

# Northwest Woodlands

A Publication of the Oregon Small Woodlands, Washington Farm Forestry, Idaho Forest Owners & Montana Forest Owners Associations

## FORESTLAND SECURITY

**Washington Department of Natural Resources Police— who we are and what we do**

**Managing Public Access on Private Land**

**Your Home Can Survive the Next Wildfire**

**Using Trail or Game Cameras for Property Surveillance**

**Estate Planning and Protecting Natural Resources**



## NEXT ISSUE . . . Forest Resilience

This magazine is a benefit of membership in your family forestry association. Contact the officers listed on page 5 for membership details.

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*Gate photo: Sergeant Jason Bodine.  
Inset photo: Canva Image Collections*

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*Other than general editing, the articles appearing in this publication have not been peer reviewed for technical accuracy. The individual authors are primarily responsible for the content and opinions expressed herein.*

**"When it's over, I want to say: all my life I was a bride married to amazement. I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms. When it is over, I don't want to wonder if I have made of my life something particular, and real. I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened, or full of argument. I don't want to end up simply having visited this world."**

**— Mary Oliver, When Death Comes**



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



ANN STINSON



# Lots of New Neighbors

This fall, Dad, my sister-in-law Lou Jean, and I were “freshening up our property line,” tying pink logging tape on our fence posts, and we heard the thunk, thunk-thunk of a well being dug just a few yards away. We hopped the fence to investigate. We introduced ourselves to the new family who had just moved from northern California. As we walked back to our task at hand, we talked about the population explosion around us and its implications for security on our property.

Between 2010 and 2020, the population in the rural areas represented by *Northwest Woodlands* rose dramatically. Rural counties in Washington, Montana, and Idaho all had growth rates over 7 percent, and Oregon’s rural counties saw a growth rate of 4.7%.\* Since 2020, given the number of people moving out of cities during COVID, these percentages might even grow higher. These numbers represent lots of new neighbors for tree farmers like us. In Lewis County, where my family manages our tree farm, the growth has been especially strong; in the last 14 years, the population has grown 12.42%.\*\* That means 9,370 new residents. And they all need to live somewhere! In addition to the well-digging family, we met marking the lines, seven houses have been built on parcels bordering our property. This could be a security hazard or a benefit. We’ve been working on making it a benefit.

One of our neighbors likes to ride horses and has asked if she and her friends can ride in our woods. We agreed but asked each rider to sign an agreement that actively gave permission. This is to prevent any possibility of “adverse possession.” Adverse

possession could become more of an issue as more and more people move into rural areas, especially if a neighboring landowner is not onsite. Having our neighbors ride through our forest has been great—they help keep our trails maintained and keep an eye out for trespassers or garbage that’s been dumped. They ask questions about our management practices, and we share the rationale for what we do.

We also keep our property lines clearly marked. Many people who have just moved to the country don’t know

what a working forest is—they may assume it is just “vacant land.” I’m thinking about a new idea for marking the line. If each of our organizations made metal tags with our website URL on the tag, members could attach them to the boundary posts most likely to be seen by neighbors. This would be a good way to educate people about our organizations and family forestry.

A country road runs through one of our properties and people often take walks along it. Before COVID hit, one neighbor walked the road (it has good heart-pumping hills) every day. Over time he has become a friend—we trade firewood for smoked salmon and seedlings for oysters. Recently a trio of people have just started walking the same road. We’ve stopped and chatted some and I hope that relationship develops as well. The more connections we can make with each of our neighbors, the more protected our forests will be. ■

\*Pew Charitable Trust

\*\*World Population Review



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



FRED OMODT



# Planning for the Future

**T**he forest management learning curve has been successfully navigated. The ten-year management plan is in place and gaining traction. The spring planting project is good to go as soon as the weather clears and the summer selective harvest is scheduled. It's time to sit back and indulge in some well-deserved self-appreciation and relaxation. Day-to-day forest management takes time and energy, but in the end, it's pleasant and necessary to rest. Tomorrow will come with new challenges and chores to be tackled in the woods. Now would be a good time

to consider securing the future of your forest. It's a topic that many of us keep pushing into the future if we think of it at all.


The issue of what will become of your forest when you are no longer able to manage it needs to be addressed. This is a decision that will take place with or without your input. You have spent years getting your woods into shape. You have invested time and talent to achieve your management goals. Leaving the destiny of your hard work and dreams to chance is poor stewardship.


What arrangements should you make for your forest once you're gone? A pragmatic option would be to sell the property to someone who shares your goals of forest management. This would allow you to benefit from the value of your asset and continue the vision you had for your woodland. Many of us would prefer our forest remain in the family. Are there siblings, children, or grandchildren who would take on the responsibilities of ownership? Is the family united in their vision for the property or will there be friction among family members? What financial and legal arrangements would be necessary to transfer ownership so that all parties will benefit? Are there tax consequences associated with the transfer?

In the absence of family members, there are land trusts, investment firms, and charitable organizations that would accept a donation of your woodlands. They should be investigated to fully understand how much influence you may have in terms of the management of your donation and what benefits may be available to you if they become owners.

There are many considerations in making this decision. Planning for a future you're not a part of can be potentially difficult and should be thoughtfully navigated. Thankfully, some advisors can help with the endeavor. Your local Forest Owners Association is a good place to start looking for assistance. Here in Idaho, we are fortunate to have a one-day seminar that explores the complexities of transferring forest land to the next generation of stewards. Ties to the Land is facilitated by IFOA members and has helped many Inland Northwest forest landowners make it through the maze of options and pitfalls of successfully planning and securing the future of your forest.

If you cannot find an advisor locally, contact Idaho Forest Owners Association, "Ties to the Land", P.O. Box 1257, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83816-1257. ■



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



NICOLE WOOD



# Taking Care of Business

**O**regon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA) had a great first quarter. That's when membership renewal occurs, and it thrills me to see the support of returning members and the excitement of new joiners. Our largest event is the Family Forest Convention which is hosted by OSWA and Oregon Tree Farm Systems. This year it will be in Linn County on June 14-16. There will be fantastic speakers and wonderful celebrations, including a tour of the Merzenich Brother's property, and Oregon Tree Farmer of the Year recipients. It is a great event and a wonderful time of fellowship and learning.

This issue is packed with education and insight on Forestland Security. Which meant for me, I needed my father's perspective. My sister and our husbands also joined the conversation. We discussed trespassing, littering and vandalism, poaching, fire, succession planning, privacy encroachment, and even tree theft. The variety of thoughts the five of us had on these topics surprised me. All were valid, and interesting, and came from different perspectives of land ownership.

When I bring up succession planning with my family, suddenly, a large elephant comes into the room. If I ask a question, I only hear crickets. Of course, we joke about it, but it is a serious topic. Dad thinks we should already know about it. Being a trailblazer, I want to forge ahead. My sister (the artistic one) desires to fit in but holds back some. We're a funny bunch, however, I'm grateful we desire to do succession planning and do it well. That's why we went

### 2023-2024 Friends of OSWA

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JD Fulwiler & Co Insurance	Swanson Group Mfg., LLC
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	White Oak Natural Resource Service

to Attorney Taylor Kittel who focuses primarily on Administrative and Estate Law. After a knowledge-filled meeting, she offered us options to proceed. A month later, she had my father's estate in a trust and written up as he desired. I think we all walked out feeling lighter knowing this step was taken care of.

My father, whom I call "Our Sheltering Tree", lives his vision for the land. My sister and I need to decide how to follow through with his vision when his property is solely in our hands. We may need to evolve to fit our vision. I believe Dad's management plan will get us more than halfway there, however, verbal communication is not strong in our family. Something we found helpful was a workshop called Ties to the Land. Yamhill County Small Woodlands Association developed this program years ago. You can find the workshop at: <https://tiestotheland.org/>. As stated on

the website: "Ties to the Land focuses on succession planning, the human side

—Continued on next page—

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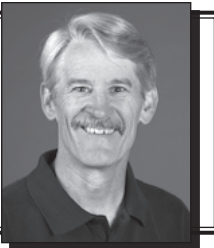
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



DAVE ATKINS



# Know Your Neighbors— Know Your Boundaries

**S**ecurity takes on many different forms as this issue illustrates with the diversity of topics. Knowing your neighbors and maintaining a working relationship and hopefully, a friendly one is key, especially for landowners who do not live on the property year-round, like us. Having multiple sets of eyes in the vicinity that can spot activity that doesn't seem quite normal is beneficial. We have a road through our property that has been open to hiking, biking, horseback riding, and skiing for decades. In one sense it is a security risk, as we, and past owners have continued the practice of allowing that use. In another sense, neighbors walking up and down the road almost every day provide some protection

as they will notice if something is amiss. Having good relationships with those people provides an informal neighborhood watch. We try to greet people whether they be neighbors or visitors when they pass through. We find most people are respectful of private property rights and show appreciation for the use of our road.

