashing, and restroom use—even when the power is out.

Designed to be easier to operate than many other hand pumps on the market, the Simple Pump provides dependable water access when it's needed most, especially during times of stress or uncertainty.

At Quinn's Well Pump & Filtration Service, we help homeowners evaluate both generator and manual pump options to ensure their well systems are prepared for outages. A quick evaluation now can provide peace of mind before the next storm hits.

If you have questions about your well system or want to prepare your home for backup power, I encourage you to call Quinn's at 541-862-9355.



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THE GRAPES OF CATH

We're crushin' it

BY CATHY A. RODGERS

[Editor's note: According to Gravity Winehouse, custom crush winemaking is "the idea of making wine in a facility with equipment and resources provided by the facility management team."]

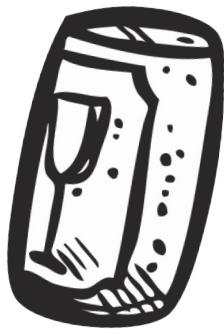
In the Applegate, winemaking is more than an agricultural pursuit—it's a shared experience, a cultural expression, and, increasingly, a collaborative business model that brings people and a shared passion together. Here, among rolling hills and sun-drenched vineyards, custom crush winemaking has become the heartbeat of a region where community meets commerce and joy is bottled.

The Applegate has long been known for its independent spirit. Small vineyards, family farms, and artisan producers define the landscape. But as interest in winemaking has grown among entrepreneurs, hobbyists, and vineyard owners, so has the need for professional infrastructure that doesn't require building a full winery from the ground up. Custom crush services have filled that need, offering access to state-of-the-art equipment and seasoned winemakers while allowing clients to focus on what matters most: crafting wines that express their vision.

In the heart of the Applegate, custom crush is not just a transaction—it's a relationship. Harvest season feels less like a business cycle and more like a family reunion. On any given day, you might find a first-time producer standing beside a veteran vintner, trading winemaking advice and weather forecasts. Labels that compete in tasting rooms often collaborate in the cellar. The result is an ecosystem where success grows not from rivalry, but from shared effort.

Quady North is the valley's largest winemaking facility, producing Herb Quady's expressive southern Oregon wines and offering custom winemaking services through Barrel 42. Herb has helped shape the next generation of winemakers by sharing his expertise with emerging brands. Here, mentorship is as valuable as machinery, and the belief runs deep that elevating others strengthens the entire valley.

This same philosophy is embodied by Schmidt Family Vineyards, a four-generation winemaking family whose roots are intertwined with the history of the Applegate itself. For decades, the Schmidts have balanced family and winemaking tradition with community-based business innovation. Cal, Rene, Tasha, Spencer, and Duncan are a wonderful winemaking family celebrating down-to-earth, neighborly values. The Schmidt Family's custom crush program reflects this heritage, supporting neighbors with small vineyard



lots who dream of bottling their own label, while also accommodating larger commercial arrangements that require consistency, scale, and professionalism. Whether it's a few tons of fruit from a hillside plot or a full-fledged brand in growth mode, every project receives the same thoughtful care, reinforcing the belief in the valley that success is something to be shared.

At the more intimate end of the spectrum, Rachael Martin, at Red Lily Vineyards, captures the soulful side of winemaking. Her smaller-scale, custom crush work showcases not only technical skill but a deep respect for tradition and trust. In a world often defined by complex contracts and maximizing profit, Rachael focuses on the essence of the Applegate, where partnerships are formed with a handshake and a shared belief in great local wine. This attitude is proof that even as the industry evolves, the Applegate remains a place where relationships matter as much as results.

This culture of collaboration has made the region stronger, both economically and creatively. Custom crush services have lowered the barrier to entry, allowing new voices to join the wine conversation without the weight of massive startup costs. Vineyards that once sold fruit anonymously now tell their own stories through their private label bottlings. Entrepreneurs from outside agriculture—chefs, artists, even former tech professionals—find a welcoming pathway into winemaking that is both accessible and sustainable.

But beyond the numbers and logistics, the true magic of custom crush in the Applegate Valley lies in the joy of shared creation. There's something deeply satisfying about watching a group of people—each with their own background, dreams, and challenges—come together around a common purpose: to make something beautiful, something that will be poured at weddings, opened at family tables, and gifted between friends.

