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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB926

To Oregon Legislative Information System (OLIS).

It's hard to believe it's been almost 5 years since we lost everything in the So. Obenchain fire on Sept. 9th of 2020. My wife and I of 56 years bought this property 47 years ago.

We bought this 21ac. ranch as a special place to raise our children and then our grandchildren in this beautiful area of So. Oregon. We started raising horses, then added cows, chickens, goats, dogs, and cats. Our children and then our grandchildren all took part in ranch life, being able to see the birth of foals, and calves, planting and harvesting a garden, feeding and taking care of the animals. We also enjoyed the variety of wildlife on the ranch with elk, deer, Canadian geese, variety of ducks and birds all living on the property or on the 3 ponds. The deer, Canadian geese and ducks would come back every year to raise their young and we enjoyed watching them all. We even had beaver living in the ponds.

As a family, we also enjoyed the surrounding beauty of wildflowers, variety of plants and trees that grew on our property, riding our horses, or just walking the property. During the 45 years before the fire, we worked hard to develop the property so that it was a place for us, our children and grandchildren, friends and extended family could all come and enjoy. We also planned so that wildlife could continue to access the property as a place to raise their young.

How can we ever explain the heartache and devastation that has affected our lives on that dreadful day in September 2020 when we arrived home from shopping to the announcement that we were at a level 3 evacuation. As we were trying to gather important papers and our animals when a fire chief drove up and told us we needed to leave now! He told us to just grab what we could and that he would be back to make sure we had left. There was fire on the hills around us and helicopters were flying overhead. We had friends drive up to try and help us with the horses and goats, but they were soon notified that their properties were now at a level 3 also and had to leave. We were able to grab our two dogs but couldn't find the cats, so we had to leave them, the horses and the goats, not knowing what would happen to them. I went back the next day early in the morning, getting permission from the National Guard after showing them my driver's license and explaining that we had had to leave our animals and that I wanted to check on them. I was told that it was an active fire area and that I needed to check the animals quickly.

The fire was even closer, burning along the sides of the road as I drove up to our house and in the treetops on the property next door. I tried to look for our cats and gather a few more items but our neighbors behind us, drove by, yelling for me to get out, the fire had jumped their fire line on their property. I left without our cats and unable to get our horses and goats out.

When we were allowed to return several days later, it was to find that our house, barn, well and pump house were totally gone, it looked like a bomb had gone off. Thanks goodness, by some miracle, the goats and horses made it through the fire with burns on their backs and feet. In fact, we had to put one of our dogs down two days after the fire due to stress and trauma and just a couple of years later, we also had to put down one of our horses also due to the stress and trauma from the fire. We lost one of our cats but were surprised when our other cat showed up a year and a half later.

There was total destruction of our home and property. All the ranch buildings and farm equipment were destroyed. Our personal property: wedding and family photos, family heirlooms that can never be replaced, antiques and antique cars, all irreplicable. We were able to rebuild the house, part of the barn and well. We were in our early thirties when we bought the property. We are now in our late 70's, early 80's, unable to do all that needs to be done. Carl Seyboldt