



100 Valleys

A Quarterly Publication for the Supporters of Umpqua Watersheds, Inc

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Wilderness Committee Update... Robbin Schindele

I hope you all have had a great summer and have remained safe from the fires and from Covid, as well as been able to spend time in the mountains, unto the lakes, or travel the coast. For the members of the wilderness committee, the summer began with a roar. Our return to the Umpqua Valley Farmers' Market in May was very successful. We developed a new brand for the campaign in June. We had T-shirts and ball caps made with the image and introduced them to the public at the market. The citizens of Douglas County accepted them with enthusiasm, and every Saturday, we sold a few items. But selling is a misnomer. We offered a cap or T-shirt to people for free if they donated \$20.00 to support the campaign. As a bonus, their donation brought with it membership to Umpqua Watersheds. This approach created a double benefit; the Wilderness Committee brought in much-needed revenue and increased Umpqua Watersheds member rolls.

Then in late July, our efforts were cut short by the Covid surge in Douglas County. The few weeks of freedom from the worry and fear of infection the vaccine gave us was obliterated by a new, more virulent virus.

Even so, we were able to gather over 700 signed postcards demonstrating support for the proposal from fellow Douglas County citizens and mail them to **Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden and Representative Peter DeFazio**.

In July, committee chair **Tony Cannon** created a great short video about the importance of protecting our native rivers and streams and posted it to YouTube and Facebook. The headwaters of six iconic Oregon rivers are within the boundaries of the Crater Lake Wilderness Proposal and this year we extended those boundaries to include the beautiful and pristine Spring River.

The committee's mission is to protect Crater Lake and the untouched areas surrounding it through Wilderness designation. We are deeply involved in an issue that goes beyond that mission. Member **Bob Hoehne** has been our lead in the creation and the drive to pass **Senator Ron Wyden's bill, the River Democracy Act**, which is probably the most significant piece of conservation legislation in recent Oregon history. The **River Democracy Act** will add nearly 4,700 miles of rivers and streams in Oregon to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system – the greatest Wild and Scenic Rivers effort in our nation's history. Nominations were submitted by 2500 Oregonians for more than 15,000 rivers and streams as part of Wyden's statewide public effort to protect more of Oregon's waterways, reduce catastrophic wildfire risks, improve drinking water, expand recreation access, and boost recovery rural jobs and



economies. Bob has worked hard to fight for the inclusion of the Upper South Umpqua River to the list of protected rivers and still hopes to accomplish that in the bill's final draft.

There are ways each of us can help: Visit www.wyden.senate.gov/contact/email-ron to email Sen. Wyden,

visit this website: oregonwild.org/cosponsor and fill out the short information form on the bottom of the page and submit the form, more importantly, is to write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Express your support and why you think it is essential to Douglas County and all of Oregon. Here is the link to submit a letter to the News-Review: www.nrtoday.com/site/forms/online_services/letter_editor/



Please take the time to do one, or both, of these things. We are constantly asking **Sen Wyden** to support our Crater Lake Wilderness campaign. Let's show him we support his priorities too.

Another member of the committee, **Susan Applegate** made a direct appeal for support from our senators by speaking to 2 members of **Senator Merkley's** staff about our progress and intentions for the CLWP. She is also reaching out to our campaign coalition members, the National Parks Conservation Association, Environment Oregon, the Crater Lake Institute, as well as Oregon Wild, to reaffirm their commitment to the campaign. She and **Bob Hoehne** are doing the same to reaffirm endorsement of the campaign from sister conservation organizations such as the **Native Fish Society** and **Cascadia Wildlands**.

Even though we love the face-to-face interactions we are doing everything we can to move our mission forward and create an outcome that will benefit you, our forests, our rivers, and the planet.

Our Mission:

Umpqua Watersheds is dedicated to the protection and restoration of the ecosystems of the Umpqua watershed and beyond through education, training, advocacy and ecologically sound stewardship.