Knowing your property's boundaries or at least the monumented corners is essential. Also knowing where roads enter and leave the property, allows you

to post signs making it clear to any traveler through the area. We have posted our AFF (American Forest Foundation) Certified Family Forest sign at the road entrances and exits, so it's clear to people that they're passing through private property. Having conversations with neighbors about work activities whether it be weed treatments, timber harvests, hanging bird boxes, burning slash piles, or planting trees, is a good idea so they know what is going on, especially when it is close to a property boundary. Communication helps keep it clear that the actions are being respectful of boundaries. Hanging flags, painting trees, or posting signs on the boundary can prevent confusion, unnecessary anxiety, or frustration. The old saying, 'good fences make for good neighbors', doesn't necessarily fit when many of our ownerships are large enough that fencing isn't practical. However, well-marked and agreed-upon boundaries can save a lot of headaches and potential conflicts. ■

### OSWA President's Message

*continued from page 5*

of estate planning. This workshop will focus on strategies to maintain ties to the land from one generation to the next; building awareness of the key challenges facing family businesses; and motivating families to address the challenges." Oregon State University Extension Foresters periodically put this workshop on for our communities, but it is also available in other states. It is a wonderful program full of insightful tips that will spark a family conversation.

Enjoy this issue and the diverse topics it discusses. I wish each of you time in your forest and that your spring goals will be met without a hitch! ■

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# Down on the Tree Farm

## MAY

- ✓ Prune western white pine and sugar pine saplings to reduce damage and mortality from white pine blister rust.
- ✓ This is a good month to finish your fire season preparations. Learn the restrictions and requirements for your activities. Take your fire extinguishers in for maintenance. Sharpen your firefighting hand tools and check your spark arrestors.
- ✓ See if your fire map is up-to-date and accurate. Include the locations of structures, access roads, water sources, existing fuel breaks, power lines, cell towers, and turnarounds. Make a few copies to distribute to the initial-attack firefighters.
- ✓ Make sure you know the location of the nearest water source and how an engine can get to it. Fill your stationary or mobile water supply tanks. Make sure they'll be ready at a moment's notice.
- ✓ Check your logger's fire equipment as carefully as you check your own.
- ✓ Introduce yourself and your forestland to the local law enforcement and fire patrol officers. Try to build a relationship before you need their help.
- ✓ Now that you're ready for fire season, take time to go fishing in your favorite lake or stream.

## JUNE

- ✓ Complete your road maintenance and improvement projects while there's still moisture in the soil. Open roads for fire control access, allowing 8 feet on each side cleared of winter windfalls, branches, and brush for engine access.
- ✓ Do your plantations need fertilization or release from competing vegetation? Tending your trees when they're young will give you a better mature stand.
- ✓ Chainsaws make good gifts. You might be able to convince your children or grandchildren to "practice" using it to accomplish an unfinished project on the property. Make sure they know good chain saw safety, maintenance, and operation before heading to the woods.
- ✓ Many family reunions happen in the summer months. It's a good opportunity to admire completed projects and "infect" your successors with pride. While you're there, be sure to take a family photo.
- ✓ If you plan to burn in the fall, make sure you have a plan, necessary permits, your help, and your equipment in place now. You'll want to be ready to light as soon as the conditions are right. Don't forget to notify your local fire protection agency even if

you're not in fire season.

- ✓ Research the opportunities for marketing non-timber products from your forestland.

## JULY

- ✓ Measure your permanent inventory plots to give yourself the satisfaction of "seeing" your trees grow. Another way to appreciate your progress is to take periodic photos at established photo points. Often, the permanent inventory plots double as permanent photo points.
- ✓ Include large woody debris, snags, and understory plants in your inventory. This information can help you evaluate the wildlife habitat on your property. After young birds have fledged, create nesting cavities, roosts, platforms, snags, or nesting boxes for future use.
- ✓ Look at your forestland on Google Earth's software from time to time. You can use the timeline to compare older photos with current photos to see how conditions have changed through the years.
- ✓ Monitor weather reports and be ready to respond if lightning is in the forecast. Patrol your forestland and report any smokes that you encounter to the local firefighting agency. The phone number should be programmed into your cell, just in case! The key is to find fires early and keep them small until firefighters arrive, personal safety comes first.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION...

check out these favorite websites and publications:

- [www.fs.fed.us/rm/higherelevationwhitepines/Threats/blister-rust-threat.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/higherelevationwhitepines/Threats/blister-rust-threat.htm) (blister rust)
- [www.idl.idaho.gov/fire-management/fire-prevention](http://www.idl.idaho.gov/fire-management/fire-prevention) (Idaho fire prevention)
- [dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/docs/fire-and-aviation/prevention/rulesregs.pdf](http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/docs/fire-and-aviation/prevention/rulesregs.pdf) (Montana fire prevention)
- [www.oregon.gov/odf/fire/pages/fireprevention.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/odf/fire/pages/fireprevention.aspx) (Oregon fire prevention)
- [dnr.wa.gov/publications/rp\\_burn\\_forest\\_fire\\_protection\\_book.pdf](http://dnr.wa.gov/publications/rp_burn_forest_fire_protection_book.pdf) (Washington fire prevention)
- [mylandplan.org](http://mylandplan.org) (management planning and mapping)
- [stihlusa.com/information/videos/chainsaw-safety-operation-maintenance](http://stihlusa.com/information/videos/chainsaw-safety-operation-maintenance)
- [knowyourforest.org/learning-library/non-timber-forest-products](http://knowyourforest.org/learning-library/non-timber-forest-products)
- [catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/pnw630](http://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/pnw630) (inventory)
- [www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/pnw\\_gtr526.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/pnw_gtr526.pdf) (photopoint monitoring)



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# Washington Department of Natural Resources Police, Who We Are and What We Do

By **SAM RAMIREZ**

**T**he Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is a multifaceted state agency that plays a pivotal role in managing and conserving the state's diverse natural resources. Established in 1957, the DNR oversees approximately 5.6 million acres of state-owned land that encompasses forests, aquatic areas, and agricultural lands.



Under the umbrella of the DNR are multiple divisions that focus on the DNR's overarching mission. Some of the more well-known and public-facing divisions include Wildland Firefighting, Recreation and Conservation, Aquatics, and Geology. While many people understand and know of these divisions within DNR, many still do not know there is also a law enforcement division. Hopefully, with some background on DNR, I can shed light on our agency.

One of the primary functions of the DNR is the sustainable management of state forests. This involves balancing timber harvesting with conservation efforts to ensure the long-term health of forest ecosystems. The revenue generated from timber sales contributes to funding public services and schools, making the DNR a key player in supporting Washington's communities.

The DNR also administers various programs aimed at protecting and enhancing water resources. From



PHOTO COURTESY: SERGEANT JASON BODINE

*The Washington Department of Natural Resources Police plays a crucial role in safeguarding the state's natural resources and ensuring the responsible use of public lands.*

managing aquatic lands to regulating water rights, the department works to maintain the quality and availability of water for both environmental and human needs. This includes addressing issues such as water scarcity, pollution prevention, and ensuring the vitality of aquatic habitats.

Wildfire prevention and response are critical aspects of the DNR's responsibilities, particularly given the increasing threat of wildfires in the region. The department employs strategies such as prescribed burns, public education, and coordination with local agencies to reduce the risk of wildfires and respond effectively when they occur.

In addition to natural resource management, the DNR plays a role in geologic hazard mitigation. This involves assessing and monitoring geological

risks such as landslides and earthquakes and working to minimize their impact on communities and infrastructure.

So, how does DNR work with property owners to make all this happen? The DNR actively engages in community outreach and education to raise awareness about the importance of responsible resource management and environmental stewardship. Through partnerships with local communities, tribes, and stakeholders, the department strives to incorporate diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, the DNR administers leases and permits for a range of activities on state-owned lands, including recreation, agriculture, and mineral extraction. These processes are designed to balance economic development with the conservation of natural resources.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources Police (DNR Police) plays a crucial role in safeguarding the state's natural resources and ensuring the responsible use of public lands. Comprised of commissioned law enforcement officers, the DNR Police focus on enforcing laws related to for-

—Continued on page 10—

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estry, wildfire prevention, aquatic resources, and outdoor recreation. However, DNR police are responsible for all DNR lands, statewide, with only 18 uniformed officers to accomplish this mission. Collaboration with other law enforcement agencies and community outreach are integral parts of the DNR Police's strategy. By working with local communities, they foster a sense of shared responsibility for the state's natural resources and encourage environmentally conscious practices.

One primary responsibility of the DNR Police is the protection of Washington's vast forested areas. Officers patrol these lands to prevent illegal logging, timber theft, and other activities that could harm the state's valuable timber resources. Enforcing forestry laws contributes to sustainable management and conservation efforts, ensuring the longevity of Washington's forests.

In addition to these specific duties,



PHOTO COURTESY: SERGEANT JASON BODINE

*DNR Police Officers are responsible for enforcing laws related to outdoor recreation. This includes monitoring off-road vehicle use, camping, and hunting to ensure compliance with regulations and maintain the balance between recreation and conservation.*

often dealing with people traveling across their privately owned land to access DNR lands to either target shoot or hunt (if they are in a legal area to do so). What can private landowners do to curb or prevent this? There is no real easy answer. Landowners have a right to not have persons or vehicles trespass on their property; however, in the State of Washington, landowners must consider that the right to privacy on your

DNR Police Officers are responsible for enforcing laws related to outdoor recreation. This includes monitoring off-road vehicle use, camping, and hunting to ensure compliance with regulations and maintain the balance between recreation and conservation.