In the end, every bottle from the Applegate tells two stories. One is about terroir: the sun, soil, and seasons that shape the grapes. The other is about people: the growers, the winemakers, the mentors, and the neighbors who made it possible. In this corner of southern Oregon, custom crush winemaking has become more than a service. It's a meeting place for community and commerce and a reminder that the greatest joy in wine often comes not just from drinking it, but from making it together.

Cathy A. Rodgers
cathyrodgers55@gmail.com



Schmidt Family Vineyards Head Winemaker, René Brons, filtering a custom crush in the winery. Photo by Britt Storer.



Winery tanks at the 30,000-square-foot Bottle 42 Custom Crush Facility, sharing the same facility with Quady North Winery on Highway 238. Photo by SB James Construction.

Planning for death takes courage! The Southern Oregon Living & Dying Alliance can help!

BY HAYRIYA HEIDI HANSEN

Truth is, everything and everyone we know and love will die! We, too, will die at some point. It really is a *gift* to those who know and love you if you plan for your eventual demise. Knowing your wishes, before and after death, alleviates some of the unknown. Planning allows those who love you, to the best of their ability, to help you receive the before-, during-, and after-death care that you desire. By planning ahead, you also allow those who love you more time to be present and grieve.

The Southern Oregon Living and Dying Alliance (SOLADA) can help you plan. Our volunteers have been offering a four-month workshop series in three locations—Ashland, Grants Pass, and Williams—to help with the questions, feelings, fears, and practical information around planning, caring for yourself and others, death, and after-death care. By the time you're reading this article, two of the series will be past. But that doesn't mean you can't attend our March and April workshops.

During the Community Death Care series in March titled Desserts and Dying, we'll discuss the stages of dying and what individuals and families may experience emotionally and physically. This session will explore care options available at home or in a facility, including hospice care and Oregon's Death with Dignity law. Attendees will gain practical insights into how these choices can be navigated, the factors to consider, and the resources available to support both the dying and their caregivers. Packets listing useful resources, equipment, services, health, and death care collaborators will be handed out at every event.

During our April event, Angel Food and After Care, presenters will discuss local options, focusing attention on home funerals and green burial. This session will address what individuals and families may experience logistically, and we'll explore choices, the factors to consider, and the resources available to support those navigating after-death arrangements. At all the workshops, collaborators from both Josephine and Jackson Counties will be presenting; our main workshop lead, Tim Holloway,

will offer targeted information, and our time together will include attendee discussion.

This workshop series will help you gain confidence around a troubling subject and empower you with the knowledge to navigate difficult situations, whether for yourself in the future or as a helpful ally in your community or family. We will bring you experts in the field to answer your questions in a comfortable setting. The Southern Oregon Living and Dying Alliance plans to present a similar format yearly with new and updated information. Additionally, in the future, we hope to offer this series on YouTube or another similar format. Stay tuned!

"If only I had planned ahead."

"If" is a tiny word freighted with so much power!

In other SOLADA news, we continue to offer Death Cafes at four locations: Grants Pass, Williams, Ruch, and Medford. We plan to add an Ashland venue in February, during the afternoon hours. Watch for further details on our website, solada.org.

SOLADA is a totally volunteer-driven, donation-based organization. Any money collected goes 100 percent to materials given out, website maintenance, and a small fee for our amazing fiscal sponsor, A Greater Applegate! We are a group of dedicated volunteers following our mission and purpose, which is to support positive death literacy in thought, word, and action. We are co-creating a community around conscious living and dying to increase our capacity to serve and care for one another and our planet.

Please check out our website at solada.org, send us an email at soladaoregon@gmail.com, or give a call/text at 541-787-7490. We look forward to seeing you at one of our events and greatly appreciate your tax-deductible donations! And a great big thank-you to our steering board, our SOLADA ambassadors, our fiscal sponsor A Greater Applegate, and to those of you who have come to our events and donated to our amazing organization.

Hayriya Heidi Hansen
hayriya1@gmail.com

At Sanctuary One, we don't quit

BY THOMAS ECKERT

At the Sanctuary One Animal Rescue Farm, we don't quit. We don't quit on the animals that have been caught up in the system. We don't quit on the volunteers and staff that have made this a true sanctuary. And we don't quit on our donors and patrons who have made it all possible.

