

Applegater

Photo by Cate Battles | applegater.org

SUMMER 2023
Volume 16, No. 2

Applegate Valley Community Newsmagazine
Serving Jackson and Josephine Counties — Circulation: 13,000

Celebrating
~29~
Years

Reassessing our relationship with fire

BY AARON KRIKAVA

Fire season. Uh, most of us respond to that phrase with dread. The calamitous and destructive nature of catastrophic wildfire can generate a feeling of fear. The suffocating and claustrophobic smoke drives us indoors.

And yet, in balance, fire provides for us in so many ways it almost defines us as a species. We heat our homes, cook our food, drive our cars—all through this miracle of combustion. Even without woodstoves, gas ovens, or combustion engines, much of our electricity comes from the burning of natural gas or nuclear fusion of the sun that powers solar panels.

As an element, fire's nature is transformation. You can hold a cup of water, dig up a clod of earth, feel the wind against your cheek. Fire is the element of change. The low-to-moderate expression of each element is healthy and rejuvenating, while extremes of each are dangerous and destructive. Small tremors reduce the stresses that lead to major earthquakes. Regular light rains moisten



Like dead-heading flowers in your garden, native fire-adapted plants benefit from having seasoned growth burned away. Photo: Aaron Krikava.

the soil and revive the plants; torrential downpours wash away soil and flood the land. A light wind carries pollen and seed across the landscape, while extreme winds blow down trees and destroy houses in tornados. Repeated low-intensity fire is also as important to safe communities and a healthy environment.

The policy of completely suppressing wildfires for the previous 70-plus years has resulted in the extremely destructive

See **FIRE RELATIONSHIP**, page 5.



Teresa Kasza holds a steelhead, the largest fish she ever caught in the Applegate River.

Fishing is good in the Applegate River

BY DIANA COOGLE

When I moved to the Applegate, in 1972, the Applegate Store held an annual fishing derby. The walls were covered with butcher paper depicting the outlines of fish caught in the Applegate River.

I still see cars crowding the pullout past the store on Highway 238 when the steelhead are running, between February and March. One day last March, I found

Brian Dirks and his 14-year-old daughter, Cailin, fishing from the bank there.

Brian said he had fished in the Applegate River as a kid. "I would fish the whole river, all day, every day," he said, "Every time you would put in a lure at a rapid, you would catch a fish." Then came the '97 flood. "After that," he said—"nothing."

See **FISHING IN APPLGATE**, page 24.

Be well—and drink clean water

BY JULIA PAVLOSEK AND LILLY ANDERSON

There's no doubt that southern Oregon has some of the best-tasting well water in the state. Cold, fresh water from your own well is one of the best benefits to country living. However, just because the water is delicious doesn't mean it's safe to drink. When was the last time you investigated exactly what's in your water? If it was more than a year ago, you could be in for a surprise.

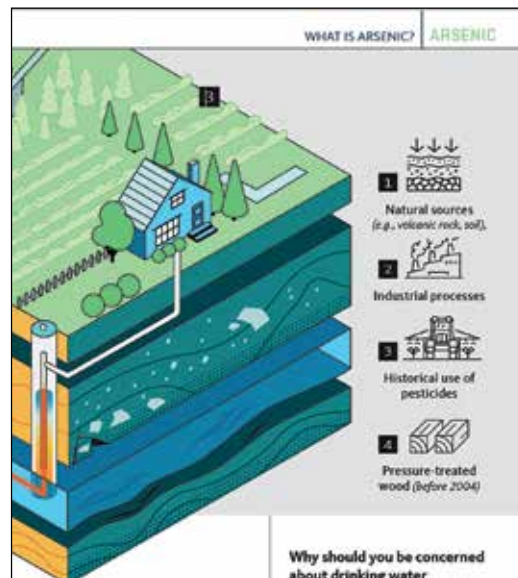
The average person consumes up to 10 cups of water per day, but we don't always think about what could be in the water we drink, cook, and shower with every day. This is easy to do because most dangerous contaminants in your well water are invisible, tasteless, and odorless. In order to avoid nasty surprises, it is recommended to have your well water professionally tested every one to three years. Long-term poisoning from water contamination can lead to chronic issues developing and worsening over time, such as high blood pressure, type two diabetes, and even certain types of cancer.

This year, Oregon State University is partnering with local Extension offices in Jackson County to provide free,

professional well-water tests to qualifying homeowners. If you are a homeowner in Oregon and at least 21 years of age, you may qualify to participate in a study recently launched by Oregon State University's Well Water Program called "The Be Well Study."

Oregon State University's Well Water Program was developed to help rural homes on wells have access to clean, healthy drinking water. Unlike city water, private wells are not monitored for contamination. To make matters worse, rural homes are particularly vulnerable to water contamination due to closer proximity to animal manure, fertilizers, and septic systems. Unfortunately, substances like lead and arsenic have been found to be present in levels above federal water contamination limits in Jackson and Josephine counties.