In the past few years, the DNR Police have seen a significant uptick in illegal and unsafe firearm usage on DNR lands. Many of these areas are adjacent to privately owned lands. Property owners are

land is different than in your home. In your home, no one gets to come in without your permission, especially when done with any force such as breaking a window to gain entry. With trespassing violations on land, the same rules do not apply. Even if the land is fenced and posted "no trespassing." An owner can't use force to remove someone from their land without demonstrating that there is a known and very credible threat to them or other persons. This is a nearly impossible high bar to overcome. Therefore, when talking about stopping trespassing violations on lands, the first thing a landowner should do is monitor what is taking place. What does that mean? It means they should assess this situation before trying to make any contact with the trespasser. While you as the landowner have the right to contact people on your property, sometimes it's best to call law enforcement because it's not always safe, nor prudent to contact a trespasser. If the landowner documents (examples: photos, license plates, good descriptions, etc.) the trespassing person and calls law enforcement, there is a very good chance law enforcement can make contact and investigate further. Law enforcement may just end up warning them. In the case of repeat offenders, this warning allows for successful prosecutions of trespassing laws when the violator has already been warned off. If a trespasser decides they want to use your property for their recreation or shooting practice, they need the landowner's explicit permission. If anyone violates this rule, the landowner should call their local law enforcement

**WOMEN OWNING WOODLANDS**

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**IDAHO: Women in the Woods Field Day**  
 May 10th, 9 AM-3 PM  
 Pine Street Woods—Kaniksu Land Trust, 11915 W. Pine Street, Sandpoint Idaho  
 For more information contact: [audrac@uidaho.edu](mailto:audrac@uidaho.edu)

**WASHINGTON: Women Owning Woodlands Meet and Greet**  
 March 16th  
 More information can be found at: <https://forestry.wsu.edu/wownet/>

**To learn more about Women Owning Woodlands visit**  
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*The Washington Department of Natural Resources Police operates at the intersection of environmental conservation and law enforcement. Through their dedicated efforts, they help maintain the ecological integrity of the state while ensuring that residents and visitors can enjoy the beauty of Washington’s natural landscapes responsibly and sustainably.*

immediately for assistance. It is highly recommended that the landowner does not contact anyone with a visible firearm or if they are engaged in shooting.

It is common for people to cross or attempt to gain access to DNR land via a private landowner’s land. Even if the private landowner has fenced their lands, people tend to bypass these barriers by going around to save time. This is often very frustrating to a private landowner because the trespasser is commonly on an All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV). Law enforcement’s recommendation is to document this as best as possible for further follow-up. It is common for landowners to discover trespassing after the fact, usually from damage to their fence or property from the ATV, so documentation can be tough. New technology over the years has helped immensely. Trail cameras are an inexpensive tool that can provide excellent visual evidence to share with law enforcement.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources Police operates at the intersection of environmental conservation and law enforcement. Through their dedicated efforts, they help maintain the ecological integrity of the state while ensuring that residents and visitors can enjoy the beauty of Washington’s natural landscapes responsibly

and sustainably. We also work closely with timberland owners, timber companies, and our community stakeholders, including landowners adjacent to any DNR-managed lands. Since there are so few DNR officers and over 3.5 million acres of non-aquatic land we patrol, we must rely on our stakeholders to help us with their observations. By maintaining open lines of communication, we can all help preserve and protect our lands.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources serves as a guardian

of the state’s natural heritage, working to sustainably manage forests, protect water resources, mitigate geological hazards, and foster a balanced approach to land use. Through collaboration with our stakeholders and thoughtful stewardship, the DNR aims to ensure that Washington’s natural resources continue to benefit current and future generations. Washington DNR Police are here to serve and can be an excellent resource to assist private landowners whenever they feel there is a nexus connecting what is occurring on their land to the adjacent DNR land. ■

*CHIEF SAM RAMIREZ is a 28-year law enforcement veteran. He retired from the Washington State Patrol after 25 years of service on April 15, 2022. During his career with the Washington State Patrol, he held several ranks and various positions including Trooper, Detective, and Sergeant. He finished his career as a Lieutenant in charge of Field Operations in Peirce County, Washington. Chief Ramirez was appointed Chief of the Washington Department of Natural Resources Police by State Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz on September 1, 2022. Chief Ramirez is a graduate of the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command Class #470.*

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# Using Trail or Game Cameras for Property Surveillance

By **LAUREN GRAND**

**T**rail or game cameras are cameras that are strategically placed on your property to take pictures and video of wildlife while you aren't around. The cameras are typically triggered by motion and store the pictures internally for viewing later. Originally, these cameras were used in wildlife management research, but as camera technology improved, they became affordable and available to the public.



These days, more landowners are finding these cameras useful as an added security measure when concerned about illegal trespassing on their property. Strategically placing the cameras at easy access points or in

areas where you keep valuable equipment can help you keep a watchful eye when you aren't around or if you have a large property. Using the right equipment can help you to get pictures of potential trespassers and their car's license plates if necessary, and without them knowing.

In the forest, you would likely need an excessive number of cameras if you wanted to focus on coverage of the entire property. This approach would be

costly, and you'd likely have so many images that you wouldn't have the time to even look at them. Instead, focus on monitoring areas of high priority or value, such as roadways entering the property or tool and equipment sheds. Using an aerial map of your property's roadways and access points helps make informed decisions on camera placement locations.

Once you determine the general location, placement will depend on the surroundings and what types of structures are present. Here are some suggestions to maximize your viewing potential.

- Place the cameras higher and angle them slightly downward. This will



PHOTO COURTESY: CANVA IMAGE COLLECTIONS

*Trail or game cameras are cameras that are strategically placed on your property to take pictures when you're not around. These days, more landowners are finding these cameras useful as an added security measure. This is a game camera mounted on a tree with an LCD screen.*

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increase your visibility in thick brush.

- Use a mounting strap for better stability.
- If you have a way to disguise cameras, consider putting some closer to the ground for better visibility of the license plate or other car features.
- Placing cameras slightly off the roadway at a curve will cause the trespassers to drive or walk directly toward the camera. This will increase the number of head-on photos and decrease the number of blurry photos if your camera has a slow trigger speed.
- Clear branches, large shrubs, and leaves from around the camera to minimize setting off the motion trigger on a windy day.
- Double-check the camera's placement and test it before you leave. There is nothing more disappointing than returning to a camera that you forgot to turn on.

• If you are worried about the camera being seen, protect it by getting a security box or label it with your name and phone number. Making note of the serial number may help authorities if the camera is stolen.

With the growing popularity of trail cameras, there are many choices out there. Picture quality is often rated by the lens, image sensor, and number of megapixels. A higher number of megapixels leads to high-resolution photos that capture more details which looks better if you are cropping the photo to increase the size of the captured security issue. However, don't let megapixels drive your decision when buying the camera. Instead, consider what you'll be using it for. Higher megapixels will be great for a professional outdoor-quality photo, but you can still get a good-quality picture for home security with a lower count. Since these cameras don't usually advertise the lens and sensor quality, it's a good idea to look at sample photos from the camera online.

Typically, trail cameras are triggered to take pictures by motion, however, some are coupled with heat sensors. Humans are warm-blooded and will have no problem setting off a heat sensor.

Cars also produce heat when they are driving around and wouldn't evade these added sensors, but you can do without them if they add to the cost.

Time-lapse mode takes pictures at specific intervals or times of the day despite triggers such as every five minutes. With many models, you can choose how often a camera takes pictures and how long it will operate in time-lapse mode. This can be useful

if there's a specific time of day or year when you experience increased security issues, and you don't live on the property and have fewer opportunities to adjust the cameras. The detection range usually includes an angle and a distance that make up the detection zone. These values help you determine the farthest distance the trespasser can be from the camera to trigger a photo.

—Continued on page 18—

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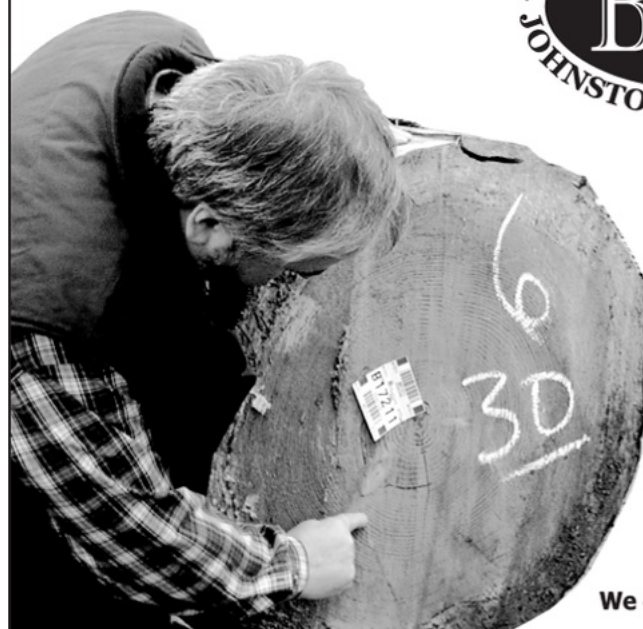
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# Managing Public Access on Private Land

By **PAUL BUCKLAND** and  
**SCOTT KERBY**

Every forestland owner out there feels the effects of the public on their property. Large and small private landowners have similar issues with public access, just on different scales. There are pros and cons to allowing the public (yes, even your cousin is “the public”) on private property. Through diligent management, landowners can maximize the benefits while reducing negative impacts. As with most natural resource issues, managing recreation on your property assures better outcomes relative to ignoring the issue.