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1-5 M-W, 9-1 Th-F.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Greetings! I have taken the baton from **Ken Carloni** to be president of Umpqua Watersheds. His dedication to the organization is inspiring. He is a founding member and has been involved in the organization ever since. Other than being class president in second grade, the only other time I have been president of an organization was with the Umpqua Valley Stamp Club. This is a much bigger responsibility. I must admit that I am a little humbled by the opportunity. In researching the past presidents of Umpqua Watersheds, I saw some very admirable individuals. I hope that I can steer the organization as well as they all have done, and I hope to get the help of our board, staff, and members to do so. I have been a member of the organization since its beginning but taking a public leadership role was not possible while I was employed by the **US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station**. I have always seen Umpqua Watersheds as a voice of counterbalance in the community. Umpqua Watersheds is at a disadvantage when compared to voices from the for-profit businesses in our community because voices in opposition to the mission of Umpqua Watersheds can usually do so as part of their employment. Active and vocal members in this community, such as Umpqua Watersheds, who are fighting for conservation, community rights, or individual benefits do so without compensation. Our passion and involvement in conservation efforts is not driven by money but by what we feel is best for our long-term persistence and livability of our community and region. Our organization has been able to persist because of our members' support providing funds for our office manager and maintenance, our AmeriCorps, our radio station: KQUA, conservation and restoration efforts, and our outreach events. Our efforts through education of our community as we face many challenges to climate change, forest conservation, and other environmental issues are very important to ensure that information is presented from the basis of science. We have been so fortunate to have many individuals so dedicated to the mission of Umpqua Watersheds. I feel that the board, the staff, and the members are an extended family. Since my retirement from federal service in 2019, I have been able to attend many of the committee meetings. This allowed me to settle into a few categories where I believe that I can help the most. As a member of the conservation committee, I feel my expertise in spotted owl biology can assist with comments on the timber sales on federal land, management plans for state lands, or input on the state regulations for private lands. **Angela Jensen** heads our Conservation Committee as legal advisor. We are able to have Angela on our team due to the grant from **The Burning Foundation**. The renewal of that grant allows us to continue to work on conservation issues. Her continued participation allows us to build on that knowledge and experience so we can provide constructive and credible comments on ongoing projects, especially on federal land. You never know where you can help with an organization, and it can be a rewarding experience. Whatever your skill, it could be useful to the organization but if you are unable to provide time, your monetary contributions help the organization continue. We have received grants as well from **River Network** (rivernetwork.org) for Wild and Scenic Rivers Partnership Program, **C. Giles Hunt Charitable Trust** for our education committee and the Science and Environmental Education Strategies (SEEDS) Project, and the **Rosso Family Foundation** for our restoration committee and the Umpqua River protection and the Archie Creek (Fire) Restoration Initiative in honor of **Abby L. Rosso PhD**.

Much of our effort is spent trying to acquire funding and the less time we spend on that, the more time we can spend on our mission. Join us!

Archie Creek Post-Fire Recovery Project

Umpqua Watersheds is a lead partner in a collaborative project with **Phoenix Charter School** and **Umpqua Community College** to promote shared stewardship of public lands impacted by the Archie Creek Fire, providing service-learning opportunities for local students and community volunteers by increasing outreach, education, and engagement related to riparian habitat restoration on the Wild & Scenic North Umpqua River. The goals of the post-fire recovery project centered on protecting the ecological integrity, cultural values, aesthetic qualities, and continued public access of heavily burned recreation sites such as Wright Creek, Fall Creek, Bogus Creek, and the North Umpqua Trail. With grant support from the **North Umpqua Hydropower Mitigation Fund**, **River Network**, and the **Rosso Family Foundation**, Umpqua Watersheds will be hiring a student intern to serve as a Post-Fire Recovery Leader to help plan, organize, and implement numerous community volunteer events in coordination with **USFS** and **BLM** partners that include riparian planting, noxious weeds removal, live-stake cuttings, and seed collection. Contact eric@umpquawatersheds.org if interested in applying.