Honestly, sometimes it's hard, and we all get tired. The challenges seem immense, and it takes all of us working together to lift each other up from time to time, but we fight on for the animals, the Applegate community, and the mission: People, Animals, & the Earth. Better together.

We've been through some major challenges in the last year. We grew too fast, took on too much, and failed to create a donor base large enough to pay for it all. So we've significantly reduced our staff, cut back on some programs, squeezed every penny, and continue to serve animals.



Pearl in her raincoat. Photo by Tom Eckert.

So far, we're staying within our budget, but we need community support. We need more donations, cash, or supplies. We need more volunteers to walk dogs, clean the cat cottage, or work in the barn or gardens. Can you join us?

Thomas Eckert
eckertthomas76@yahoo.com

•••BIZBITS•••

The Provolt Store has three new-biz items. (1) They are now offering a gluten-free pizza, using a cauliflower crust. Usual toppings apply. (2) They have started a K-pop Stray Kids fan club on Facebook, where they'll celebrate birthdays, do quizzes, and play games. Sign up to join the fun! (3) They have built a small stage behind the store for "when we have something." The first "something" on the stage was a show from pole artists of Sky Dance Fitness, made spectacular by a background lightning storm.

Diana Coogle
diana@applegater.org

BizBits highlights businesses new to the area, holding special events, or offering new products. If you are a business owner, let us know when you move into the area or to a different location, hold a special event, expand your business, or mark a milestone. Email gater@applegater.org.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY ANNIKA HODGES

Thank you to everyone for showing up for the *Applegater* during our NewsMatch campaign. Your support—through donations, encouragement, and sharing the message—means more to us than I can easily put into words.

Because of you, we can keep telling local stories and making sure this paper remains free, accessible, and rooted in the community it serves. As I look ahead to a second year with the *Applegater*, I'm grateful to be doing this work alongside such a thoughtful and engaged community.

We also want to share a small change in one of our favorite features. The column formerly known as "They Live Among Us" will now be called "Introducing..." We'll continue bringing you the same fun interviews with community members, but under a title that better reflects our commitment to celebrating everyone in our community as equals.

Thank you for supporting and believing in the *Applegater*. Cheers to a new year!

Annika Hodges
Applegater Editor in Chief
annika@applegater.org

For Opinion piece and Letter to the Editor requirements, please visit applegater.org/submitting/#articles.

CHAIR'S REPORT

BY DIANA COOGLE

With regret, I have to announce two resignations from our board.

We are losing our excellent secretary, Laura Duey, who joined the board in November 2023, serving from the beginning as secretary. Since then, she has kept meticulous minutes at our meetings, kept our records organized and accessible, moved us to online systems for our documents, headed up the NewsMatch drive, taken on the roles of donations manager and grant manager, and done countless other things for the board. She told us when she took the position that she was a "details person" and maybe we wouldn't want that, but oh, yeah! We have really benefited from her work with the *Applegater*. We are sorry to see her go and wish her well in the coming years.

We are also losing Ash Martel, who joined the board in 2025 with appreciation for what the *Applegater* does and enthusiasm for joining its movers and shakers. However, in the meantime, her life got more complicated, and she found it more and more difficult to keep up with her commitments to the *Applegater*. We will miss her presence and her willingness to step in where she could, and we extend sympathies for the conditions that made it necessary for her to resign.

On the other hand, I am pleased to announce that Greg Stanko and Roger Wirth have joined the board. See the "Welcome, New Members" article on page 21.

The officers of the *Applegater* Board of Directors for 2026, voted in at the January meeting, are:

Chair, Diana Coogle
Vice-chair, Whit Whitney
Secretary (interim), Roger Wirth
Treasurer, Roger Wirth

At-large board members are:

Greg Stanko (grants manager and distribution manager)

The *Applegater* editor, Annika Hodges, continues as a nonvoting board member.

The *Applegater* Board of Directors is now five strong. That number satisfies the requirements of the bylaws, but we really need at least one more board member to fulfill tasks. We need a secretary. Roger has generously agreed to take over secretarial tasks until someone else steps up, but we need to take that burden off Roger's shoulders. He is doing a sterling job as treasurer, and we can't risk having him resign for overwork! Would you like to serve your community by becoming the secretary of the *Applegater*? (I promise that you won't have to do everything Laura was doing.)

Let me know if you are interested. We meet on the second Tuesday of the month at the Applegate Library. I would love to talk to you about the board, what we do, and how you can help. We are a fun group to work with. Come join us!