Let’s face it. There are good guests and some not-so-good visitors. The good guests, such as the fictional Goodpeep family (Bob, Mary, and the kids, Jimmy, and Penny) appreciate the opportunity to recreate on someone else’s property. They are generally respectful to the land and the landowner by obeying the laws, rules, and common courtesy by minimizing the impact of their use. Heck, the Goodpeeps have even dropped off some summer sausage

made from Jimmy’s first deer he shot on your property! They sure are nice folks.

Then, there are the visitors who are...umm, undesirable, shall we say. They can be invited, like your cousin Billy-Bob who shot off Fourth of July fireworks right next to your slash piles a few years back. Or they can be uninvited visitors like the ding-dong who cut up some of your decked Douglas-fir sawlogs for firewood. Many are just simply ignorant about private forests and how their activities negatively affect the property and the environment. Still, others simply do not respect property or the environment regardless of ownership. If only there was a magic wand one could wave to only let the Goodpeeps on your forest and prohibit the Billy-Bobs. Sadly, such a wand does not exist.

There have always been abuses of forested properties, such as timber theft, degradation, dumping, vandalism of property, and damage to roads and forests, to name just a few. There was a time when these impacts seemed minimal, and everyone had room in the forest to enjoy the outdoors, mostly without feeling or seeing the effects of other users. Just a few decades ago,

forestland, public and private, was primarily wide open and the Pacific Northwest still had the romance of the pioneer days. Many outdoor enthusiasts remember cutting wood, fishing, hunting, and berry-picking and didn’t necessarily know whose property they were recreating on or whether they had permission to do so.

To give some short background and create some understanding of why citizens of the western states might feel entitled to access private land indiscriminately, we can look at publicly held land masses in the United States by region. The western United States is unique in that about two-thirds of forestlands are owned by federal, state, and local governments. Forests in the eastern United States have been predominantly privately owned for over one hundred years, with only about one-fifth owned by the government. In the West, prior generations had relatively free run of large swaths of land and didn’t feel the need to discern between public and private property. The general assumption amongst Westerners is that large, forested properties are open to the public to freely recreate when, and as they wish. How many of you have come upon a visitor on your property who told you they thought they were on public land? With the ad-



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vent of GPS and ownership maps available on phones, this excuse has become less believable.

With the growing population, there is an increased use of the outdoors. Forestland owners are faced with dealing with the public's interest in using and recreating on their land. Impacts and collateral damage incurred by the landowner from recreationists that were at a somewhat tolerable level

before, now have become a source of animosity. The free and unmanaged access approach is now showing itself to be anything but. Now, owners must weigh the pros and cons of allowing the public to recreate on their property. The balance between benefits and costs must be reasonable for it to be equitable and sustainable but is nearly impossible to pinpoint exactly.

Inland Empire Paper Company (IEP) owns and manages over 120,000 acres of timberland in Washington and Idaho. Over half of its timberlands are located just outside of Spokane, WA, the largest metropolitan city in the region and home to its state-of-the-art paper mill. IEP had an "open-door" policy for its timberlands dating back to the 1950s and genuinely felt good about the free access it granted the public. However, by the late 1990s, with a growing population and property damage issues they were experiencing, it became apparent free and unmanaged recreation wasn't working—something had to be done. Some of their foresters liked the idea of shutting off public access and being able to focus on their jobs without interruption. However, the company's leaders saw value in having public access and were concerned with losing goodwill with the community. This resulted in the directive to find an economical way to accommodate public access without unreasonably infringing on forest management activities.

(Insert photo 2)

Faced with this conundrum, IEP



PHOTO COURTESY: INLAND EMPIRE PAPER CO.

*Old car stuck in the mud. Abuses of forestland by recreationists have been occurring for a long time. This 1950s-era vehicle got caught on the wrong road at the wrong time of year.*

hired Quality Services Incorporated (now Axxess Recreation Management) to help develop a comprehensive recreation access program. In relative order of priority, IEP's key objectives were to reduce road damage, protect property from theft, protect riparian areas, reduce logging equipment vandalism, and reduce trash dumping—all while keeping the timberlands open for public use. These objectives would be met through organized monitoring and patrolling as part of a recreation management plan.

A fee, or "pay-to-play" access program was developed and imple-

mented for those who wished to continue their use of IEP timberlands. Permits could be easily purchased (now online) allowing a wide range of day-use activities, including hunting, fishing, mountain biking, horseback and ATV riding, hiking, firewood gathering, mushroom and berry picking, scenic driving, skiing, and more. Prohibited activities included overnight camping, campfires, target shooting, and commercial activities.

The fee access program was designed to be financially neutral (revenue equal to costs) to keep liability risks reasonably low. A for-profit system would have increased liability risks. The program is managed through a combination of gate attendants and roving security personnel to ensure that property visitors are adhering to the published set of rules and regulations. An added benefit was an opportunity to engage and educate the community about forest management issues.

The initial response was mixed as expected. Of course, some users were upset about paying a fee for use of the land they had previously accessed for

—Continued on next page—

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free, but they were in the minority. Others quickly embraced the program as they saw the benefits of monitored access and the elimination of troublesome individuals and problems. IEP has the philosophy that recreation, like timber and wildlife, is just another facet of holistic land management that should be managed toward optimum results. Through outreach and educational platforms for engaging the public to

how and why sound forest management practices benefit everyone, IEP has gained a significant amount of community goodwill and positive support for its program. Public awareness that their property is privately owned but can be accessed easily through its program has created stewardship among patrons and neighbors who enjoy quick access to forestland from nearby urbanized areas. Unexpectedly, permitted visi-

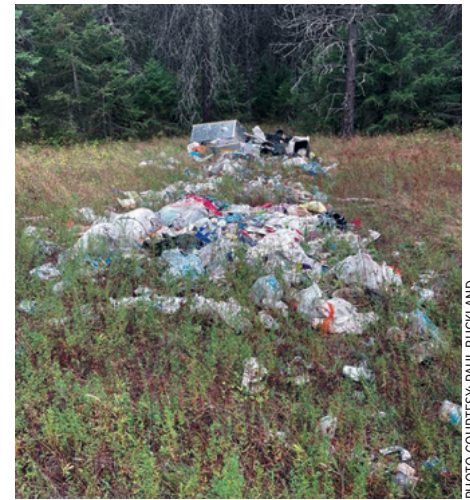


PHOTO COURTESY: PAUL BUCKLAND

*Garbage dumping is one of the many damages a property owner can experience. Routine monitoring and even the presence of law-abiding visitors help reduce the occurrence of damage.*

tors routinely report violators they run across to help support a program they want to help maintain. In general, there are now proportionally more “Good-peeps” recreating on the property than “Billy-Bobs”.

Not every property or owner is the same—the accessibility, easements, size, demographics, and owner objectives can change the viability of an access program, but an access system can be customized for a property based on an owner’s expectations. There are other options available to forestland owners for managing public access to private property. Some states provide financial incentives for public access through their respective Fish and Game/Wildlife departments. Others choose to create rules for public access and not charge a fee to keep the statutory umbrella of liability protection from the state, protecting themselves from being sued by property visitors. Still, others have chosen a profit-generating approach with exclusive lease opportunities, usually for hunting.

Closing off property to public access can be more expensive. Closing a gate and putting up No Trespassing signs can give one a false sense of security. Meanwhile, covert “backdoors” are developed by “Billy-Bobs” that can rob a landowner blind. Community connections are eroded and can transition

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to hostility toward that landowner. The foresters at IEP have experienced a massive reduction in property damage, theft, and vandalism since the inception of their access program.



PHOTO COURTESY: PAUL BUCKLAND

*Signs are helpful to identify private property and outline the rules for the property.*

The woods can be a fantastic playground with various opportunities for healthy recreation. But, just like a school playground, there should be rules and monitoring of those rules. Without such a structure, your forest can turn into a Lord of The Flies situation quickly. It is prudent to at least set explicit expectations about what is allowed, and not allowed, on your property. Even Billy-Bobs can and will follow the rules (usually) if they know what they are, and the Goodpeeps appreciate the structure and help the landowner with their security. ■

**PAUL BUCKLAND**, or “Buck” as many people know him, is currently the Forest Resource Manager for Inland Empire Paper Company (IEP). He, along with a team of foresters, manages IEP’s 120,000 acres of timberland in Washington and Idaho. He graduated from the University of Montana with a B.S. in Forest Management in 1995. He and his wife Jill raised two children on their Wiseacres Tree Farm in Coeur d’Alene, ID. **SCOTT KERBY** is the owner of Axxess Recreation Management LLC. He and his team manage over one million private timberland acres for public use in

Washington and Idaho. Scott joined the Marine Corps in 1994 shortly after high school and spent most of his duration overseas in the Persian Gulf and Bosnia.

Scott and his wife live in North Idaho and enjoy horseback riding, fishing, and spending time in the woods with their dogs.