Kasey's Korner.....Kasey Hovik

We live in strange and challenging times. We continue to struggle through the worst pandemic in 100 years while forest fires, floods, devastating storms destroy property, and lives are lost. The ugly divisiveness that is a part of local and national politics wears us down. Our natural world and wildlife face extreme peril because of climate change and pressure to maximize short-term profits at the expense of long-term habitat conservation. Given the enormity of these problems, it is very easy to get discouraged and even depressed because it feels like there is nothing we can do. There are no quick fixes and small rural nonprofits like Umpqua Watersheds lack funding and volunteers compared to our friends in Eugene and Portland. So why bother?

Over the last ten years, my natural optimism and determinism have continually been renewed because of the work of our AmeriCorps members. They come from all over the country to our small community and immerse themselves in our efforts to make a difference for the beautiful Umpqua. They work for less than minimum wage and often reside in communal housing. Most qualify for food assistance programs. All our AmeriCorps have had 4-year college degrees and three have master's degrees. I take great pride that they chose Umpqua Watersheds when any one of them could have taken a position with much larger organizations. They chose UW because of the passion we have for our mission and our dedication to supporting them in the process of their service. From the beginning, we make a commitment that we will roll up our sleeves and work with them and will do everything possible to ensure their service with us enables them to attain the lofty goals they set for themselves when they made the decision to become an AmeriCorps member.

I am so grateful and proud of all the AmeriCorps members I have been privileged to supervise and mentor over the last decade. The last year has been the most challenging by far, because of the pandemic and we are so incredibly fortunate to have had **Ryan Kincaid** as our member. She worked hard to ensure her service with UW was a success and that we achieved all the objectives of the work plan we created at the beginning of the year. A big part of our environmental education program was in-person classroom instruction. Since this was not possible, she developed alternatives by starting a book club, creating a first-ever virtual teachers workshop to provide resources for teaching environmental education, launched a radio program called "**Living Downstream**" where she interviewed many people who are working to make a positive difference for the environment and our community, created the "**Eco Innovations Challenge**" program where several people, including kids, were challenged to put forth an idea on how they could help solve an environmental problem. In addition, she continued our tradition of engaging the community with covid-safe river cleanup events. Each week Ryan would update me in zoom meetings on her work and I looked forward to our time together because her energy, enthusiasm, and dedication gave me hope and inspiration.

At the end of July, I always feel sad because our AmeriCorps members' service with UW is ending and they will leave our community after making such a big difference here. Hope springs knowing that they will bring their energies to other endeavors. This year is different because Ryan has chosen to stay on with Umpqua Watersheds in a different capacity thanks to a grant from **C. Giles Hunt Foundation**. She will be our first Director of Education and Outreach. While it is only a quarter-time position to start, I know that Ryan will be able to



accomplish a lot during her 10 hours each week. We are also very excited and grateful to **Jerry Mires** for his donation so we are able to welcome our newest AmeriCorps member, **Jane Maloney**. Jane is a New Jersey native who bounced around New England before landing in Roseburg to work with Umpqua Watersheds. She has a BS in Environmental Science from St. Michael's College in Vermont. While there, she was an instructor for

the Adventure Sports Center, leading rock/ice climbing and backpacking trips. After college, Jane worked for the Appalachian Mountain Club in Boston, leading youth trail crews on the Bay Circuit Trail, where she developed a strong interest in community outreach, conservation, and environmental education.

Jane is excited to serve as the Environmental Education and Outreach Leader as an AmeriCorps volunteer. She looks forward to developing educational programs and engaging with the Douglas County community, and she hopes to make a positive impact at Umpqua Watersheds.

In her free time, Jane enjoys hiking, climbing, reading, and making all kinds of art!



