

Susan Rudisill
194 Skyview Drive – P.O. Box 66
Idleyld Park, Oregon 97447
Srudisill84@gmail.com

To: Representative Christine Goodman
800 Court Street, H386
Salem, OR 97301

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Dear Representative Goodman,

This letter is to thank you for introducing House Bill #3523, the Wildfire Settlement Tax Subtraction. I urge, beg, plead, implore, your colleagues to support these efforts. That monies meant to compensate for the enormous losses related to a wildfire be subject to tax is unjust, outrageous and just plain wrong!

The power company's negligence and errors caused the catastrophic fire. They need to give something back. It's not only that the victims deserve to receive that money, but that we and they NEED it. Unlike many, we were lucky in having insurance which did cover most the initial loss and expenses. However, damage and loss did not stop once the flames died down. Wildfire is the disaster that keeps on taking. These past two and a half years have seen loss after loss. Post-fire recovery is expensive. Here are a few examples, and reasons why I feel that I both deserve and have earned any settlement money to be awarded to my family.

Because most of our energy & resources have been consumed with clean-up and recovery work, we have lost other opportunities. My career as an artist has been neglected, missing chances for exhibits and sales. My 80-year-old husband has aged rapidly, unable to fully enjoy his retirement and "golden years".

Because we could not afford to hire help, we, our son and his wife labored for weeks to clean up burn debris. We peeled and treated logs, and built a bridge to replace the one that burned. Our son used two weeks of vacation time, provided labor, tools and materials to build a garden shed to serve until we could afford to rebuild the garage. Winched out burnt stumps. Hauled truckloads of burn debris to the landfill.

In an effort to cover up the fire scars, I have bought and planted trees, shrubs and flowers. That's an expense. New and very invasive thistles and broom have spread rapidly since the fire – I struggle to do what I can to keep them at bay, and pay for help when possible. Had I the money, this work could keep someone busy for weeks, maybe months.

Fifty- to eighty-year-old trees that were fire-damaged but still had some green in the winter of 2020-21 have been slowly dying before my eyes. Many of them will have to be felled. Another expense. But worse, for me, is the sad loss of these grand old trees, and the shade and habitat they provide.

Then there is the erosion of our creek, and the related damage to yet more trees and landscaping. Because all the land above our property was essentially clear-cut, and damaging logging roads built, water comes rushing down with enormous force, bringing debris and silt to a formerly clear-running creek. Lovely cascading waterfalls are now blocked by burnt branches. The stream now under-cuts the bank, damaging the roots of an heirloom oak, among other trees, and threatening the stability of my Creekside patio. Stream restoration and erosion control efforts are beyond my strength and ability, and my budget.

Stacks of burnt tree carcasses are piled up on the edges of our lawn and meadow, including the remains of 85-year-old spruces, cedars and Douglas-fir. What am I to do with them?

Wildfire is the disaster that keeps on ... taking. Taking energy. Taking resources. Taking more trees. Our property value has gone down. Our home insurance has gone up.

The place which has been our home since 2002, and which was to provide a legacy to hand down to our son & grandchildren, has lost the features that made it special – our 5 acres of established, mixed-species forest, our forested view, and our beloved North Umpqua Trail and NU Forest. With the trailhead just half a mile from our home, this was essentially our backyard, the place we'd hike regularly. This access was one of the main reasons we chose to live here.

In addition to being an Oregon citizen, an artist, wife, mother and grandmother, I am now a survivor of the Archie Creek Fire of September 2020. That experience has become a defining aspect of my life, and will be so for whatever years remain. Since the fire, recovery has dominated my time, my conversations, my mental state. It has consumed most of my energy, and too much of my family's financial resources. How is one to be compensated for all the intangible losses? Please don't take still more from us, in the form of taxes.

Thank you,
Susan Rudisill

“Solastalgia: an emerging form of depression or distress caused by environmental change, such as from climate change, natural disasters, extreme weather conditions, and/or other negative or upsetting alteration of one's surroundings or home. This condition brings with it a profound, often long-lasting disruption to a person's sense of identity, belonging, and security relating to where they live.”



Tales of Love & Loss Triptych by Susan Rudisill

They built their forever home by a small pond

The Grandmother Tree

Wildflowers bloomed along the trails they hiked



Impact of the Archie Creek Fire on the landscape

At right, Pre-fire forested hillsides seen from my porch.

Above left, Post fire view, also from my porch.

Above right, View from a short distance above my home.

Paintings by Susan Rudisill, Idleyld Park, Oregon