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## Using Trail or Game Cameras for Property Surveillance

continued from page 13

Consider picture quality here too, the more megapixels you have the more details you'll capture. If you have low megapixels and the camera is set up for a long trigger distance, you'll capture fewer details of the intruder, and your pictures may look pixelated when they are blown up. Long trigger distances are important in a clearing but may be less useful in a dense forest setting.

Trigger speed is the time it takes for the camera to take a photo once the object enters the frame. Trigger speeds of less than half a second are ideal. Anything longer and you could end up with a lot of empty frames and car rear ends. Although Car Rereads sounds like a great coffee table book!

On the other hand, if the camera is looking over an area of interest (for example a property gate or locked shed) which situates the intruder looking directly at the camera, then a slow trigger speed may not be much of a factor.

Recovery speed is how quickly the camera can reset and take a new picture. Slow recovery speeds of one to two seconds may save you on memory, but you may miss some photo opportunities if the trespasser is just moving



PHOTO COURTESY: DICK BEERS

*Photo burst features allow the camera to take several photos per second. This can increase your chances of getting a good photo of unwanted visitors. This is a car trespass caught on camera! A faster trigger speed may have gotten a clearer picture of the license plate.*

through that area. With a fast trigger speed, but slow recovery time you may get a great photo of the perpetrator, but you'll miss the accomplice that was right behind them.

Photo burst features allow the camera to take several photos per second. This can increase your chances of getting a good photo. If you're only curious about unwanted visitors, you may not need burst mode. However, if you are looking for a good picture, burst mode will give you more options

to choose from. You'll even get better shots if they're driving.

Other cameras will take ten-second video clips, which can be useful if you're interested in documenting an intruder's behavior, like watching where they're going or how they're entering the building. However, videos take a lot of memory and battery. This may be difficult to manage if you don't check your cameras often.

Time stamps are important if you want to collect information about times of the day or year when unwanted visitors might be accessing your property. This can be a useful tool if you don't live on your property and can't see when people are accessing it.

Some cameras go the extra mile with the moon phase, temperature settings, and barometric pressure indicators as well. These are only important if

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you are a serious hunter who doesn't have the time to go scouting, and you probably don't need them for security purposes. Though it could be a cool research question to see if people do get into more mischief around a full moon.

Battery life plays a large role during high activity and is a consideration if you don't live on your property to maintain the cameras frequently. Alkaline batteries are cheaper but will degrade picture quality over subsequent use and cooler temperatures. Lithium batteries are longer-lasting, are often rechargeable, give better consistency of quality, and work better in cold weather. These qualities may save money over time by not having to replace your alkaline batteries as often. Some cameras recharge with solar packs or allow for attaching a solar charger. These have the potential to run indefinitely, but if you are placing the camera in a dense forest, solar packs may not be efficient for you.

LCD Screens make camera setup easier, especially while adjusting placement to get a good shot. You can view the pictures right away and directly on the camera without an adapter or extra device. This is the option for you if you can't wait until getting home to look at the photos. No screen will also save you on cost.

Storage for your pictures is usually on an SD card. If your camera takes high-resolution photos, bursts, or video, or you won't be able to check and clear the SD card regularly, you'll want a 64-GB or larger memory card because these features take up a lot of storage space. If you don't have an LCD screen, view pictures by downloading them onto your computer directly from the SD card.

Before checking photos on your digital camera, be sure your camera software is compatible, or pictures may be lost. There are a few more expensive models that will remotely transfer your photos via cellular technology to your email for a monthly fee, but this is only effective if you have cellular reception in the camera location.

It is important to note that this tool,

if positioned correctly or set for time-lapse photos, has the potential for an enormous number of pictures. You may have an amazing shot of a car license plate, but it's no good if you can't find it. Some cameras come with or have the option to add photo-management software that usually comes with photo enhancement tools. This can be helpful if you don't consider yourself an organized person or if you want to tinker with the pictures.

Depending on the situation, mischief can increase at night. Night photos require light for a good shot. Picture quality will decrease at night, but you can still get a clear picture within an acceptable range. Higher flash ranges will show people at farther distances from your camera.

There are three types of lights to choose from. The first is your traditional white light flash. These are good for getting close-up, full-color photos where you need to see lots of details. These lights aren't the best option for security cameras because the noticeable flash could be seen by the intruder, and they may choose to damage the camera. Other options for regular flashes include infrared light or "low glow," and black infrared or "no glow." Both options take black-and-white photos.

Infrared lights produce a visibly faint red glow when taking pictures.

The red glow, when positioned correctly will not be too noticeable, but the light can be seen when looking directly at the camera. These cameras typically take better night images compared to the black infrared cameras, but there are exceptions.

No-glow cameras emit no visible light while taking photos so your subjects will be unaware of the cameras at nighttime. These light options are typically preferred for security cameras because they don't spook trespassers.

Trail cameras can be a great addition to your security strategy and a useful tool for getting a better idea of any foul play occurring on your property. If you keep your objectives in mind and choose wisely on the features, there is no reason you can't get a good quality camera that does what you need for a reasonable price. Peace of mind for you and your family is well worth it. ■

*LAUREN GRAND is an associate professor of practice and Lane County Extension forester in the College of Forestry at Oregon State University. As an Extension forester, she teaches landowners and the public about forest ecology, management, and planning. She also has a focus on amphibians and their forested habitats. Lauren can be reached at 541-579-2150 or [Lauren.Grand@oregonstate.edu](mailto:Lauren.Grand@oregonstate.edu).*

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# Estate Planning and Protecting Natural Resources

By TYLER KITTLE

**I**n this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes. This famous quote from Founding Father Benjamin Franklin in 1789 still rings true today. However, many of us prefer the ostrich's approach of burying our heads in the sand instead of planning for these certainties, especially with natural resource properties like timber. The idea of "estate planning" can be overwhelming, and often triggers thoughts that support our do-nothing approach: that's only for rich people; my family knows what I want; I'm busy so I'll deal with that next year. Here's a different way to think about it: everyone has an estate plan. Either you have your estate plan, customized to your property, your family, and your values; or the state in which you live has a plan for you. So, the first question is: do you know what your estate plan is, and is that what you want?



The default estate plan provided by state law is not often appropriate

for natural resource property. Woodlands, farms, and other types of natural resource property ("NR Property") are more complex than a bank account or a personal residence. The valuation is trickier, with frequent fluctuations and often a higher value than folks expect. NR Property takes a lot of work, and adult children are rarely equally involved in its management (if any adult child is involved at all), so the family dynamics around NR Property are more complicated. The taxes are complex because of deferrals and exemptions, potential capital gains, looming estate taxes, and often a lack of cash to pay those liabilities. There are a host of other complexities specific to each family and their NR Property, and it's both daunting and overwhelming to think "What's my plan?"

This article will discuss some high-level concepts to consider for your estate plan. It is not legal advice specific to you, and I hope that you will take your thoughts and reactions to an estate planning attorney who can help brainstorm and craft a plan customized for you. The goal of this article is to motivate you to have any plan in place starting with a few simple steps, and



PHOTO COURTESY: CERIDWEN HARRIS

*Bald Eagle rests in a pine after feeding on salmon in Lake Coeur d'Alene.*

to dispel some common myths about estate planning.

Where do I start? I suggest you start with one free thing you can do today: call your doctor's office or your closest hospital and ask what documents you need for someone to make medical decisions for you in an emergency. Most states have free forms to name someone as a health care representative; someone who can speak for you if you



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can't speak for yourself. In Oregon, the Advance Directive is the primary form. In Washington, there are many acceptable forms, but the Health Care Directive is common. See the links below to download those two forms for free, and often hospitals have printed versions available. There are other forms to consider, such as a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) and a POLST (Physicians Order for Life-Sustaining Treatment), and your doctor can advise if you need one or both. If you aren't sure how to answer any part of the forms, ask your doctor or skip it: just make sure you have something in place, it's signed by you, and you provide the complete names and contact information for the people who could make decisions for you. Without this, privacy laws may prohibit your trusted folks from accessing your medical information and making decisions for your care.

The next simplest step is to get a power of attorney. In my experience, a power of attorney is the most cost-saving tool you can have; the biggest "bang for your buck" in the estate planning toolkit. A power of attorney names someone you trust to manage your property upon your incapacity, including your NR Property (which may mean your business interests if it's held in a corporation or a compa-

ny). The only decision to make is who should be in charge. For this document, you don't have to decide the bigger questions of 'who gets what' and how it will all work out. However, if you don't have a power of attorney in place and something unexpected happens to you, your assets (including the management of your NR Property) may be subject to a court-supervised conservatorship. While each state has its own rules about how conservatorship works, generally it's a very expensive, restrictive, and public process. Guiding families through a conservatorship, knowing that all the stress and expense could have been avoided by a relatively simple document, is one of the hardest parts of my job.

A few words of caution: choose the person to make financial decisions based on their trustworthiness and honesty, not because they are the oldest child or because that person feels entitled. A power of attorney conveys a lot of power, and financial abuse is a very real concern. Also, have an estate planning attorney prepare the power of attorney for you; avoid an online form or an attorney who does not regularly practice in this area. The boilerplate matters, and if the power of attorney doesn't have all the right provisions, you won't know until it's too late to fix

it. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Together, these two documents, which authorize someone to step into your shoes for both financial and health care decisions, are the primary tools to protect your NR Property upon your incapacity.