To return to the question I posed at the beginning, "So why bother?" Because individually and collectively we can make a difference. Our AmeriCorps members have shown us time and time again and they have been drawn here because of what Umpqua Watersheds is doing. It's not easy being green. We have a lot of work to do together. Please continue to volunteer and to support Umpqua Watersheds financially and we will continue to make a positive difference for the environment, our community, and in the lives of young people who travel from afar to serve.

Advice From A Raindrop

You think you're too small to make a difference? Tell me about it. You think you're helpless, at the mercy of forces beyond your control? Been there.

Think you're doomed to disappear, just one small voice among millions? That's no weakness, trust me. That's your wild card, your trick, your implement. They won't see you coming

until you're there, in their faces, shining, festive, expendable, eternal. Sure you're small, just one small part of a storm that changes everything. That's how you win, my friend, again and again, and again.

KIM STAFFORD, OREGON POET LAUREATE



REMEMBERING JOHN STELZER

Mathematician, Philosopher, Professor, and Friend of UW

I would like to share a few memories of my friend and fellow Umpqua Community College (UCC) professor, John Stelzer, who died of natural causes several months ago. I would also like to thank his wife, **Renie McRae**, for a generous donation in his memory to UW's education fund.

I first met John shortly after moving to Roseburg in 1982. John and his then-wife Kelly were at a farmer's market where they were selling herbs that they had grown at Elderflower Farm, their charming farm/forest in the Callahans. We struck up a conversation and soon became fast friends. A few years later, we became colleagues when I was hired to teach biology courses at UCC where John was teaching Philosophy and Religion courses and Kelly was teaching Sociology classes.

I always enjoyed the times I spent with them at lunch in the cafeteria or at other chance meetings at the College. John loved a good argument, and would often take the opposite side even if he didn't actually believe his own premise just to see if he could craft an argument that would win the debate. I remember him making a very persuasive argument that the Earth was flat for the sheer joy of the challenge.

One of my favorite stories of John related to his time at **NASA** in the early days of the space program. After a youthful indiscretion that apparently involved a girl and a back seat in the straight-laced 1950s, a kindly judge, rather than sending John to a month in the county lockup asked him "Son, have you ever thought about joining the military?" John's answer was "I'm thinking about it now, Your Honor!"

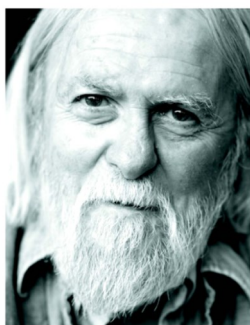
Military service was what John needed to get his future on track. Testing showed his strong aptitude for mathematics, and the government invested in those abilities. John eventually earned his Ph.D. and wound up working at NASA on the Mercury project that eventually successfully launched **Alan Shepard** into space.

You might have seen the movie "Hidden Figures" that traced the history of the mostly Black women serving as "computers" – people who did calculations before actual computers existed. John would certainly have rubbed elbows with those pioneers.

Behind in the "space race" with the Soviet Union, the US was desperate to catch up. The launch of the Sputnik had shocked the West, and America was determined to be the first to send a human to space. But an abundance of caution delayed Shepard's launch, allowing Soviet cosmonaut **Yuri Gagarin** to reach space first.

As John told it, a major problem was that he and his fellow engineers didn't know whether they could trust the output from the early analog computers that were supposed to send real-time data to Mission Control during the launch. Their solution was pure 1961 genius.

They chose a large cafeteria and cleared all the tables and chairs away. They then used long strips of adding machine paper to create what John described as a "3-dimensional slide rule" that they slid around the floor to validate the machine's output. Satisfied that the computer was indeed programmed correctly, they gave the thumbs up and the rest is history.



John's spirit lives on in his contributions to the space program, his many scholarly articles, his impact on decades of UCC students, and now in the opportunities, UW can provide to students in his honor. Many thanks to Renie and to John, who is no doubt crafting another impeccable argument on his new journey into space... Ken Carloni

Wrapping Up & Continuing On....