Diana Coogle
Chair, *Applegater* Board of Directors
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Louvenia Magee, Jacksonville, OR
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Welcome to our new board members, Roger Wirth and Greg Stanko

BY DIANA COOGLE

It is a great pleasure for me to introduce you to our two newest board members, Roger Wirth and Greg Stanko.

Roger Wirth has been a whirlwind of a treasurer since he joined the board in October 2025. With a background as a forensic CPA with the DEA Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force and, later, in a similar position with the Medford Police Department and the Jackson County Sheriff's office, Roger dug into our files and folders and records with the relish of a professional. With an unbelievably sharp eye for details and figures and column upon column of accounts, he has created better systems and record-keeping for the *Applegater*. He lives in the Little Applegate with his wife, Cheryl, and has recently joined the Upper Applegate Church, which has become an important part of his life.



New board member, Roger Wirth.



New board member, Greg Stanko.

Greg Stanko, who joined the board in January, has lived in Williams with his wife, Kate, since 1981. In 2019, he retired from a career in the medical

field, including early work in the Air Force Medical Corps. Hiking has long been and remains a number-one passion, which he indulges in as often as possible, enjoying opportunities to explore the Applegate and Williams valleys. Other passions include photography, animal husbandry, gardening, and woodworking. In addition to his work with the *Applegater*, Greg is chair of the board of the Williams Community Forest Project and works extensively on restoration projects on the Layton Ditch trail system. He expressed a strong commitment to the *Applegater* mission and has already shown his willingness to commit to active participation in board duties by becoming both donations manager and distribution manager, for which we are grateful.

Welcome to both Roger and Greg. We are pleased to have you on the board with us, helping us serve the Applegate community through the *Applegater*.

Diana Coogle
Chair, *Applegater* Board of Directors
diana@applegater.org

Building a resilient Williams

BY HARMONY SUE HAYNIE

In November 2025, a group of people gathered at the Williams Grange for a day-long workshop entitled "Building a Resilient Williams." The organizers of this event started having planning meetings during the summer. They were quite close-mouthed about the actual mechanics of the meeting, offering only vague details and building up some mystery around what to expect. All that was communicated was the following: an open invitation for people with good ideas related to the meeting's theme to bring them; a free lunch; a donation-based meeting; and all donations going to the Grange.



At the opening circle.

Photo by Harmony Sue Haynie.

The day began with an opening circle and an introduction to Open Space Technology, a procedural format for facilitating groups that sets up certain structural elements that help to bypass some of the more difficult aspects of group dynamics: power struggles, attention-seeking, manipulation, not speaking up, feeling stuck, and more, and instead, encourages cooperation, deep listening, authenticity, respect, and freedom. In fact, the only rule of the day was the "rule of two feet": if you are in a situation where you are not contributing or learning, it is your responsibility to leave. In addition, posters were placed around the room reading, "Prepare to be surprised!"

After the opening circle, different ideas were brought forth, then breakout groups were organized in various meeting areas and time slots. About 50 people were in attendance at

any given time during the day, with a total of about 75 throughout the day. Groups discussed various topics: creating a pedestrian bike path in Williams; permaculture, food banks, and food sovereignty; creating local holistic elder care facilities; creating a local wellness clinic with a pop-up tea house; and starting a regular local barter fair and swap meet.

Participants had their choice of joining several different groups in the two different breakout sessions, with a delicious organic lunch available in between. At the end of the day, there was a final closing circle, where many in the group reported feeling "encouraged," "uplifted," and "more positive" due to participating in the day's activities. Additionally, many groups decided to continue meeting over the winter months to build momentum for their projects.

The second meeting of "Building a Resilient Williams" will happen this spring. Stay tuned for more details, and come join us in these dynamic community conversations!

Harmony Sue Haynie
harmonysue23@gmail.com

The history and future of the Williams World Music Choir

BY HARMONY SUE HAYNIE

The Williams World Music Choir (WWMC) was founded in the fall of 2016 by me, Harmony Sue Haynie. At the time, I was an active member of the Rogue World Ensemble (RWE), a world music choir based in Ashland that I joined in 2009. Over my time in RWE, I was occasionally allowed to teach a song to the choir, and after a few years, I realized that this is what gave me the most joy—teaching others how to sing world music songs. So started the WWMC.