Now that you know where to start, let's consider three common myths about estate planning for NR Property.

—Continued on next page—



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**Myth #1:** If my family knows what I want, they can (and will) do it.

While knowing what should happen is important, someone needs legal authority to manage and make decisions for the NR Property (and other assets). Many people assume that their family knows and will follow their wishes upon their death. Some go to great lengths to communicate those wishes in detail. However, just knowing is not enough; someone needs legal authority to follow through.

The two most common documents to convey this legal authority are a will and a revocable trust. Both documents accomplish the basic goal of giving the people you choose the legal authority to manage and distribute your assets upon your death. When someone has a will, the estate is typically administered with the supervision of a court in a process called “probate”. When someone has a revocable trust, the estate is typically administered privately without court supervision. Whether a will or a revocable trust is the best option for you depends on many facts, and you should consult an attorney who knows the details of your situation, including the laws and local culture of the probate court where you live. I find that most of my clients who are woodland property owners prefer a revocable trust because it provides more flexibility in the continued management of their NR Property. However, a will is better than not having any plan at all.

Finally, keep in mind that your assets

and family dynamics will change over time, so your estate plan may evolve. Grief and money may also cause people to do unpredictable things. You can only plan based on the information you have right now, and you can change your plan if/when other things in your life change.

**Myth #2:** A revocable trust avoids estate taxes.

A revocable trust does NOT avoid estate taxes. Other types of trusts may avoid or reduce estate taxes, but a revocable trust is not a magic wand that makes estate taxes disappear. A trust is a type of entity created for a specific purpose, just like a business. When someone says, “I have a business”, you know very little about that business. What’s the business purpose? Who is in charge? How is it taxed? Similarly, there are thousands of types of trusts created for different purposes, with different provisions and different tax consequences. Most of the time, when someone says, “I have a trust”, they have a revocable living trust, and its primary purpose is to avoid court supervision (probate) of their assets upon their incapacity and death. Some may have a different type of trust that reduces or avoids estate taxes, but that’s typically a more complex instrument tailored to a specific situation (or they misunderstand what they have).

Some tools can greatly reduce or avoid estate taxes, especially for NR Property. These tools are evolving.

States with a strong history of natural resources recognize that the tax environment makes transitioning NR Property to the next generation very difficult, and they are crafting laws to encourage the preservation of NR Property. Note Oregon’s recent law (SB 498 affecting estates after July 1, 2023) that created a whole new estate tax exemption for NR Property up to \$15 million. This new law is a stark contrast to Oregon’s \$1 million estate tax exemption for all other kinds of property. To qualify for this higher exemption, the management and distribution of the NR Property must meet certain requirements including active management of the NR Property for profit, continued ownership and material participation by family members, and continued use of the NR Property for a specific time. This new law leaves more questions than answers in its wake that will take some time (and legislative guidance) to sort through. However, there are other time-tested opportunities to reduce estate taxes to consider. Specific advice about how you may reduce or avoid estate taxes is beyond the scope of this article. However, know that there are tools out there to help, and the guidance of a tax advisor or estate planning attorney can help you set up your NR Property to take advantage of these tax benefits.

**Myth #3:** I need to make decisions about my estate plan before I meet with an attorney.

I see strong themes in my clientele. The primary theme with my NR Property owners is waiting to schedule

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## Links

Oregon Advance Directive for medical decisions:

<http://tinyurl.com/ykm6mvcs>

Washington Health Care Directive:

<http://tinyurl.com/49ctt9e4>

the first meeting until something bad happens, such as one spouse facing dementia or a terminal illness. My clients say that they delayed because they felt overwhelmed with the number of decisions to make, and they didn't want to waste time and money before having all the answers. From my perspective, it's obvious they don't have all the answers; they need information specific to their situation before they can identify the options.

For example, a common situation is when a patriarch or matriarch owns NR Property that has been in the family for generations. They believe everything needs to be divided equally among their children, but only one adult child lives on the property and understands its operations. It may be uncomfortable for some, but fairness is not always equal. We may need to explore some creative solutions, like giving the child who has invested their life in the NR Property the opportunity to buy out their siblings on favorable terms. The stress and overwhelm typically subside with some. Of course, having general goals and priorities in mind is helpful, but most people need creative brainstorming with professional guidance to understand their concrete options and the resulting tax consequences. The

most expensive decision is not to have a plan in place at all.

One of the greatest threats to NR Property is failing to plan for a property owner's incapacity and death, and how to transition NR Property to the next generation. These topics are uncomfortable. The decisions are overwhelming. Avoidance is common and understandable. However, you don't have to tackle it all at once, and you don't need all the answers to get started. Start with the simple tools to plan for incapacity—a health care directive and a power of attorney—and then seek guidance on the more difficult decisions so you don't fall victim to the myths around estate planning. ■

*TAYLOR KITTELL is a Founding Partner at Breakwater Law. Taylor's practice focuses on estate planning and administration, including probate, trusts, guardianships, and conservatorships. Above all else, Taylor values her relationships with clients. She is committed to treating each client with respect and compassion while assisting them in resolving both the immediate and long-term issues they face. She values communication, collaboration, and teamwork, which are often the necessary ingredients to obtaining the results her clients desire. She can be reached at [Taylor@Breakwater-Law.com](mailto:Taylor@Breakwater-Law.com).*

## Lane Townsend

October 27, 1927-December 13, 2023

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Ivan and Lane Townsend were the Washington State Tree Farmers of the Year in 1977, receiving recognition from Governor Dixy Lee Ray. They were also recognized as the National Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year for the NW Region.

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# Your Home Can Survive the Next Wildfire

By **GUY GIFFORD**

**S**pokane County, August 18, 2023: Two separate fires burned over 700 structures and 20,000 acres. These two fires were the Gray Fire and the Oregon Road Fire. Weather at the



Spokane Airport had a high temperature of 90 degrees and a relative humidity (RH) of 6-9%. From a wildland firefighter perspective, the temperature was hot, although not extremely hot, but the RH was extremely low for this area. The combination of high temperature and low RH made the conditions tender and dry, so a single spark or ember (an ember is burning vegetation started

from a wildfire) could start a wildfire. The winds that day were sustained at 20-25 mph with gusts of 30-37 mph. When these fires started high winds resulted in extreme fire behavior and a high rate of spread. With extreme fire behavior, we get large flame fronts, and many embers are generated. These embers start “spot fires” often in front of the main fire increasing the intensity and rate of spread of the wildfire. These embers can travel 10,000+ feet high and are then carried by the wind, often traveling over a mile. The fire conditions were so extreme people found burned embers over 7 miles from these fires.

A popular belief is that most structures are ignited by a large flaming front. This assumption is based on what we often see in pictures and news stories. What people don’t see are the embers, which are small pieces of burning vegetation carried through the air that start spot fires and structure fires by landing on flammable material next to a home. This is often happening up to a mile away from the wildfire where the firefighters are which is why most people think large flames start structures on fire. A lot of research has gone into how structures ignite during wildfires. The research focused on a homeowner’s actions to reduce the chance of their structure igniting during a wildfire. The research has shown that focusing on creating a zone around your home where embers cannot ignite flammable material is critical protection in case of a wildfire. While these steps will not guarantee the safety of your home in the next wildfire, they will greatly reduce the chance of your home burning. With proper planning, you can have a home and landscape with low ignition potential that also meets other landscape goals, such as welcoming pollinators and birds. These steps can range in cost from low to high, but most actions can be no cost. These steps are taken in what we call the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ).

Research has shown that the HIZ is

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the best area to focus your activities if you want to reduce the chance of your structure igniting in a wildfire. The HIZ consists of three smaller zones around your structures.

Zone 1: The Immediate Zone (aka Be Ember Aware): Distance 0-5 feet

Zone 2: The Intermediate Zone (aka Lean, Clean, and Green): Distance 5-30 feet

Zone 3: The Extended Zone (aka Reduce the Intensity): Distance 30 to 300 feet.

### Zone 1: The Immediate Zone / Be Ember Aware

In the Immediate Zone, the focus is the structure and the first 5 feet of landscape around the structure. This is the area where you want nothing flammable. If something starts on fire here, you may have direct flame contact with your home. When we focus on the structure, we call this home hardening.

Home hardening has 2 goals:

1: Prevent Embers from entering your structure

2: Remove flammable material on your structure that could ignite from an ember.

Embers may enter your house from gaps and openings in the structure. These gaps and openings could be purposeful such as vents or unintentional such as loose weather stripping. Vents should be covered with a metal



*Dried plant matter and peat moss found in hanging baskets are extremely flammable.*

PHOTO COURTESY: GUY GIFFORD

screen with openings no greater than 1/8". This allows your house to breathe while still reducing the amount and size of embers that may enter your home.

Gaps in your home can be harder to find and are often located around doors and windows. It can be easier to find these gaps in the winter. Look for cold areas coming into your structure. Gaps can be filled with caulk or weather stripping. A key part of your structure that is often overlooked is your garage,

specifically the garage door.

Make sure there are no flammable materials on your house or decks, this could include:

- Newspaper loose or in a recycle bin
- Woodpiles
- Cardboard
- Dry leaves and needles
- Door mats that are made of flammable material.