The past couple of months have been a whirlwind as I completed my AmeriCorps term of service and stepped into my new role as the **Director of Education and Outreach!** I have enjoyed being a part of Umpqua Watersheds for the past year and am so grateful to be able to continue working with the organization in this new capacity.

One aspect of my new role will be to coordinate various programs and events. I will continue to facilitate our **Turning Over a New Leaf** book club virtually, every-other-month. On Saturday, September 25th, we are discussing *A Generous Nature: Lives Transformed by Oregon*, by Oregon author **Marcy Cottrell Houle**, who will be joining us for the session! Pick up a copy from your local library or bookstore today and email me (ryan@umpquawatersheds.org) to register and receive the Zoom link to attend. In October/November we are reading *Maybe One: A Case for Smaller Families*, by **Bill McKibben**, with a Zoom session to discuss that book on **Saturday, November 20th**.

Each quarter, we will have volunteer training which covers upcoming opportunities for involvement. Our next training will take place in October. Additionally, we are hoping to host a film screening in November. Be on the lookout for more information regarding both events!

Our Education Committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month, and we are currently seeking new members - especially local youths and teachers! If you or your child might be interested, please send me an email (ryan@umpquawatersheds.org) letting me know your name and why you'd like to be a part of our group.

Another exciting new initiative that we're doing this fall is a *Scenes of the Umpqua Calendar*, which will feature photographs showcasing the beauty of the Umpqua watershed. More information on this will be available on our website and Facebook page by early October.

I look forward to seeing and interacting with you during our upcoming events! With smiles.....~Ryan Kincaid

In Memoriam....

Joseph "Josef" Donald Gult Jr., 72, a resident of a Forest Grove Memory Community, died Wednesday morning, April 21, 2021, at the Hillsboro Medical Center in Hillsboro from leukemia. Josef and his wife violinist **Kim Angeles** both love nature and the Natural World. Josef played beautiful guitar and had a wonderful smile to go with it! They both played many concert benefits for UW over the years and helped raise funds for the Wilderness, Umpqua River Appreciation Day Festival and for the LUCY- League of Umpqua Climate Youth. Our heart goes out to Kim and we thank Josef! Rest in the forest along the river dear friend. ~**Bob Hoehne**

Public Trust and Oregon's Private Forests, Part 1... *Angela Jensen*

Environmental groups, like-minded individuals, and families in rural Oregon have long been concerned about industrial logging practices on private lands. With the unrestricted leveling of forest habitat and ecosystems, the ubiquitous use of pesticides, and the disregard for neighboring citizens sharing water and atmosphere, private industrial timber interests have benefited greatly from their private forest land ownership. Indeed, many have done so at the expense of the rest of us.

I remember my father praising the practices of such timber exploiters in Southern Oregon for having the "business smarts" and foresight to take advantage of federal lands open to them while

buying up private timberland while it was cheap. You see, their business plan was to exploit the timber resources on public lands while it was available to them. The private timber industrialists knew that public lands would soon be restricted. But this would not matter... if they could log with impunity on their own land.

Indeed, this is what happened. With the implementation of the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994, new rules were set in motion to help achieve more sustainable practices on federal forest lands. However, private lands in Oregon were not bound by such restrictions. In fact, Oregon's statute on the subject was drafted to protect the "farmer" from lawsuits of neighbors who wished to bring a nuisance or trespass claim against the farmer or logger whose actions otherwise diminished the use and enjoyment of their property by pesticide drift, polluted water, or other unacceptable circumstances. The term "farming" encompassed the agriculturist and private forester alike. Oregon's Land Use and Right to Farm statute (30.930 and 30.936) was adopted in 1993. Was it a coincidence that it took effect before federal land restrictions? Unlikely. At that time, the Oregon legislature deemed agriculture and forestry practices vital to Oregon's economy.