The choir has now been singing in Williams for ten years, two semesters a year—fall and spring—with two concerts each semester (with only a handful of sessions off). In addition to putting on some very beautiful concerts and making good memories, singers in the choir improve their vocal ability, become more

confident in their vocal expression, and find a warm and engaging community within the choir family. Singing is truly good for the soul!

This past fall, the tenth year of the WWMC project, a few singers in Ashland approached me about teaching a choir there. (RWE closed its choir program in the winter of 2020.) I decided to try an experiment: teach the same repertoire to two separate groups of singers and then bring them together for the concerts. It worked *so well!* The combined Community World Music Choir had three wonderful performances in December 2025. Feedback was enthusiastic, and hearts were full.

The only problem? This group could no longer be called the Williams World Music Choir. And calling

the group the Community World Music Choir would be just too dull.

And so I mulled it over. We are a group with diverse ability levels and musical backgrounds, coming from diverse locations in southern Oregon, including Williams, Ashland, Ruch, Applegate, Cave Junction, and Grants Pass. We sing very diverse songs from all over the world in multiple languages; the songs are in different time signatures, different harmonic structures... we are, quite literally, a mosaic....

And so, the group formerly known as the Williams World Music Choir will now be known as the Mosaic World Chorus. We will be practicing in both Williams and Ashland this spring from mid-February to mid-May and will be performing over the weekend of May 15, 16, and 17, in both Williams and Ashland.

For more information, please contact me by email at harmonysue23@gmail.com or by texting 541-613-4572. We still have openings in the choir for lower



Harmony Haynie, CWMC Director, at the Williams Grange performance on 12/13/25.

voices for this spring, and I can put other singers on a waitlist for when openings become available.

Harmony Sue Haynie
Director, Mosaic World Chorus
harmonysue23@gmail.com

■ CWPP PUBLIC MEETINGS

Continued from page 16.

- **Williams: 33 attendees**
- Williams represents about 15 percent of survey responses.
- Williams residents have higher-than-average support for prescribed fire, but fewer than half have a go-bag ready during wildfire season.
- Most attendees expressed concern about fuels reduction on public land, emphasizing its importance on ingress/egress routes and home hardening/defensible space projects.

- Tip: Check out Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative's (SOFRC) Prescription for Safety case study for inspiration on starting a private-land roadside treatment project in your neighborhood. A PDF of the report is on SOFRC's website under the Science Delivery tab and Fire Science for Neighbors subtab.
- Want to get involved in the CWPP development process? The survey is the best way to contribute, but we welcome feedback and comments by email as well. The survey will be open until April;

the exact date is to be decided. The third and final round of public meetings will take place in April; the exact details are yet to be decided. Sign up for the CWPP mailing list and find more information, including the survey, on the CWPP website at applegatepartnership.org/cwpp.

Amelia Liberatore,
Communications Specialist
Southern Oregon Forest
Restoration Collaborative
aliberatore@sofrc.org



Scan this QR code using the camera on your smartphone to access the CWPP survey. The survey is also on the CWPP website at applegatepartnership.org/cwpp. Photo by SOFRC.

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NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS

Season of growth at Applegate School

BY RENEE GOURLEY

All things have been moving and grooving at Applegate School this year. Students started the school year with excitement, eager to get back to learning and all activities. The students have been engaged in meaningful, hands-on learning across all grade levels. From exploring science and social studies to building strong character skills, each class has been hard at work discovering new ideas, asking questions, and growing together.

Our kindergarten through third-grade students have been learning and growing together. One exciting part of the first half of the year was learning about the life cycle of a butterfly. Students watched each stage, from caterpillar to chrysalis, and were thrilled to tag and release ten butterflies, giving them a special connection to the science they were learning. In October, the class also enjoyed a trip to the pumpkin patch, where they learned about the life cycle of a pumpkin—from seed to sprout to harvest. As they explored all parts of life and nature, they focused on the character trait of kindness. Through science, seasonal activities, and shared experiences, our youngest learners are discovering that kindness helps everyone grow, just like butterflies and pumpkins.

Our second-grade students dove into social studies by learning about early Asian civilizations, with a focus on ancient China. They explored important inventions such as paper, writing, and calligraphy, and learned how these ideas helped shape history and communications. Students created their own books inspired by ancient Chinese practices, combining creativity with history.