You may be wondering how it's possible for you to have a problem with your water while your neighbor doesn't. It all has to do with the underlying sources of contaminants. For instance, use of fertilizer on surrounding lands or having grazing animals near a well can lead to a



Graphic courtesy of Oregon State University.

nitrate problem on your property. Arsenic, another common contaminant in Oregon, arises naturally from volcanic rocks. Some areas have more of these rocks, causing higher levels of arsenic. Lead is unusual in that it often arises from man-made products. Lead can be introduced from old household plumbing with service lines, galvanized pipes, and older faucets. Laws have since restricted the use of lead in household plumbing, but you may still be at risk if your plumbing was installed before that change came about.

If you are interested in learning more about well-water contamination and how it relates to your health, there are several free resources for you. You can learn more about ways you can protect your well from contamination at wellwater.oregonstate.edu. If you have specific questions, you can navigate to the "Ask Extension" web page through OSU Extension at extension.oregonstate.edu/ask-extension.

The Be Well Study is a research study that includes a 30-minute survey about managing and treating your well to protect your drinking water and your health. You will receive a free water test worth \$130 if you complete this survey. To participate, you must be an adult and have a private well on your property that supplies drinking water. To learn more about the Be Well Study, visit beav.es/Be-Well-Survey or contact Dr. Veronica Irvin at veronica.irvin@oregonstate.edu.

Julia Pavlosek
BioHealth Sciences
pavlosej@oregonstate.edu
Lilly Anderson
Research Project Coordinator
lilly.anderson@oregonstate.edu
Oregon State University

Nonprofit Org
US Postage
PAID
Permit #125
Medford OR
ECRWSSEDDM

Local Postal Customer



~ FINE PRINT ~

The Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc. (AVCN) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to the publication of the *Applegater* newsmagazine, which, we feel, reflects the heart and soul of our community.

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.

Acknowledgements

The *Applegater* newsmagazine is published quarterly by AVCN and is funded by donations from our loyal readers and advertisements for local businesses.

Special thanks to Diana Coogle, Margaret Perrow della Santina, Haley May Peterson, and Paul Tipton for copy editing; Lisa Baldwin, Diana Coogle, Carla David, Jeanette LeTourneux, and Paul Tipton for proofing; David Dobbs for bookkeeping; Webmaster Joe Lavine; and Barbara Holiday for layout.

Board of Directors

Diana Coogle, Chair
David Dobbs, Vice-Chair/Treasurer
Lisa Baldwin, Secretary
Barbara Holiday
Margaret M. Patterson
Jennifer Petersen

Editorial Committee

Barbara Holiday, Editor in Chief
Diana Coogle
Aaron Krikava
Sandy Shaffer
Greeley Wells

All articles, stories, opinions and letters in the *Applegater* are the property and opinion of the author and not necessarily that of the *Applegater* or AVCN.

Protection of Copyrighted Material

All materials submitted for publication must pertain to the Applegate Valley, be original (no press releases or reprinted articles), and be the intellectual property of the author unless otherwise credited.

All articles submitted to the *Applegater* are subject to edit and publication at the newsmagazine's discretion and as space allows. No more than one article per author per issue. When too many articles are submitted to include in any one issue, some articles may be placed on our website or held until the following issue.

Letters to the editor must be 200 words or less. Opinion pieces cannot exceed 500 words (no images). Articles cannot exceed 700 words. Obituaries are limited to 500 words and one photo. Essays are limited to 500 words and one per issue.

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 flag 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).

Applegater Newsmagazine
PO Box 14
Jacksonville, OR 97530

■ FIRE RELATIONSHIP

Continued from page 1

wildfires we now experience. Historic fire-return intervals in our area were 7-10 years, meaning that fire moved across every acre of our landscape, on average, every 10 years or less. This fire was low to moderate in intensity, burning what little fuel had accumulated since the previous fire and reducing the in-growth of trees and shrubs. With fire reducing the fuel load on a regular basis, only six percent of historic wildfire burned at high severity. Having prevented this regular low-intensity consumption of light fuels, we now have accumulations of fuel 7-10 times larger than would have historically existed. When natural and human-caused fires move across the landscape with these increased fuel loads, the high-intensity, catastrophic conflagrations we now experience are the result. Currently, 36 percent of a wildfire area burns at high severity, a six-fold increase (doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.2702). We need intentional, repeated, low-intensity fire to reduce and mitigate high-intensity wildfire.