But what about the neighboring landowner that inhales the drift from forest pesticide application; whose water and soil are now tainted with glyphosate; whose use and enjoyment of their own life and land is now inhibited? What about the future generations that will realize the repercussions of their exploitation to the tune of decreased wildlife and ecosystem services, combined with a disrupted and unpredictable climate system? Do their predicaments matter less than current landholders seeking prosperity?



Of course not.

So, why are current laws so antiquated that they seem to only protect the interests of those seeking to profit, even at the expense of others?

Well, not all laws are. In fact, some laws are **so** old that they are not given due consideration in our current courts yet could otherwise be useful tools in these situations. One such common law concept is the Public Trust Doctrine.

While there is considerable disagreement about the origins of the Public Trust Doctrine, its principle is straightforward: *some resources are too precious for individual control and exploitation and must be held in trust by the sovereign body for the benefit of everyone*. Historically, this doctrine has been appropriately applied to air, running and navigable waters, and the sea. But living resources cannot be disconnected from each other and certainly cannot be disconnected from us.

So, could the Public Trust Doctrine be employed to stop the private forester from polluting, infringing on, and otherwise damaging living resources that the rest of us and future generations rely on? It's a concept. And while it would take a great deal of work to get this concept employed in the courts, I certainly like the thought of it. After all, it seems that a few have become unjustly enriched by their private timber exploits at the expense of the rest of us. Is not some reparation due?

Show your appreciation for the Natural Beauty of the Umpqua River

Please join in on the 37th Annual Umpqua River clean-up day **Saturday, September 25th, 2021!** The Restoration Committee, part of Umpqua Watersheds needs volunteers to help clean up the shores of the Umpqua River from the Headwaters to the Sea. River clean-ups are fun ways to spend time with people and to give back to the community. Because of the Pandemic, people will not be meetings or gathering to pick up trash. Please take your own bag down to the river near you and pick up any trash. If you need some help picking up your trash bags call Bob - 541-679-7077. Always remember - SAFETY FIRST - There is a lot of trash that needs to be removed before the high water comes. This not only cleans our area it also helps keep the ocean clean, protect wildlife and fish.

THIS IS A COMMUNITY EVENT EVERYONE IS MORE THAN WELCOME PLEASE COME TO HELP KEEP OUR RIVER CLEAN!

Coordinators in your area are:

Downtown Roseburg-**Barbara Lynch**-541-670-1099

Sutherlin **Kris Reed**-541-580-8987

Upper Cow Creek-**Marguerite Garrison**-541-837-3429

Tiller - **Stanley Petrowski**-541-825-3070

Main Umpqua-**Bob Allen**-541-580-5269

Little River-**Geoff Niles**-541-496-3886

Winston/Dillard-**Bob Hoehne**-541-679-7077

North Umpqua-**Brian Peters**-541-530-6782

Tyee/Elkton-**Alan Bunce**-541-580-4208

For more info contact:

BRIAN Peters 541-530-6782 OR UMPQUA WATERSHEDS 541-672-7065

PROTECTING HOMES AND NATIVE FORESTS FROM WILDFIRE: Challenges and Opportunities

Since the early 2000s, wildfires have been getting larger, faster moving, and more destructive to homes, infrastructure, and forestlands. This is partly due to climate change and partly due to the legacy of the wholesale conversion of native forests to highly flammable tree farms. There is a general agreement that we need to address this situation as a nation, but there is little consensus on remedies, especially when it comes to forest management.

In the wake of the 2020 climate-driven wildfires that charred millions of acres in the West, there is broad agreement across the political spectrum that a major effort is needed to increase the resilience of homes and neighborhoods to this growing threat. More controversial, however, is the idea that public forests should be “managed” to decrease wildfire risk and “restored” to more historic, fire-tolerant conditions. Unfortunately, “restoration” means different things to different interests. But with billions of dollars likely headed our way from infrastructure bills now moving through Congress, we, as a society, need to forge a common understanding of this term to make sure that those taxpayer dollars are spent effectively.