—Continued on next page—



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- Containers with dead plants (many hanging planters contain peat moss, which easily ignites)

The first 5 feet of landscape around your structure is also part of Zone 1 and needs to be clear of flammable material that may ignite from embers including bark and flammable mulch.

Mulch should be non-combustible such as rock or dirt. Ideally, this area has no plants but if you must have plants keep them spaced out and small. Choosing Fire-Resistant Plants should be done in Zone 1. The current guide is focused on Eastern Washington, but most plants should work in Western Washington as well. Be sure to check with your local nursery to ensure the plant can survive in the Western Washington climate. In Zone 1 the key to success is regular maintenance. Make sure everything is well maintained and has no accumulation of debris.

### **Zone 2: The Intermediate Zone / Lean, Clean and Green**

Zone 2 extends to 30 feet from your structure. This area is typically your yard and garden and may extend beyond 30 feet. In this zone, some items may burn but applying the lean, clean, and green concept to any burnable material should produce small flames and not spread to your structure. This can be accomplished by using an island concept. Locate items that may burn in islands separated from other islands so the fire cannot jump from island to island. This keeps the fire isolated and away from your structure. The goal is to minimize how many islands might burn in a wildfire and hopefully avoid having your whole yard burn.

Ideally, mulch in this zone should be non-flammable. Only use burnable mulch to maintain soil moisture or for erosion control. Plants should be fire resistant just as in Zone 1. Prune trees 10 feet high from the ground. Ensure you have no branches that overhang your roof or within 10' of chimneys. Clear vegetation around wooden fences, play structures, and sheds.



IMAGE COURTESY: NIFPA

*Research has shown that the HIZ is the best area to focus your activities if you want to reduce the chance of your structure igniting in the next wildfire. The HIZ consists of three smaller zones around your structures.*

### **Zone 3: The Extended Zone / Reduce the Intensity: Distance 30 to 300 feet**

This is the area you do not regularly maintain and is typically outside your yard and garden areas. It is often forested but could be native grasses and shrubs depending on your ecosystem. The goal here is to reduce the intensity of the wildfire. Instead of having 20 or 30-foot flames going through your property, we want much smaller flame lengths. Smaller flames reduce the damage to your property and make firefighting resources more effective. Typically, large flames in a wildfire are due to trees and their size.

From a fire perspective, we are trying to thin trees to get what we call “roads in the sky”. Roads on the ground often act as a fire break by slowing or stopping fire spread, but we also want these fire breaks in the treetops. When you look up into your trees you should see a minimum of 5-6 feet between the tips of the tree branches. This creates fire breaks in the sky to reduce the chance of tree-to-tree ignition. Further spacing is recommended on steep slopes as you get closer to your house. Thinning will also increase the health of your forest by

reducing the competition for water and nutrients. The island concept we talked about in Zone 2 can be applied in Zone 3. Islands can consist of a single tree or clumps of trees that are separated from other islands to meet various goals you have for your property such as wildlife habitat and aesthetics. The above spacing recommendation can also be applied to shrubs.

More information can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/3tjr42sa>.

As you take steps to protect your property from wildfire, focus on Zone 1, then Zone 2, and finally Zone 3. This sequence is often the easiest and most economical way to increase the chance of your home surviving the next wildfire. ■

*GUY GIFFORD has a BS in Forest Resource Management from the University of Idaho. He has been a wildland firefighter for almost 40 years and has over 30 years of experience as a forester. He has spent most of his career helping landowners manage their property for their specific goals whether it is forest production, wildfire, recreation, or reducing the impact of wildfire. He can be reached at [guy.gifford@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:guy.gifford@dnr.wa.gov).*



# The Understory

## Letter from the Editor:

My name is Jill Buckland and I live on ten acres in the woods of North Idaho. Since becoming the editor in August of 2022, I've been committed to learning the process of how *Northwest Woodlands* magazine comes together well and on time. Navigating the editing process has been a welcome challenge and a rewarding adventure. Before going solo, I was lucky enough to work with Anne Maloney as we transferred the editing position from Oregon to Idaho. I'm grateful for Anne's guidance and the time we were able to work together. She was a gracious teacher and pillar of patience while the new lessons percolated.

First, a little bit about me. My husband Paul and I live in the panhandle just south of Coeur d'Alene. We're tightly wedged between our home away from home state Montana, and the east side of Washington where Paul is the resource manager for Inland Empire Paper Company. We migrated to North Idaho 26 years ago and promptly welcomed our daughter Sophie and three short years later our son Sam. In 2007 I was on the way to town with the kids and noticed a new For Sale sign in our neighborhood. Eager to explore, I took a wild turn up a long driveway and came upon the house of my dreams. It sat low and blended seamlessly into the quiet woods that cradled it. Thanks to some financial wizardry and good fortune, we purchased that home and the ten-acre woodsy oasis it sits on. To say that raising our family among the trees has had a positive effect on all of us would be an understatement. The teenage version of our kids may not have been thrilled with being so removed (go ahead—sneak out, but you'll have a long walk ahead of you) but with maturity and reflection (and since moving to town), they've grown to appreciate their upbringing in the woods. Sophie recently graduated with her degree in Recreation Management from the University of Montana and Sam is an arborist for a local tree-cutting service. Growing up among the trees sent roots deep into the core of the amazing humans they've become. Our family has one overriding theme and that's trees. We plant trees to honor, celebrate, and mourn. Trees surround us, tower above us, provide cooling shade when it's hot, and keep us warm through winter.

My work background is in creative design, management, and writing. No matter the title, my primary focus is storytelling. I'm an eager reader who'll devour anything: books, magazines,

recipes, essays, newspapers, etc. Reading and creative writing are how I connect to myself, to place, and to people. The pages of *Northwest Woodlands* are a prime stage to share stories that teach lessons, give insight, and inspire reflection. Whether it's a deep dive on a useful logging tool, tales of adventure while recreating in the woods, or detailed directions on how to build a birdhouse; I seek out the essays you'll want to read, learn from, or be entertained by.

With each new year, I choose a word or quote that will be my north star. For 2024 my guiding quote is from the renowned poet Mary Oliver; *Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.*

This quote inspires me as a writer and informs my focus when editing. This is my 6th solo issue, and since finding solid ground with the mechanics, I'd like to turn attention to the heart of the stories, and I believe that is within you. I want to hear what you'd like me to pay attention to. What astonishes you? Have you learned a good lesson fellow landowners can benefit from? Did you discover an effective way to keep deer away? Did you adopt a pet badger you want to tell us about? Are you building a cabin? We all have tales to tell and lessons to share, I can't wait to hear yours. ■

**Jill Buckland**  
nwweditorjbuck@gmail.com

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# TreeSmarts: Research You Can Use

## US Forest Service Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act: Fast, Variable, Rarely Litigated, and Declining

Published in the April 2020 Journal of Forestry <https://academic.oup.com/jof/article/118/4/403/5825558>, with corrections in April 2022 (<https://doi.org/10.1093/jofore/fvac005>). Authors Fleischman, Struthers, Arnold, Dockry, and Scott represent the University of Minnesota and/or the University of California at Davis.

Across 42 states of the USA, the USDA Forest Service (USFS) administers federal lands encompassing nine

regions, 154 national forests, >600 ranger districts, and 20 national grasslands. Over the last several decades, the agency has embraced a multiple-use mandate that requires an interdisciplinary workforce, high levels of public debate over decision-making, and balancing extractive and non-extractive uses. At the same time, challenges from flat or declining budgets, the retirement of experienced staff without adequate replacements, as well as longer and

*TreeSmarts: Forest Research You Can Use appears in every other issue of Northwest Woodlands. Column editor Ed Styskel reviews research from a host of sources, sorts through the items of interest to family forest owners, and provides a short summary of the pertinent results in understandable language. If you have a suggestion to share with Ed, please contact him directly at [edstyskel@gmail.com](mailto:edstyskel@gmail.com).*

more intense fire seasons consumed an increasing portion of the agency's budget.

There has been much public debate on how the USFS can better fulfill its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) obligations, even including the possibility of rule-making changes by the agency and the Council on Environmental Quality. However, that debate has not been informed by systematic data on the agency's NEPA processes.

In contrast to recently publicized concerns about indeterminable delays caused by NEPA, the above-named five science researchers used the USFS Planning, Appeals, and Litigation System (PALS) database to determine that the majority of NEPA projects are processed quickly using the existing legal authorities of Categorical Exclusions (CEs) and Environmental Assessments (EAs), and the USFS processes Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) from 45 to 217 percent faster than three other federal agencies with a significant NEPA workload.

CEs accounted for 82.3 percent of all projects and 15.8 percent were EAs. Only 1.9 percent of the 33,976 USFS decisions between 2005 and 2018 were processed as an EIS—the most rigorous and time-consuming level of analysis. The number of new projects declined dramatically during those 14 years, with the USFS now initiating

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less than half as many projects per year as it did before 2010. The median time (term corrected in 2022 to instead be “average time”) to complete a CE is 105 days, an EA is 392 days, and an EIS is less than 2.5 years (882 days).