Our fourth- and fifth-grade students have been working hard on their science fair projects, showing dedication, curiosity, and critical thinking. They asked thoughtful questions, conducted experiments, collected data, and prepared presentations. Through this process, students practiced problem-solving, perseverance, and scientific reasoning while taking pride in their hard work and accomplishments.

Middle school students have been actively engaged in a variety of hands-on projects in the STEM classroom, where they are applying skills in engineering, technology, and problem-solving. In

addition, student leadership groups have been working to create a positive school culture that is encouraging, kind, and supportive. Through collaboration, leadership activities, and service-minded projects, these students are helping make our school a welcoming place where everyone feels valued and supported.

Our student-athletes have had an exciting year. The girls' volleyball team had a great season, finishing with an impressive record of eight wins and four losses. Their teamwork, determination, and positive attitude were on display in every match. The boys' basketball team battled through an intense season filled with close games, including two that went into overtime. One unforgettable moment came when sixth-grader Wyatt Fitting sank a buzzer-beater shot to secure a thrilling win for the team. The girls' basketball season is in progress, and they continue to show improvement in skills from last year, with an amazing 24-point win over their opponent in their first game of the season. All three teams have shown perseverance, sportsmanship, and school pride, making it a season to remember.

We are very proud to recognize two outstanding students who have been selected as Rotary Students of the Year: fifth-grader Marquee Hersha and eighth-grader Taven Beckstead. Both have been chosen for their leadership, responsibility, and positive impact on our school community. Both students consistently demonstrate strong character and a commitment to doing their best. They were honored for their achievements at a special luncheon in February. We congratulate them on this well-deserved recognition.

Together, these experiences highlight the dedication, curiosity, and kindness that make our school community so special. From our youngest learners to our middle-school leaders, students are growing academically, socially, and personally each day. We are proud of their hard work, teamwork, and positive character, and we look forward to continuing to celebrate their successes as the year goes on.

Renee Gourley
renee.gourley@threerivers.k12.or.us

Siskiyou Field Institute: Where learning becomes livelihood

BY TUULA REBHAWN

On a sunny morning in May, a van laden with coolers of fresh lettuce, carrots, and ground beef pulls up to the outdoor kitchen at Siskiyou Field Institute (SFI). The cook emerges from the cheery red food truck to greet the driver and admire the produce, grown at Applegate and Illinois valley farms and procured through the Josephine County Farm Collective. This afternoon, kids will munch fresh carrot sticks between Outdoor School classes, and, later on, beef tacos from locally raised cows will settle everyone down for tales told around the campfire.

A recent high-school graduate holds a drip torch low to the ground and steadily ignites pine tree duff near the base of a 200-year-old oak tree. Her peers do the same to the left and right of her, creating a line of fire that will slowly creep through the forest above Takelma Creek, tended by dozens of trainees earning firefighter certifications. This is her first time working with fire as a vehicle for forest health, and she has to admit it—she's hooked.

A couple of University of California students working toward their master of science degrees take their boots off at the entry of the lodge and pad across the soft carpet toward their rooms, their backpacks full of plant samples and tablets brimming with fresh data. They've made SFI their laboratory and have been hard at work setting up studies and collecting data. But tomorrow they have a free day—they might head out to hear some music at a local winery or even try hang-gliding at Woodrat Mountain.

The backhoe operator moves his final bucket of dirt for the day and gets ready to head home. This is his favorite kind of contract—rebuilding streams that have long been held back by poorly designed dams. Now that the Takelma Creek dam is out, it's up to him and his crew to restore the habitat. With the paycheck, he can sign up for one of those interesting classes they have at the SFI campus down the hill. He'll be back to forage mushrooms this fall!

For the economists in the room, here's the hard data on how outdoor education and land restoration drive the local economy. Just under \$100,000 comes through SFI annually in the form of Outdoor School revenue. A third goes to seasonal employees (teachers and the all-important cook), and the rest goes to



A supervisor from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife oversees placement of instream wood as a part of meadow restoration at Siskiyou Field Institute. Photo by Aliyah Zweig.

regular staff wages, supplies, materials, and food, purchased locally whenever possible. In the past five years, we've obtained and spent over \$1.2 million for habitat restoration, hiring local contractors to design and implement a dam removal project and a culvert replacement to bring salmon back to upper Takelma Creek. We contract around a dozen experts each year to teach adult education classes (like mushroom identification), and though the pay isn't lucrative, it's a puzzle piece for scientists and other knowledge-tenders to earn a living in the rural Klamath-Siskiyou.