Assuming that Congress can actually function in this hyper-partisan political climate, conservationists need a strong voice as to how federal dollars we will potentially receive should be spent to protect homes, neighborhoods and forests from climate-driven changes in wildfire behavior. In the following paragraphs, I will lay out funding priorities for which there is broad agreement and some that are more controversial.

Building Codes: When wildfires burn, the air they heat rises by convection and carries hot embers out ahead of them, sometimes for miles depending on the amount of wind driving them. This was particularly true during the 2020 Oregon wildfires that were driven by 40-50 mph winds coming uncharacteristically from the east. Research over the last several years has shown that homes are far more likely to be ignited by these embers than by the heat of an approaching ground fire. Houses catch fire when embers land on wood shake roofs, needles and twigs in

uncleaned gutters, flammable shrubs, firewood piles (especially against structures), or wood chip/bark mulch directly adjacent to structures. Fire associated winds can also cause embers to be



sucked into unscreened attic vents or other openings in the building’s envelope. There are many images of burned homes associated with the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise, CA with unburned green trees nearby.

But many houses that were built in Paradise after a 2008 building code update [survived](#). A comprehensive review of Oregon’s building codes for homes in the fire-prone wildland urban interface (a.k.a. the WUI) needs to be funded, and updates should be made based on the most recent research. In the meantime, there are many excellent websites with tips on how to harden your home against wildfire including [this one](#) from CAL FIRE. Grants or low-interest loans should be made available from infrastructure funds to help homeowners increase their home’s fire resistance.

Hardening Powerlines: High-voltage powerlines suspended from towers present a grave risk of fire ignition and have been the cause of many catastrophic fires in the last two decades including the Camp Fire and most of the 2020 Oregon fires. Incredibly, the Dixie fire, now the largest fire in California’s recorded history, was started by the *same PG&E powerline* that started the Camp Fire, and the Archie Creek Fire was started by the *same PP&L powerline* that started the Williams Creek Fire that burned 8,395 acres in 2008 and cost over \$14M to control.

It has long been known that high winds, especially during hot weather that causes powerlines to sag, can blow those lines into nearby vegetation and/or can arc when trees blow down on them. Power companies have now adopted policies to shut down lines when high winds approach, but that means irate customers (some who rely on that power for medical equipment) and loss of income. Too often, these companies

err on the side of customers and profits and keep the lines live, or turn them back on before linemen have thoroughly checked them for downed trees (as [reportedly was the case](#) with the Archie Creek and other 2020 fires).

Although precise figures are hard to come by, it is very likely that burying these lines, or capping them with concrete where that is not possible, would have been far less expensive for these

giant corporations than the cost of payouts from the myriad of lawsuits their negligence spawned. Hardening these lines against wildfire should fit anyone’s definition of infrastructure



Paradise, CA after the Camp Fire 2018

and should be at the top of the list for federal funding associated with proposed power grid upgrade spending, although the final language in the proposed infrastructure bill(s) currently before Congress is [uncertain](#).

Public Buyouts of Burned Properties for Greenspace Buffers:

Neighborhoods of closely spaced houses are usually easier for firefighters to protect with fire lines, backburns and aerial attack, while dispersed homes in remote settings at the ends of roads that often have no other way out pose a significant risk to emergency responders. Rather than rebuilding homes in the WUI that are likely to burn again, the city of Paradise has [purchased about 300 acres](#) of land from willing sellers with burned homes that are at high risk of burning again and added them to the town's existing park land to be maintained for recreation *and* as fire-resistant green space.

