

Testimony for Oregon Legislature House Special Committee on Wildfire Recovery
– Southern Oregon February 17, 2021

Our ranch was destroyed by the U. S. Forest Service backfire in early September 2020. This was their response to the Brattain fire. The backfire was lit on private land without landowner's permission. The Morgan Ranch is located in Lake County and comprises about 1,200 acres. The Forest Service managed to burn 1,100 acres of it. Approximately, 95 percent of our timber was killed, 14 miles of fence destroyed, most fall forage lost, and all ground cover gone except for the rocks. They "managed" to burn over 17,000 acres of private land and did millions of dollars in resource damage.

Our property is under Oregon Department of Forestry fire protection, however, they nor the Forest Service did anything to protect our property. After the fire, it was all but impossible to get anything from the Forest Service or even talk to a person. Their offices were closed, typically phone calls were not answered if it was even possible to leave a message. If we got an answer, it was usually wrong. Promised outcomes were easily forgotten. "I don't remember" was typical response received. NOT a good experience.

We salvage logged after the fire so now ODF says we are to replant. We live in a desert, Mother Nature took thousands of years to grow trees on this property. We are in a ten-year drought, global warming, steep, rocky, dry soils is what most of the ground is like where trees are expected to grow. It could cost up to ten times our merger return on salvaged trees to replant. Doesn't make economic sense.

The unpaid volunteer High Desert Rangeland Fire Fighters were the only ones that did anything to protect us and our ranch. They were the only bright spot in the Brattain Fire disaster.

Jim Baldwin/Brenda Morgan
40828 Clover Flat Road
Paisley, OR 97636
541-943-3929