We haven't calculated the second-tier economic impact of bringing hundreds of kids, many with family members, to Selma, Oregon, for Outdoor School and day programs each year, or the job training and hands-on-the-ground knowledge we provide. If anyone knows a student of economics who would like to run the numbers, please reach out!

We're always learning something new here at Siskiyou Field Institute and celebrating our place in the economic web of the Illinois and Applegate valleys. Consider becoming a member today!

Tuula Rebhawn
Executive Director, Siskiyou
Field Institute
director@thesfi.org
(541) 597-8531

■ QUILTERS AND COMMUNITY

Continued from page 2

growth, or another kind of experience, such as surviving cancer or making a major move in career or home. The President's Challenge Quilts based on this theme will be on display.

The show will feature a huge spectrum of beautiful bed, lap, and children's quilts, innovative art quilts, wearable art and fashion, and other fabric-related items. Knowledgeable guild members will be on hand both days to answer questions about quilts and quilting. Back by popular demand are demonstrations and "make-and-take" classes on both days at no additional cost. These include a kid's felt bookmark, a collapsible thread catcher, a stitch booklet, a cute felt birdie, and a quilt block.

Attendees could win door prizes, given away hourly on both days, and can purchase raffle tickets for themed baskets and prizes. They can also purchase tickets for a chance to win the spectacular Piecemakers' 2026 Opportunity Quilt, "Giant Dahlia." Proceeds will benefit the Rogue Valley Humane Society and the Women's Crisis Support Team. A silent auction will include original art, vintage quilts, quilt kits, and other items. Auction and Opportunity Quilt winners will be announced prior to the close of the show on Saturday afternoon.

The Piecemakers' "Bee-autiful Boutique" will sell gently used sewing supplies, fabrics, quilts, and gifts handcrafted by guild members. Vendors from Oregon and California will sell fabrics, patterns, and the latest notions and machines.

Quilt Show hours are 10 am-4 pm both days at the Josephine County Fairgrounds, on Route 199 in Grants Pass. Admission is \$5 per day; children under 12 are admitted free. There is ample free parking.

For Piecemakers members, fostering that friendly and affirmative spirit starts with our regular meetings on the first and third Mondays, 9 am-noon, at the Grants Pass Fruitdale Grange. Please join us! Typically, about 60 of our 100+ members gather to do handwork together, enjoying companionship while planning the next quilt show, the next charitable project, our upcoming quilting classes, and more.

Local Piecemakers members also gather in smaller groups to pursue different types of patchwork. For example, the English Paper Piecing (EPP) group meets

regularly at the homes of Applegate quilters. EPP is an ancient and portable method of handpiecing that is fun, relaxing, and yields beautiful results. One group of EPP quilters assembled their quilt blocks into a spectacular quilt to raffle off, raising over \$6000 for CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) and the Humane Society.

For more information about Piecemakers, please stop by one of our meetings or visit our website at www.RVPiecemakers.com.

Liza Crosse
lizacrosse@comcast.net

Scan this code to read more about the Rogue Valley Piecemakers guild and our quilt show.



Visit us online at applegater.org.

White Oak Farm's new Community Trees Program

BY TAYLOR STARR

White Oak Farm is a nonprofit organic farm and education center located in the Marble Gulch watershed on the west side of Williams. We've been growing produce for local markets, schools, and food pantries for the past 24 years. You may have heard of us from your kids or grandkids, as we host summer camps and school field trips and offer school garden programs at Williams Elementary, Applegate School, Ruch Outdoor Community School, and Hidden Valley High School. You might not know, but for the past seven years, we've also been developing a native nursery that provides plants for riparian restoration projects around the region. This winter, we started a new program out of the nursery to provide free trees and shrubs to local neighborhoods and community spaces, including here in the Applegate Valley.