While this could potentially cost many tens of millions of dollars for just the 2020 Oregon fires alone, a 2019 [report](#) from the Governor's Council on Wildfire Response found that the cost of fighting wildfires will likely rise beyond the tens of *billions* of dollars over roughly the next two decades (and this was published *before* the unprecedented 2020 fires). Buyouts are NOT eminent domain – landowners must be willing to sell, and the price is negotiated with the public buyer. But the trauma and loss that these landowners have suffered, the increasing cost of fire insurance, and the rise in building costs may be strong motivations to sell. Right now, this initiative in Paradise is being funded with grants from nonprofits, but in our area, these costs could be paid out of infrastructure funds and the properties added to adjoining federal lands.

"FireWise" Communities: Since 2002, the National Fire Protection Association has promoted community fire preparedness through their [Firewise USA program](#). This program emphasizes tree and brush removal to create "defensible space" around homes. Rural neighborhoods in fire-prone areas are encouraged to band together to do this work supported by federal funds. Most of you who are reading this article will be familiar with at least the broad outlines of this very worthwhile program.

While "firewising" has proven to be effective in allowing firefighters to move into burning areas more safely, it is not foolproof, especially during wind-driven climate fires like the Sept. 2020 fires in western Oregon. A couple of months ago, I stood by the charred ruins of a once charming log home whose owner, a long-time UW supporter and former board member, had faithfully followed the Firewise recommendations and still lost the home he built, lived in, and loved.

Forest Management Options for Wildfire Mitigation: The safety of human life and property is of universal concern and is the primary focus of all the strategies outlined above. But active management to protect mature and old-growth forests is more controversial.

Some, particularly [timber interests](#)), contend that thinning

forests beyond the WUI is a viable solution to create "fire breaks" that can be used to stop fires before they get to communities. Others contend that thinning forests away from the immediate borders of communities is simply an [excuse to log more timber](#) and [lowers biodiversity](#). Many researchers contend that although thinning may be successful at mitigating wildfire damage soon after it is completed, [it must be combined with periodic prescribed fire](#) to be effective over the long run. Analyses of the 2021 Oregon Bootleg Fire that has burned through a mix of mature forest, plantations, and thinned forests with and without subsequent prescribed burning will supply a wealth of data that will help to show how effective (or not) these management practices are.

Conservationists are particularly concerned that money in the infrastructure bill(s) will be commandeered by timber interests to ramp up logging on public lands under the guise of wildfire protection. But what has been shown to be [the most effective type of thinning](#) is "low thinning" (a.k.a. "thinning from below"), where instead of taking the largest (and most valuable) trees out of the stand, only the smallest (and most flammable) trees are cut. This type of thinning would require a large investment with little or no return from the small diameter, largely unmerchantable trees that would be removed.

If done properly, *and* maintained by periodic underburning, thinning in already managed plantations away from the WUI has the potential to mitigate some of the risk of wildfire, both to distant neighborhoods and also to the old-growth forests they often surround. Recent fires have shown that mature forests with their mix of ages and structural heterogeneity are much more resistant to high-severity crown fires than even-aged plantations. However, these increasingly rare ancient stands are more and more likely to be surrounded by highly flammable plantations, especially in the BLM checkerboard, and are therefore more vulnerable to severe fires as a result. Thinning uniform plantations around old-growth forests to break up their continuous fuel structure would not only decrease the risk of high-mortality fires spreading into primary forests but would also create the structural diversity that promotes native biodiversity.

The history of "restoration" being used as an excuse to log more timber has made this last suggestion controversial in conservation circles. But "firewising" native stands to protect their enormous stores of carbon and genetic diversity shouldn't be dismissed just because of past abuses. In 2013, UW developed and adopted a [set of restoration principles](#) that can serve as guidelines for what legitimate restoration should look like. These are now eight years old, and in light of accelerating climate change, are due for review at our next strategic planning meeting in November. We invite you to take a look at these guidelines and send us comments at uw@umpquawatersheds.org or ken@umpquawatersheds.org to give us your feedback or any suggestions for changes you might have. Thanks.



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