Utilizing fire as a land management tool has benefits beyond reducing wildfire severity. Fire allows nutrients trapped in dead plant matter to be recycled back into the soil to fertilize the trees, shrubs, flowers, and grasses native to our forests. In cooler, wetter forest ecosystems, decomposition and decay is the process that breaks down this dead plant matter to cycle nutrients back into the forest. In our hot, dry climate, decay and decomposition are limited, so fire plays the role of recycler. In addition to the boost of nutrients, our native fire-adapted plants benefit from having seasoned growth burned away. Like dead-heading flowers in your garden, fire causes vigorous new sprouts to emerge from the undamaged roots. This new growth is superior browse for deer and other wildlife; fire benefits our native animals as well. Some of our native plants, like manzanita and knobcone pine, need fire to release their seeds and get them to sprout. While benefiting our native plants, fire is useful in reducing invasive species of plants and grasses that do not have the fire adaptations of our local flora.

With this broad range of benefits, it's clear that fire is a vital element in our landscape and lives. Next time you hear "fire season," I hope you take a moment to appreciate all the ways we benefit from fire.

To help put this element back into our toolbox, the Rogue Valley Prescribed Burn Association (RVPBA) is bringing interested landowners and community members together with experienced fire practitioners to share the knowledge, skills, and tools of beneficial fire use. Working together as a community we can bring more of this important element back onto our landscape. If you're interested in learning more and getting involved, visit our website at roguevalleypba.com.

Aaron Krikava

roguevalleypba@gmail.com

RVPBA has gathered funding support, now for a second year—from the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the US Department of the Interior, and the Nature Conservancy through the Fire Learning Network—for the networking needed to bring people together in support of good fire and for outreach, such as writing this article.

A huge THANKS to the generous donors who recently contributed to the Applegater.

SASQUATCH

Anonymous, San Francisco, CA
Fund for Nonprofit News at the Miami Foundation
Sara Katz & David Markle, Williams, OR

BEAR

Junelle Benedict & Adelle Waln, Jacksonville, OR
Three Bears Charitable Trust, Jacksonville, OR

STEELHEAD

Chuck & Donna Baird, Springfield, OR
Baldwin-Mickelson Fund
Mary Ann Johnson, Jacksonville, OR
Alice LaMoree & Peter Johnson, Jacksonville, OR
Philip & Janet Post, Grants Pass, OR
Yola Sanders, Ocean Park, WA

DEER

Anonymous, Jacksonville, OR
Lisa Baldwin, Grants Pass, OR
Audrey Eldridge, Albany, OR
Bert Etling, Ashland, OR
Christopher Friend, Wilderville, OR
Sylva Hatchman, Grants Pass, OR
Harold Hopkins
Janice & Jeffrey Peacock, Lafayette, CA
Kathleen Pyle, Jacksonville, OR
Don & Sandy Shaffer, Jacksonville, OR
Pat Street, Williams, OR
Glenn Thompson, Gold Beach, OR
Linda Weeks, Jacksonville, OR
Candace Williams, Ashland, OR

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.

Sasquatch - \$1,000+
Cougar \$500 - \$999
Bear \$200 - \$499
Steelhead \$50 - \$199
Deer \$5 - \$49

Please make your checks payable to *Applegater* and mail to PO Box 14, Jacksonville, OR 97530. Our nonprofit ID number is 26-2062663.

Donors: We strive to ensure that our donor list is accurate. Please contact us if there are errors or omissions.

We can help you reach your market!

The *Applegater* is the only newsmagazine covering the entire Applegate Valley. With a circulation of 13,000 and a readership of more than 20,000, the *Applegater* covers Jacksonville, Ruch, Applegate, Williams, Murphy, Wilderville, Wonder, Jerome Prairie, and areas of Medford and Grants Pass.

For more information, contact:
Jackson County
Ron Turpen @ 541-601-1867 or ron.turpen@gmail.com
Josephine County
Max Unger @ 541-373-1445 or imaxunger@gmail.com

Next deadline: August 1

Cover Photo Credit

Thanks to Sue Owen for the photo (taken by Cate Battles) of her lovely lavender field at the English Lavender Farm. (See Sue's article on page 3.)

Have a photo for the Fall 2023 *Applegater*? Email it to gater@applegater.org.

Correction

A donor acknowledgement on page 5 of the spring edition gave an incorrect city and state. The Three Bears Charitable Trust is based in Jacksonville, Oregon.

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 Barbara Holiday at barbara@applegater.org.

PERSONAL MAILING LABEL

Living away for a while? Friends and relatives in faraway places?

The *Applegater* can be mailed anywhere in the US. Order a personal mailing label for:

One year: \$20 (4 issues)
Two years: \$35 (8 issues)

Mail us a check or pay online at applegater.org.

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

Inside the Gater

Ruch Library adds another open day.....6
Ice cream social on McKee Bridge in June.....7
Ruchbah explained.....8
New Cantrall Buckley Park Coloring Book.....10
Summer activities abound at Pacifica.....11
Guide to the farmers market season.....12
David Rains Wallace, keynote speaker, at July festival.....16
New restaurant at Jacksonville Inn.....17
Applegater editor change.....19
Gater Tale about rootstock families in the Applegate.....20
Local farmers revive ancient grains.....21