Special land uses (utility structures, special events, energy development, etc.) accounted for 38.4 percent of all NEPA analyses and 95 percent of those were CEs. NEPA project reviews for recreation, vegetation, wildlife/fish/plants, woody fuel treatment, and forest products ranged from 15 percent down to 10 percent of the total, respectively. NEPA reviews for national forest unit management plans involved only 1.3 percent of all projects but 10.5 percent of all EISs. The most common purpose for EAs and EISs is vegetation management (e.g., forest products and fuels) since they have more potential for environmental impacts and public controversy. California projects produce the most EISs, followed by Oregon, and Washington.

Of much greater concern is the dramatic decline in the number of NEPA analyses conducted by the agency, a decline that has continued through three presidential administrations and is not clearly related to any change in NEPA policy. More than 60 projects requiring EISs were initiated annually in 2005-2009, but the number declined after with only 19 per year in 2017 and 2018. Similarly, the number of EAs initiated dropped from a high of 614 in 2009 to a low of 153 in 2018, and the number of CEs dropped by more than half (2,716 initiated in 2005 and 1,218 initiated in 2018). The number of NEPA analyses signed each year also decreases over time following a similar trend. This may suggest that the USFS no longer has the resources to conduct routine land-management activities.

Wide variations between management units of the agency suggest that lessons could be learned through more careful study of how individual units manage their NEPA workload, as well as through exchanges among managers to communicate best practices.

Funding was provided by a National

Science Foundation grant as well as USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (McIntire-Stennis Project # 1013165).

A follow-up analysis titled *Environmental Impact Assessments Not the Main Barrier to Timely Forest Management in the United States* responded to decision-makers from across the political spectrum who circumvent environmental analyses to expedite implementation of necessary actions for climate resilience and clean energy. In the October 2023 journal *Nature Sustainability* (<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-023-01218-1>), researchers Struthers, Murenbeeld, and Williamson (representing University of Georgia and/or Boise State University) used a statistical process known as survival analysis to discover two important findings.

First, for most actions, the Forest Service takes as long or longer to award initial contracts and roll out first

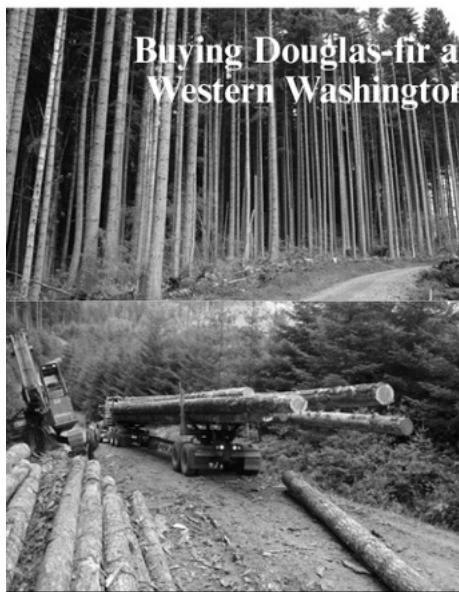
project activities than to comply with NEPA.

Second, NEPA compliance accounts for approximately one-fifth of the forecast implementation time. For those rare major actions that require an EIS, the NEPA process takes an average of 2.6 years. Generally, actions analyzed through an EIS are larger in area, longer term, and involve more activities, factors justifying time spent on stakeholder engagement and analysis of effects. Lengthy timelines for complex analyses may also reflect interruptions in the NEPA process due to agency vacancies, poor data, and staff management, changes in congressional budgets, and evolving needs of cooperating agencies and stakeholders.

Funding for this follow-up analysis was provided by the Wilburforce Foundation, the National Science Foundation Idaho EPSCoR Program, and the National Science Foundation. ■

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# Twig Tales

## Home Security: Woodland style

By **KEN BEVIS**

Bob and Barb Wahr live near the Taterticia and Cascadia lines, way up on a gorgeous property above Gold Knob Ridge and the Turtle River. They're worried somebody is sneaking into their place. Shadowy figures showed on the trail cameras right about the time the morels disappeared. Was this the start of sneaky trespasser invasions, or some strange wildlife passing through? Bob is a friend who likes wildlife, so he asked me to offer another opinion.

Bob, Barb, and I toured the perimeter of the property, trailed by their posse of Argentinian Herd dogs. "No Trespassing" signs were posted at appropriate intervals. A 4-strand barbed wire fence stretched all around (with a smooth wire at the bottom, slightly higher to allow deer to go under) and a solid gate on the entrance road with stern signage ("If you can read this, WORRY."). Looked like all the normal stuff.

Barb and Bob are fit, retired Tech executives, who recently moved out to their property full-time. Bob has substantial silver mutton chops and close-cropped hair. Barb is diminutive and sturdy, with quick, piercing eyes. They are naturalists, and keenly in tune with wildlife. Barb grows amazing flowers and produce, including arctic Kohlrabi and mangos. Bob is an accomplished tinkerer, well-versed in modern technology, and has developed an elaborate, voice and motion-activated, perimeter security system he wanted to show off.

We walked to where the mysterious trail camera images had been taken. "Right over there by that Doug fir habitat patch. Jumped the fence I think but didn't leave any tracks or even set off the system." It looked like a good travel corridor for wildlife, with linear hiding cover adjacent to open areas. He pulled a picture up on his phone and it showed the dark human-like silhouette facing away, slightly hunched forward and indistinct. Bipedal he thought, but

fuzzy in the camera with what appeared to be long arms nearly raking the ground. We stopped at a beautiful buck-skinned larch snag full of woodpecker holes. Barb said, "I love this tree, it's like a bird hotel!" I agreed. "A tree like that has so much habitat value!"

"Sure does," said Bob. "And more. Watch this." He touched the front of the enormous stem and a panel door silently opened, revealing a control panel. It had no buttons, switches, or knobs! Bob saw my puzzlement, "It's motion and voice-activated. Watch." He said, "Bubba. Level 1". Periscope-like stems emerged from the ground and bright lights started to spin around! "Wow, that would surely scare something away!" I said. Bob spoke, "Bubba, Level 2". Then more stems came up with loud screeching horns. Wow! "Bubba, Level 3!" More towers emerged and sprinklers began spraying water in a 50-foot radius all along the perimeter! Quite the show. "When triggered, these levels are programmed to come in at 15-second intervals. But if the intruding organism leaves, it doesn't go to the next level and shuts down automatically." Genius! "And no traps or nets may I ask?". Bob smiled, "Well, let's not be so sure!"

Sensing his implication, I reminded Bob that all our training through FDCNRAFSP (Forestry Division of Coordinated Natural Resource Agency Forestry Service Program), including Forestland Security Training, recommends avoiding anything that could cause serious injury, for various reasons. Booby traps like pitfalls, legholds, balls of rolling wire, land mines, nets, guns, or snares, can cause substantial physical harm, and potential legal liabilities. He just laughed. "Well, ok, but they might be surprised anyway!"

After the demonstration, Barb asks, "How about some lunch?". My belly is grumbling, and I agree heartily (FDCNRASFP ethics rules say I can accept gifts up to the value of a ham and cheese sandwich, and a soda). "I'm going over to where the critters were

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and look for tracks,” I say. Bob nods, “Ok, but be careful”.

They went up to the cabin and I walked along the fence looking for mysterious critter tracks. Right next to some fake holes, ala Wylie Coyote, there were strange, rumpled leaves. I lean over for a closer look and, ‘Woosh!’, my left foot is grabbed by a snare, and up into the air I go! I’m left dangling, swinging from a bent sapling just a few feet from the control snag! The system goes off. Whoops, whistles, sprinklers, lights, waving nets, the whole deal. Now I’m in a pickle! But I use my highly trained FCDNRAFSP-WMP outdoor survival skills, remembering the “Escape from Forestland Booby Trap Module” and athletically

moving to start swinging the rope. I can’t quite reach my utility pack, lying just beyond my fingertips on the ground. After 30 seconds of light and deafening horns, sprinklers sweep into my eyes, but my safety goggles keep me from being blinded. Luckily, I have my Finnish PCI (Precision Cutting Implement) on my belt. I manage to get it out and struggle to reach up and cut myself down, but I can’t quite get to the rope. I need to turn this system off! I swing vigorously and reach the snag, and thanks to my iron grip, I hang on. I touch the side and the cover opens. There it is, the control panel, but no switches. Hanging on only by my fingernails, I notice a tiny hole labeled “For Emergency Use”. With one hand, I manage to scratch a sliver from the snag and sharpen it with my PCI into a key shape. I insert it into the slot, twist it, and the howling system suddenly shuts down when various towers disappear into the ground. Cool. But I’m still hanging upside down so now what?

Bob and Barb appear! “I see you found my surprise!” says Bob. He speaks to the panel. “Release snare 41”, and I am gently lowered to the ground.

“That’s quite a system,” I say. “But we do caution against using physical booby traps, as the outcome can be dangerous”. Good thing I’m well trained.

We went up to the cabin and while we ate a delicious ham and cheese sandwich, chased by cold soda, we looked at the mysterious trail camera pictures. The dark silhouette appeared to be hominid, but no face could be discerned. It passed right over where I was way-laid without setting off the system.

“Who, or what was it?” asked Barb. I said, “I don’t know.”

The world if full of mystery, and even I couldn’t figure this one out. ■

*KEN BEVIS is a Stewardship Wildlife Biologist for the Washington version of FCNRAFSP (WA Dept of Natural Resources).*

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