Through a three-year partnership with the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), we launched our Community Trees Program this winter. In collaboration with local partners, we are growing, distributing, planting, and helping to maintain 8,000 trees and shrubs in community spaces around the region over the next three planting seasons. The goal

is to provide drought-tolerant and disease-resistant shade trees for communities that are impacted by overheating due to the effects of climate change and recent fires. These projects are an example of green infrastructure: a system that utilizes natural processes to provide cost-effective services for communities, such as stormwater management, reduction of heat stress, better air quality, energy savings, and improved quality of life. Often, green infrastructure is seen as a strategy for urban areas, but it can also provide many benefits for rural places. Trees and shrubs help cool homes and public spaces; reduce energy costs; provide wind, dust, and noise breaks; and reduce erosion, while also creating biodiversity, pollinator habitat, and natural beauty.

Our focus is on plantings in public spaces such as schools, parks, playgrounds, community gardens, parking lots, libraries, and mobile home parks, to name just a few. As a part of the program, White Oak Farm educators will also be incorporating tree-based education into our curriculum at local schools to teach students how to grow and care for trees and inspire them to appreciate their many benefits. Your

child might even come home with an oak or an apple sapling they grew from a seed at school this year.

In 2025, after a summer of outreach and conversations, we identified three sites for our first planting projects: a mobile home park in Ashland that burned in the Alameda Fire, a farmers market and main street district in Rogue River, and a community garden in Cave Junction. Each site is unique and presents its own challenges and opportunities, but it has been extremely satisfying to set close to 1000 trees and shrubs in the ground already this season. Now with the return of spring weather and warmer temperatures, we are turning our attention to finding next winter's planting sites. In 2026, we would like to prioritize projects right here in the Applegate Valley. To be eligible, sites must be used by the public, have the ability to maintain plantings in the future, have access to irrigation water, be able to fit a minimum of 50 plants, and meet ODF eligibility guidelines based on location and land ownership type. If you have a



Plants in the nursery are ready for their new homes. Photo by Taylor Starr.

site in mind, reach out, and we can let you know if it's eligible. Available species will include southern Oregon natives, fruit and nut trees, and many varieties of willows. If you know of a spot in the Applegate that would benefit from more shade, habitat, diversity, and natural beauty, please let us know. We would love to discuss your ideas and see if we can work together to get more beneficial plants in the ground this year around the Applegate. To discuss potential projects, please contact me at the email address below.

Taylor Starr
farmertaylor@yahoo.com

■ SAP TO SYRUP

Continued from page 17.

Sap collecting can be adventurous depending on your local terrain. I chose to tap a handful of trees this year that are decidedly not in the nice flat, easy-access section of our land—instead, they're through the woods and down a slightly unforgiving embankment. Hauling full buckets of sap from there is going to be... memorable.

Sugaring is a labor of love that takes a little dedication and patience—from scouting trees, to tapping, to collecting, to thanking the trees, through the many hours of boiling, filtering, and bottling. The reward is a decadent, invaluable sweetness that is incomparable to anything else—besides syrup from the sugar maple, of course—though the difference is tangible. I find maple tapping to be an incredibly

fulfilling way to connect with the natural world, and it's something I genuinely look forward to every year. While I spend most of my time outdoors in warmer seasons, this quiet ritual fills a special gap during the cold winter months, when many other projects and activities naturally slow down or move to the back burner.

If you're inspired to try it yourself, the Oregon Maple Project and OSU

Extension offer fantastic local resources. Check out other tree species that can be tapped for syrup-making too: most maple varieties, alder, birch, and black walnut. Have questions about the gear or maple tapping in general? Feel free to send me an email. I love talking about this stuff!

Allie Parkin
mineekhoorn@gmail.com



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Registration opens March 16th



Contact: education@applegatepartnership.org * Learn more: applegatepartnership.org/summer-camp

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Photos, left to right:

-**Larry Smith** of Jacksonville, reading the Applegater at the Molly Malone statue in downtown Dublin, Ireland. It was a cold day in November.


-**Billy (R) & Heidi Doyle (L)** of Rancho Picaro & Crooked Barn Vineyards in Jacksonville in St. Moritz Switzerland wishing best wishes to the Applegater on Billy's 59th Birthday.

-**Sandra Sommers (R) and Martin Sloan (L)** catching up with the news in the Applegater while on the Melecon in San Felipe, Mexico.

-**Cathy Rodgers (Right to Left), her daughter Jenny, Seth, Ronin and Gia** all enjoy the Applegater while taking in an evening beachwalk in Marbella, Spain....Costa del Sol on the Mediterranean Sea.

Keep those articles, letters, opinions, and "Reading the Gater" photos coming in. You are the Gater!

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